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Genesis

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I can’t remember much prior to volunteering as a guinea pig, but what I can remember is in these pages. This is the story of my final days at ConCore, the most reputable and well-known science research facility of our time. The scientists at ConCore were attempting to solve the enigma of the power that can be held within the unknown regions of the human mind, and I fit the test-subject profile perfectly: male in his mid-twenties in good health with not much holding him back. Looking back on it, I think the reason I’d decided to volunteer was simply the fact that I had nothing to lose. I had very little family left, and those who were still alive did not keep in contact with me. I had no significant other either; I lived alone with my dog, Kyle. My job was a cruel joke, a series of menial tasks that were below even me. In essence, I wasn’t doing much with my life, so why not devote some of it to ConCore and what I thought at the time to be a noble cause? It seemed like a perfectly logical way to put meaning into my life as well as money in my pocket. Soon after I joined, however, I learned that their tests were not as noble as I had previously thought. I was required to show up everyday for a variety of experiments, ranging from shock therapy to the attempt to cram, in small bits, a variety of useless literary and scientific knowledge into my memory, in hopes that I would retain most of it. Although they were pretty vague, not wanting to breed false results, I got the impression that their main goal was to begin the next stage of human evolution, though I’m still unsure of their true intent. The ending was always the same: the tests generated no results and I became a little more aggravated with these so-called “scientists,” who only concerned themselves with triggering some ancestor’s knowledge locked away inside my head and prayed for any little blip on a computer screen, announcing they’d gotten somewhere outside of the functioning cerebral area.

One day, after what seemed like countless months of spending nearly every waking moment in that ConCore lab, one of the experiments finally showed positive results. At the time I couldn’t say if it was the variety of physical stresses they’d put my body through or simply one of the sources of food and water I’d been receiving. All I knew was that this particular day was different. I remember waking up that morning and observing that my dog, Kyle, had different assortments of color surrounding his body—colors that I had never seen before in my entire life. It seemed that I not only saw the colors, but that I could actually feel them; their warmth I can only describe as a mix of yellow and white heat. When I reached out to pet him, it felt as if I was running my hand across some type of furnace. After a few moments, Kyle bolted away from me and hid; he could sense that there was something different about me.

I then immediately ran as fast as I could the eight blocks to the ConCore lab. It seemed the tests and physical workouts had left my body in perfect condition, as I performed this task with very little fatigue. About halfway to the facility, I began to wonder if perhaps it was all a dream, and, deep within me, I felt as though I should not return to that place. However, I soon found myself entering the bathroom on the
ground floor of ConCore. Perhaps I was trying to stall my going into the lab; to this day, I’m still not sure. I can only remember standing inside the bathroom and staring at my reflection in the mirror. My hair seemed as black as it had always been, yet when I ran my hand through it, it turned a sort of light brown. My skin, pale from birth, began to show a multitude of colors, ranging from reds to blues to yellows, with purples and oranges overlapping and scattered throughout. I was so focused on my new vision that I’d neglected to see that Stanley, one of the three security guards ConCore had to offer, had joined me in the men’s room. I acted as though I had been washing my hands and then quickly left the restroom while he stood there, watching me.

As I walked, I could feel the colors starting to fade. I quickly took the steps to the third floor, where they hadn’t been expecting me for another hour or so. The last several months had been a terrible ordeal, but seeing life with all of these extra colors was amazing and perplexing all at once. I felt once I reached the lab, I was going to get an explanation to all of this, or, if it was all a dream, at least wake-up in bed with an old episode of The Twilight Zone playing.

“Marvin, I can see these colors that you can’t possibly imagine; my skin, it’s glowing! The tests have finally paid off!” I declared as I burst through the door.

“Jack, are you alright?” Marvin replied. “And what do you mean ‘these colors’? I don’t see anything different about you.”

“I think it has something to do with my vision, Marvin. I noticed first thing this morning that Kyle was shining bright for some reason, though nothing else was, so I ran here right away. And just downstairs, I saw my reflection in the mirror; I’m all lit up like a Christmas tree!” I replied impatiently. “Let’s start up the machines and see if I’m showing any of the data you’ve been dreaming about since the day we began all of this.”

After a couple more minutes of me explaining the day’s events, I was strapped down to a table with a variety of different machines monitoring my heart rate, my brain activity, my nervous system, and anything else I could imagine. The colors were still present, but the readouts showed no more difference than usual. Marvin naturally requested that I stay in the lab for a few nights while he and the others ran additional tests to see if they could understand this sudden change. I awoke the next morning in that white laboratory room without the warmth I’d tried so hard to hold onto the night before. I looked down at my hands and feet; the colors had disappeared and I was the same old Jack Riley I’d been before. Two weeks would go by before I would experience any of it again. ConCore insisted I remain locked up in that lab, staring day after day at those sickeningly white walls, hoping for the colors to become visible again.

One morning nearing the two week mark, while sitting in the center of the laboratory room attempting to remember the first day I’d seen the colors, I heard a shout of victory. “JACK! You’ve done it!” Marvin called from the other side of the window, which stood between me and the research team. “We just saw something appear in your hand there. It was a bright light, only there for a moment, but your cerebral activity jumped!” Opening my eyes, I expected to see the colors, but they had not returned. Yet I finally had proof that something had changed, something we’d
never seen before. Another three days would go by before I could manifest this ability again, but this time it would change everything.

From that point on, I’d been instructed to imagine the colors I was seeing and to “hold” them with my hands. I was attempting to create something that wasn’t there, and it worked. I was in the same room I’d been in for those two weeks, staring at the window that separated me from the scientists. I was imagining Kyle with his variety of colors and what it had felt like to touch him when it happened; this white light came from within my hands and began to form a shape in the air that was about two feet wide and four feet high. It appeared to be in the shape of a small doorway. I held it there for several minutes without too much struggle before it disappeared. I requested to go home, assuring the scientists that, with a little bit of rest and relaxation, I could produce the light again and perhaps keep it there even longer. The scientists insisted I stay inside the lab. At that point I’d begun to lose all track of time; I could not even tell if it was day or night. I felt so much anger towards ConCore; why couldn’t they just let me leave? I had been faithful and honest; I had submitted myself to every test and mere whim they’d asked of me. Why wouldn’t they let me go home for a night?

“Jack, we can’t let you go out into the world. Imagine the damage you could do. That last light you put out melted the floor right there,” Marvin said as he pointed to an area right in front of me. “You could hurt yourself, or even someone else. You could kill someone Jack.” My anger grew at the accusation that I would inadvertently kill myself or someone else, and as it grew, I focused on the feeling of the light inside my palms. I’m not sure where the energy came from, but something burst inside of me: a mix of anger and the need to escape. Only a moment later, the light reappeared, forming the same doorway-shape as it had before, only this time it seemed as though something existed on the other side of it. I looked more closely and saw a field and blue skies through the door. I looked up at Marvin and saw him shaking his head “no.” The scientists were scrambling to get to me, but I was too quick; I smiled at them all as I leapt through the doorway to freedom.

So it is here in this wide field in the middle of nowhere that I stare down at my journal, looking back on the time since this all began. I want to remember my experiences at ConCore; I feel I need to remember, for it may be important one day. For now I am without my home, without my possessions, without Kyle, and yet... I am content, for now. The colors still come and go. Some days they appear bright and dazzling, crowding in at me until all I see are splashes of color. Other days, the field seems as it has always been. I have tried creating another doorway, but I have yet to succeed. Sometimes I wonder if I’m really trying at all, or if I’m going through the motions to please my subconscious. I believe somewhere deep down inside of myself I don’t really want to go back. I may be without all that I love, but at least I am free. I hope if you are reading this you might use my experiences to understand what became of Jack Riley. I never made my mark on the world, just another person going through the motions almost invisible; today the world has forgotten me and I am truly invisible.