

# XPERTS



e-Smog

Ann Backhaus



***XPERTS:***

***e-Smog***

***Electromagnetic Pollution!***

**Ann Backhaus**

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Visit the Website [www.iicm.edu/Xperts](http://www.iicm.edu/Xperts) for the latest on new books in the XPERTS collection!

## Author's Preface to "Xperts: e-Smog"

When I began the research for this book, I became intrigued with the topic of electromagnetic radiation poisoning, or e-smog as it is called in this book. That intrigue remains with me today. I cannot look at a computer or a microwave or a TV without wondering how much e-smog is radiating....

Sources of information on e-smog are plentiful. During the writing of this book, I talked with individuals about the topic and gathered interesting anecdotes. While anecdotes can provide valuable fodder for a story, I also wanted research. In addition to the references that appear in the text, there are numerous additional articles from equally reputable sources that support the premise that e-smog has a dangerous impact on health and well-being. Likewise there are reputable sources that dispute these claims.

What does it mean—the contradiction in research? It means that the verdict is still out. It means that e-smog cannot be waved off as a figment of our imaginations, as many modern day maladies are. And it means that *if* e-smog poses a health risk to society, it might well be in the interest of large corporations with their bottom lines at stake to lobby, dismiss, cover up....

BIG thanks to Edna Backhaus, Martyn Cox, Beth DeSchryver, and Peter Ptschelinzew for their thorough reviews, their insightful comments and their enthusiastic participation in idea bouncing – at all times of the day and night. Special thanks to Hermann Maurer for the opportunity to participate in the *Xperts* cooperative writing project, an exciting, international endeavor.

Ann Backhaus  
March 2005



## Editor's Preface to "Xperts: e-Smog"

This is one of the novels in the XPERTS Collection, a collection of novels I am coordinating. Some of them I write myself, but others, like this one are written by others. This one is written by a very good friend of mine now living on Borneo, Ann Backhaus. Like all books in the series this one also follows an outline agreed upon between the author and me, thus making sure that the books fit into a general 'master plan'. I am reading and editing each of the books as they progress.

Each novel is completely self-contained, yet there is some coherence due to a set of persons that appear in each of the novels at some stage, usually playing a pivotal role.

The books in the collection are an unusual mixture of adventure, human emotions, supernatural powers ('parabilities'), science fiction with glimpses into the future, and this interwoven with often detailed descriptions of interesting places from all over this world, be it USA, Canada, the Arctic, Europe, Brazil, Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, India, Bali, La Reunion, Borneo... you name it!

Some of the books have been written originally in English, others in German, but they are generally available in at least those two languages.

I want to cordially thank my friends for their continuing support, the Austrian publisher Freya and the US Publisher Booklocker for excellent cooperation, and my US friend and agent Dr. Andrew Burt for his endless patience.

Send me some feedback, positive or negative, to [hmaurer@iicm.edu](mailto:hmaurer@iicm.edu), will you!

Enjoy the book!

Hermann Maurer,  
Editor of the XPERTS Collection  
Graz / Austria, March 2005



# 1. Enigmas

*June 16, 2003*

*Colorado Springs, Colorado, U.S.A.*

Mandi checks her watch again, then flips open her e-Helper<sup>1</sup>, a combination mobile phone, computer and internet browser. She redials Ramu's number but again gets transferred to his voicemail. Ramu's flight arrived on time, so where is he?

"Mandi, we need a plan B—and fast."

Mandi looks at the man standing near her and momentarily does not recognize him as her research assistant. Dressed for the 'live' performance planned for the opening ceremony, he wears black, and a jagged red thunderbolt runs the length of his body. Mandi has a gut feel that they will need more than a plan B, but she simply nods her head and walks onto a makeshift 'stage', a few planks raised just inches above the dirt.

Instead of standing behind a podium, Mandi approaches the front of the stage.

"I know we're running about fifteen minutes late," says Mandi to the more than 150 researchers gathered from around the world, "but I have not yet heard from Dr. Ramu Visra. Rest assured, his airplane has landed safely. He must be caught in traffic...I'm sure that he will walk through those doors in a matter of minutes..." Mandi's voice trails off. She looks into the faces of the crowd and recognizes colleagues she has worked with closely for years. Their faces show a shared concern.

"So," she says feigning enthusiasm, hoping absurdly that a renewed vigor could literally make Ramu materialize in their midst, "in the interim, let me tell you a little about Dr. Ramu Visra—whom many of you know only by his nickname, *e-man*, which," laughs Mandi, "does *not* stand for elusive man, as many believe—although I do agree that Dr. Visra is rather mysterious. Rather, *e-man* stands for electromagnetic man. Dr. Ramu Visra is the world's *leading* researcher on electromagnetic smog or e-smog.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Xperts: The Telekinetic*.

“The public came to know Dr. Visra last month through his bold assertions that all electrical gadgets cause electromagnetic pollution, which impact not only electrosensitives<sup>2</sup> but *all* humans in any number of destructive ways.”

“Many here heard of Dr. Visra through his published research in last month’s prestigious *International Medical Association’s* journal. In that abbreviated article, Dr. Visra gave summary data that led him to make his assertions. It is that data that Dr. Visra will share—in detail—with us during this conference.”

“Those of us who have communicated directly with Dr. Visra have quickly earned a deep respect for his commitment to the field. We’re *all* beginning to feel the funding squeeze by the world’s largest corporations, whose very livelihood we threaten with our research. Where there once was money for research, there is no more. Where there once was money for conferences such as these, there is no more. As you noticed from our last minute change of venue, those funding cuts have had an impact!”

Pockets of laughter interrupt Mandi. Their conference, which has been an annual, five-star, catered event—funded by the corporations—moved quickly down market after the release of Dr. Visra’s public statement and the conference committee’s decision to refocus their conference around Dr. Visra’s controversial data. The corporate sponsors of the event pulled their funding.

“So—even though we’ve had to bring our own linens and make our own beds—this outdoor conference venue isn’t too bad, is it? And the weather has been great!”

Mandi is interrupted again, and this time to clapping. Even though the conference is kicking off late, the attendees’ spirits are high. What many have suspected for years—namely the potentially lethal effects of e-smog—Dr. Visra now appears to have proven with extensive and exhaustive trials, which he literally keeps under lock and key.

Mandi signals to her research assistant to telephone again. She then continues, “So who is this elusive personality who’s taken the reins in electromagnetic research? You’ve all certainly heard the media’s version, which I’ll remind you is funded by the same large corporations whose products Dr. Visra’s data targets. As we speak,

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<sup>2</sup> Electrosensitives are individuals with particular sensitivity to electromagnetic radiation or fields.

these corporations are conducting a smear campaign against not only Dr. Visra's credibility but also our field. It is a campaign so insidious and self-serving as to be criminal. We should all be outraged!"

A third time Mandi is interrupted with applause and shouts.

"Dr. Ramu Visra is a researcher like the rest of us, and he doesn't lack vision and insight. When traditional research methods failed to produce statistically significant data, Dr. Visra didn't simply record the data and look for the next research grant, which—I must confess—many of us did, blinded by corporate biases and funds. Instead, he rethought his approach. He took his research out of a clean laboratory setting and went into the field. This is where our critics have run rampant. Dr. Visra refused to control for 'confounding variables,' such as environmental pollutants. He maintains, and I agree as do most of us here, that those 'confounding variables' are the variables of real life! We are constantly bombarded by electromagnetic waves and other pollutants in our environments!"

Mandi's arm movements get larger and more certain. She hasn't noticed that her research assistant is trying to get her attention. After a few seconds, he walks toward Mandi and hands her an e-Helper. He then walks away, sits down and puts his head in his hands. Mandi puts the e-Helper to her ear and listens. The crowd is left suspended mid sentence, with only the sound of wind blowing leaves across the floor of their outdoor venue.

Only those individuals sitting in the front hear the small catch in Mandi's throat before she turns momentarily away from the crowd. She looks outside at the trees, then turns around and speaks haltingly, "There has been a terrible accident...On the way from the airport...Ramu is dead. His girlfriend, Stephanie McGrath, is in critical condition. I...I...don't know what to say..."

Mandi does not have to say anything. Strangers voice their disbelief to each other and a few individuals shout questions. They collectively mourn a man whom most have never met but who held the knowledge and data to potentially change the course of many, many lives.

The true horror of the situation will not come until later, with the discovery that at approximately the same time as Dr. Ramu Visra's 'accident', his small Malaysian university laboratory is being ransacked. Files are taken and a virus is eating its way through the electronic data stored on the laboratory PCs as well as the larger central server. A localized electrical fire chars the university's

backup files, making them irretrievable. Dr. Visra's university colleagues happen to be off campus for the day, attending a professional development workshop thanks to money provided by an anonymous donor.

Dr. Ramu Visra and his data are gone.

*June 16, 2003*

*Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia*

The young girl jumps off the school bus and runs up both hills on the way back home, until she bursts, by now quite out of breath, into her brother's bedroom.

"Paul, is it true? Huh, is it true?" she yells as she heaves her backpack from her tiny shoulders and dodges the small kitchen table. Paul is having one of his 'bad days' and has been in bed all day.

"Are you going to be part of the D&D3G?"<sup>3</sup> yells the girl as she leaps onto her brother's bed.

"Evette get off me!" laughs Paul.

Evette ignores her brother and reaches over him to throw open the drapes, letting the sun pour into the dim, cramped room. Evette sees a shaft of sunlight fall across Paul's thin arm.

"Come on 'fess up, or else," she says, beaming. She raises her hands slowly in front of her face, poised to tickle.

Before Paul can answer, Evette falls forward and they tumble laughing and shouting. Evette's little arms and fingers dig into Paul's ribs until he calls, "Uncle! Uncle! OK, stop! I'll tell you! Stop!"

Evette springs off the bed and falls into the beanbag chair next to Paul's bed. She rests her feet on Paul's mattress, rocking her feet so they tap against her brother's feet.

"Does Mum know?" she asks suddenly serious.

Paul looks at Evette quickly. "Mum can't know. She wouldn't let me join. Please, you can't tell her."

Evette is silent. Ever since she heard today that her brother was joining the computer club, she has had mixed emotions. She is happy for her brother. He has often talked to her about wanting to be

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<sup>3</sup> D&D3G is an abbreviation of Dungeons and Dragons—Third Generation.

‘normal’—wanting to be able to run and play and own gadgets, like the other teenagers he knows.

But Evette knows that her brother is not ‘normal’ and she has begun to wonder if he ever will be. Their Mum tells them often that Paul is ‘special’ and ‘different’, but they both know what she is really saying is that Paul is sick. They do not know what he has and their Mum won’t tell them, but they know that he is very ill.

“You’re going to get sick...If you spend that much time on the computer, you’re going to get sick, really sick, like you are now,” says Evette looking directly at her brother.

“I know,” responds Paul in a hushed voice.

They listen as a raven caws loudly from outside Paul’s window. A few branches scrape against the corrugated tin roof, sounding like chalk against a chalkboard.

“So tell me about it. What’s it like?” asks Evette, forcing her voice to be enthusiastic. She knows that she should tell their Mum everything, for the sake of Paul’s health.

“It’s so cool,” Paul blurts out quickly. “Scott’s got a machine that we used to scan me, including my face, and the computer uses it to generate an electronic version of me! I just saw it last night. It looks just like me ten years from now. You should see the big muscles I have and how fast I can run! I get the name for my new online character at the initiation next week...” He pauses, then asks, “Are you going to tell her?”

Evette does not answer. She cannot look at her brother.

“Evette, it’s the only way I can be... well, free,” pleads Paul in a soft voice. “My computer character—*me*—can run and jump and swim, and never get tired. I can go outside. I never have headaches or bad days or anything. I’m finally normal. Please don’t tell her. If you tell her, she’ll pull me out of school again. All my friends are at school.”

When Evette looks up she sees her brother picking at a loose thread on the bedcover. She knows what he is saying is true. This might be his only chance to be normal. “I won’t tell,” mutters Evette. She clears her throat and looks at her brother, “I won’t tell Mum.” Paul smiles and then shuts his eyes.

She goes into the bathroom and pulls open the drawer. She pushes the vials and pillboxes around until she sees the pillbox with the blue, childproof cap. She pours a glass of water and goes into Paul’s room.

“Here,” she hands him the water and pills.

Paul smiles weakly. "Guess I overdid it."

"Vice Squad or The Full Monty?" asks Evette. Ever since Paul disobeyed their Mum's orders and got himself an E-helper, she and Paul have watched every movie they can get their hands on. Two of Paul's favorites are 'Vice Squad' and 'The Full Monty'. To keep their Mum out of the loop, they describe Paul's symptoms as either the 'vice squad'—headaches with a vice-like grip—or the 'full monty'—headaches plus a range of other symptoms from exhaustion to hyperactivity.

As Evette sits with her brother, she sees the corner of a magazine sticking out from underneath his bed. She quietly reaches forward and slides it out. She flips to the dog-eared page and finds one of their Mum's articles, which she keeps hidden behind the shoeboxes in her closet and which Paul ferrets out when their Mum is at work. Evette reads the sections that their Mum has highlighted and tries to decipher their Mum's notes jotted along the page's sides.

Years later, when Evette understands the meaning and ramifications of those articles, it is too late. The wealth of phone numbers, notes, and articles that Evette's Mum squirreled away in her closet, many of which Evette cannot later find online or in print, are gone. They have been burned.

*November 25, 2012*  
*Kalimantan, Indonesia*

Elly squats on her haunches and digs her toes into the soft black ground next to the river. She shades her face with her hand, squints her chocolate eyes and looks upstream. She softly puts a hand on the shoulder of Eko, the small boy next to her.

Eko does not notice Elly's touch. He is absorbed in his project—getting a leech to climb onto the reed he holds before it. He has watched the leech for almost half an hour. It has left a beautiful zigzag trail in the mud. He squats motionless, watching the leech patiently as it approaches his waiting reed.

Eko's concentration is amazing. He does not see or hear anything around him. Just a few minutes ago, a big brown vulture-like bird swooped downward, splashing muddy water onto the river's banks. Red dragonflies hover near them—one even landed in Eko's hair,

flying away only when Elly put her hand on his shoulder. Eko sees nothing but the leech and his reed.

Elly has mixed feelings about Eko's concentration. Since they left their home a month ago, Eko's concentration has gotten better every day. He can now 'focus' for almost an hour. However, is this level and duration of concentration good? When he is focused, Eko sees, hears and smells nothing around him except for what has his attention. The trees—even the sun and the moon—could crash in around him, and he would not notice. Such singular focus makes him easy prey in a land of many surprises.

Elly leans forward so she can see Eko's face. Although mostly gone, she can still see the child's 'worry lines'. Just three weeks ago the small boy's forehead showed deep trenches befitting an old man of many sorrows. As she looks at him, she sees that the deep furrows are gone.

Eko's face is motionless, but his eyes are alert. He looks intently at the ground and watches the progress of the leech. Gone are his nervous darting glances. His anxious twitch has also disappeared.

Elly cocks her head to the right and listens intently. In the distance she hears the sound of an approaching engine. She gently nudges Eko as she stands up. She remains motionless for a moment, then nudges him again, more firmly.

Eko slowly gets up and looks into Elly's face. She feels a pang of pain in her gut and wants to clasp him to her. Instead, she takes his shoulders gently and nods twice, then turns his small body toward the wall of green vines. He runs toward the jungle and ducks through the vines. Elly knows that he stands in a cool dark spot, waiting for her.

Elly looks around her to ensure that they can disappear into the jungle without leaving much evidence. Others use this path to the river's edge, and she does not want to make it obvious that she and Eko are here. Eko has left little sign of his visit to the river's edge. He has broken no tall reeds and has flattened only a very small area where he squatted. Elly bends down to fluff the small weeds then stands up quickly. The boat engine has cut out.

From the corner of her eye Elly sees movement. Eko's brown face peers out from behind a large purple flower. Elly nods once and Eko's face disappears. She cannot help but smile. After spending so much time together, they can talk without words.

Elly looks upstream into the silence. Two years ago her sister died. Sometimes she hears her sister's screams in her head during the twilight hours, when spirits fill the air. And there was another death, only one year ago, which is a death she remembers almost nightly in her dreams. In her dreams she sees a healthy laughing baby tied in a sarong across her back.

The wet season in the jungle is when the sickness takes the spirits of those around her. With each wet season comes a great fear in Elly's body. She has seen the sickness take small children and one woman. The sickness starts with vomiting and pains. Sometimes her sister would vomit so severely that she was afraid that her spirit would be cast out. After the vomiting come the loud drums that play in the heads of the sick. The drums are the sign of death.

Much has happened since the deaths. Elly and Eko now live outside the village. She no longer lives in a house with tiled floors. Her floors are dirt. Her home is no longer made of fine local timber; instead she weaves her home from the leaves of the jungle. She no longer sleeps with her husband beside her. He blames her for many things, including the deaths. But she does not listen to him. She knows that the air around the jungle huts where her husband works cause the deaths.

Elly's husband works in the jungle where there are many computers and many orangutans. When they first arrived in the jungle village from their own city, many boat rides away, he took her to the jungle huts and showed her many things. She cannot forget these things.

Although she knows she should not, Elly goes often to the jungle facility and sneaks in. She looks around. She remembers the first time that she went to the huts with her husband. There were fewer huts and fewer computers. Now there are many huts, and they are filled with new computers, new machines, and new orangutans. Many times there are trucks filled with boxes that drive from the huts to the river. Eko likes to watch the trucks. It is no use trying to keep him away from the trucks and the jungle huts where the sickness is because he is drawn there like a moth to a lantern.

Around the huts the air is thick. Her husband could never feel the air, but she and those who have died can feel the air. There is fire in the air around the huts. Sometimes that air spreads into the jungle, as far as their woven house. When the air of her woven house gets too

thick with fire air, she and Eko go away for at least one full moon cycle.

After they arrived in the jungle village, Elly's husband stopped listening to her. His new job gave him a confidence that filled his heart. He no longer had space in his heart for her native Dayak<sup>4</sup> knowledge. He laughed at her when she spoke about the electricity in the air around the jungle huts and he berated her when she blamed the village deaths on that same air, so she stopped talking about it. He said that she should not curse their lives. Although he said she spoke Dayak nonsense, she could see he feared her curses.

Elly no longer goes into the village unless everyone is sleeping. Sometimes she must go to find Eko. He likes to watch the village people, but they fear him; they think he brings the sickness. After she delayed the death of a child, they think she carries the power of her ancestors.

Elly does not know if she carries the power of her ancestors, but she does feel like she bears the spirits of the many orangutans that have died at the jungle compound. Even after her husband said that she could no longer go to the jungle huts to see the orangutans, she went there quietly. She watched from behind large leaves, scared to approach the men with guns sitting outside the huts. When the men went away for mid-day prayer on Fridays, Elly used to visit the helpless baby orangutans in their small cages.

When the orangutans got sick, they were taken out of their small cages and put into a large cage set apart from the huts. Sometimes Elly would sneak into the outside cage to sit with the sick orangutans. The small orangutans often crawled into her arms to die.

As Elly remembers, she feels the pain in her gut worsening. She shakes her head. She looks upstream again and cocks her head, listening for the sound of the engine. Although she cannot hear it, she decides they must continue their journey. She knows that the Giant Trees grow not far from here. There are always plenty of orangutans nearby, and giant fruits from the giant trees.

As Elly and Eko approach the Giant Trees, they hear the piercing screams of a mother and baby orangutan. After the initial shock, Elly sprints through the jungle toward the screams, followed closely by

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<sup>4</sup> Dayak is a term used to describe a group of Indonesian indigenous people. The particular group referred to here is located in Central Kalimantan.

Eko. They reach the Giant Trees and frantically search for clues as to what happened.

Not far beyond the Giant Trees, a man kicks a mother orangutan in the ribs and she topples over. The poison from the dart is spreading through her body, and she can no longer protect her baby. He throws the baby into a small cage suspended from bamboo poles. Two men hoist the poles onto their shoulders and continue their trek. It is the second orangutan they have caught today. They walk toward the small cluster of thatch-roofed huts on the boundary of the mining lease. The man looks again at the two young, healthy orangutans. It has been a good day.

## 2. Negotiator or Miracle Worker

*The room is silent except for the occasional sound of rustling paper. Twelve men examine the proposal before them. The high gloss of the table reflects their coffee cups and the seriousness in their faces. Although the air is chilly inside the room, it feels close. They have been in the room—listening, debating and reading—for over three hours. The thermometer outside the Darwin Council House reads 38° Celsius, and they have not yet reached the hottest part of the day.*

*The proposal from the Northern Territory State Government dangling before them is enticing, despite its exorbitant price tag. They are offering a large tract of remote, uninhabited land as well as a plentiful supply of research subjects: kangaroos. If kangaroos do not meet their particular research criteria, the business can import whatever species of animal they require, exempt from the strict State and Federal quarantine laws.*

*The State Government representative ensures them that a facility fitting their needs can be built either above or under ground. The land has a large escarpment, which they are welcome to exploit for tunneling. Lastly, the Federal Government has had an impeccable record of protecting its extensive northern coastline from terrorist and refugee intrusion for the past decade. They can provide similarly effective surveillance for The Cooperative's proposed business. One of the men, wearing unusual green wire glasses, cuts off the questioning of his colleagues. He stands with his back to his colleagues and shakes the representative's hand. They have a deal. The Government will receive prompt payment, as discussed, from The Cooperative.*

*November 25, 2013*

*Jabiru, Northern Territory, Australia*

Mandi feels like a ping-pong ball. She spent the morning in the intense tropical sun talking with the protesters who chained themselves to the Rangler Uranium Mine entrance. She then raced off to a buffet lunch at the Crocodile Hotel in Jabiru, where she met with the regional mine manager.

"They're young and idealistic," explains Mandi. "I'd much rather talk with uni students like these, than those who don't believe in anything—or follow anything—except for maybe the next party. You know the kind."

Although Tom Sutton, the mine manager, does not look up from his plate, Mandi knows that he is listening to her. She has worked with Tom on two other negotiations and she likes his style. Tom is 'rough around the edges' but he knows his business, and despite his gruff exterior, he is open to ideas. That is the only reason she agreed to his last-minute request.

Professor Dr. Amanda Webber, known to her university students and colleagues as Mandi, planned to spend this weekend in her flat in Fremantle, Western Australia, marking her third-year students' flora research projects. Instead, she finds herself wearing her 'other' hat, as a mediation consultant. Mandi has mediation finesse. She gets pleasure from seeing sworn enemies shake hands. Besides, mediation rates are much better than lecturing! These projects pay for some of her university research projects and for her travel during semester breaks.

After lecturing in her Friday morning class, Mandi rushed from the university to her flat to throw a few things into her backpack. On her way to the airport, she read the papers that Tom had faxed her. The papers outlined the situation with protesters and the current tense situation at the mine. The protest started seven days ago and since then the mine's production has been low, down around 60% of capacity. Mandi planned her negotiation strategy during the four-hour charter flight from Perth, Western Australia to Jabiru in the Northern Territory.

Mandi looks around the Crocodile Hotel restaurant at the luncheon buffet that stretches from one side of the room to the other. She tries not to think of the pile of university papers sitting

unmarked in her hotel room. She spears a juicy piece of papaya with her fork.

"Mandi," starts Tom, "remember that project we worked on in Newman a few years ago? If I were a religious man, I'd say you worked a miracle there."

Mandi looks at Tom, who pops another squared piece of satay crocodile into his mouth. He continues, "We don't need a miracle here, but a revelation would be nice."

Mandi knows exactly which project Tom is referring to. It is called the Newman Project, but she remembers it as the blooming of her 'first love'. This was the first time that Mandi spent any length of time in 'real' Australian bush, and she fell in love with it. Sure, prior to the Newman Project she had walked the entire Bibb Track<sup>5</sup> and her colleagues told her that *that* was a 'real bush experience', but that was different. On the Bibb Track there are campsites with three-sided shelters, water tanks and pit toilets. There are well-marked trails and there are towns—such as Dwellingup, Balingup, Pemberton and Denmark—close to the track. But in the Pilbara, the remote region in which Newman is located, there are many places without trails, shelter or water. The landscape can be desert-like, harsh and unforgiving. This is where Mandi learned her bush skills and learned to love remoteness and solitude.

The Newman Project was Mandi's first consulting job as a solo negotiator and it fell into her lap by sheer accident. Her mentor and the chair of the department in which she now works, Dr. Herb Folsum, was requested for the project, but he was going out of town with his family on a long-anticipated holiday. Mandi felt unsure about the job, but Herb insisted she take it. He believed she could pull it off without a hitch, so she trusted his judgment.

Like Herb's students, Mandi's students get a direct benefit from her consultancy projects. Mandi channels much of the money she receives from consulting back into the university department where they both work. As a graduate student of Herb's, Mandi knows that extra money for research, especially 'fringe' research, is hard to

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<sup>5</sup> The Bibb Track is a nickname for the Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia, which is a walking trail that winds its way south from Kalamunda, near Perth, to Walpole and along the coast to Albany. The total track is 964 kilometers, but hikers can choose to walk smaller sections of it in 2-3 day treks.

obtain. Herb and Mandi's consultancy money funds many such projects.

Mandi thinks back to her first 'serious' discussion with Herb. He spoke of her special skills: her extraordinary insight and perception. He said that she had an unusual ability to cut a fine path through a quagmire of words. Shortly after that discussion, Herb asked Mandi to be his protégé, and she worked with him throughout her graduate studies. His expectations and standards were high, which meant a huge workload during Mandi's PhD years, but she never gave in to the pressure.

Although Herb told her that she was exceptional, Mandi disagreed. She simply had a passion for the environment and for technology. She spent hours with Herb discussing research findings and hypothetical negotiation case studies. Before long, she was accompanying Herb on several small local negotiations involving logging companies in the southwest of Western Australia.

Tom excuses himself as he gets up from the table for another helping of crocodile satays, kangaroo patties and emu steak. Mandi smiles and continues thinking.

Mandi ended up on the Newman Project for two reasons: Herb's planned vacation and the nature of the project. From the information that Mandi received, she and Herb agreed that the negotiations would be straightforward. The project profile was similar to the many case studies that they had already discussed at length. A mining company was experiencing internal conflict and tension. Mandi would start with a series of workshops and finish with a team building exercise. If necessary, they could then enter into mediation.

No one—not even Herb, who was an internationally recognized environmental and mediation specialist—anticipated what truly awaited Mandi. No one could have predicted the flash flood and the deep-seated hatred and family power struggles.

Tom returns to the table with a plate piled high with a second helping of food. "Remember *The Rabbit Proof Fence*<sup>6</sup>... those little

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<sup>6</sup> Set in 1931, *The Rabbit Proof Fence* tells the story of three Aboriginal girls taken from their families to be trained as domestic staff. They escape and two of the girls make the trek across the Australian Outback to return to their families. Another movie featuring the Pilbara is *Japanese Story*. In *Japanese Story* an Australian geologist (Sandy) and a

girls who found their way home?" He nods subtly toward the window beside them.

Mandi sees what Tom is indicating. Crossing the parking lot outside the window are two small Aboriginal girls. They walk barefoot across the pavement, the smaller of the two slightly behind the taller. Their knotted hair sticks defiantly in all directions and their faded clothes hang loosely on their skinny bodies. The taller one turns her head and her eyes meet Mandi's eyes. Memories of when Mandi was in Newman following the thin Aboriginal children in the desert come flooding back to her. She remembers their dark black eyes and their direct gaze, which seemed to look past her face and into a quiet space inside. Their eyes seemed so comforting and wise, but the children were so young.

When Mandi looks back at Tom, she sees him watching her. Mandi quickly switches gears—back to Rangler and the situation at hand.

"I'm confident I can talk them through your points Tom," says Mandi. "But you'll need to compromise on your environmental development approach. I'd suggest you hire at least one of the protesters to work with your group. I know that Evette—who is coordinating this effort—has appropriate experience. She did her Honors Thesis on alternative rehabilitation approaches. She's from Nimbin, and she..."

Tom cuts Mandi off, annoyed. "Bloody Nimbin<sup>7</sup> ferrals! I thought they were out saving the rainforests in Queensland. What are they doing over here?"

Mandi calmly continues, "Evette has some good ideas. So I'll tell her that you'll negotiate again tonight after work?"

Tom rolls his eyes, but agrees.

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Japanese businessman (Hiromitsu) go into the Australian Outback. This touching story weaves their interaction into the uncertainty and harshness of the Outback.

<sup>7</sup> Nimbin was a dairy town in New South Wales until The Aquarius Festival of 1973 transformed it. Referred to as the 'back to the land counterculture', Nimbin is known for its alternative communes and individuals enthusiastic about permaculture, composting toilets and gray water systems. Unfortunately it is also becoming known for increasing drug use.

"Great," says Mandi. "I'll head out there with the good news and get them out of the sun before another one goes down with heat stroke. We'll work it like last night—if that's OK with you. How about meeting at 6:15 in my room so we can finish working through some of the sticking points. I'll book the same conference room as last night and ask the hotel to bring in some light snacks and refreshments."

"OK Mandi. Talking about miracles, can you ask them to shower before they come this time?" asks Tom sarcastically.

On her way out of the restaurant, Mandi stops off at the cashier to pick up her order: two bags of fruit, cheese and bread, and several jugs of ice cold water. It is always better to negotiate with protesters who have full stomachs.

As soon as Mandi opens the restaurant door, a wall of humidity and heat slams into her. "Gunumeleng," mutters Mandi under her breath.

The build-up to the wet (known locally as the Gunumeleng) starts in October. In November the thunderstorms hit, along with near-plague numbers of mosquitoes. That first breath outside during this time of year, especially after being in air conditioning, is always the hardest. Mandi feels her skin tingle as if her hair were standing on end. She looks up into the gray, overcast sky and back at the Crocodile Hotel, aptly named for its crocodile shape.

'This place has changed since last time I was here,' thinks Mandi. 'Look at those huge antennas. No wonder the TV reception was so good last night.'

Mandi notices the huge eucalyptus trees partially shading the parking lot. 'I haven't seen eucalypts that tall...They must be new too,' she thinks offhandedly. She is glad they are here as they provide much needed shade for her four-wheel drive ute<sup>8</sup>. As she pulls out, the two Aboriginal children approach her truck. Mandi rolls down the window.

"You goin' da mine?" the taller of the two asks.

"Yes, you need a ride?" asks Mandi.

Instead of answering, the two jump up onto the back flatbed of the ute. Mandi motions for them to come inside where it's cooler, but they just shake their heads and lean against the back window.

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<sup>8</sup> A ute is an Australian colloquial abbreviation for utility or small truck.

The afternoon's discussions with the protesters—day four of negotiations—go smoothly. Several of the protesters will meet tonight at the Crocodile Hotel to finalize the details. Hopeful that an agreement is in sight, Evette and the others unchain themselves from the entrance to the mine and the larger pieces of mining equipment. Full production at Rangler resumes quickly. Within minutes, large haul trucks and front-end loaders disappear, getting into position before the afternoon downpour hits.

Mandi gets back into her ute and sits behind the wheel. She knows that she should go directly back to the hotel to mark papers, but her mind races. Dozens of thoughts jockey for attention.

'I don't know what is going on, but I can't seem to hold a single line of thought very long ...' Mandi reprimands herself. 'During lunch my mind was everywhere—Herb, Newman...everywhere but where it should have been. I should have been focused on Tom and this project.'

Mandi's body reflects her state of mind—skittish. When Evette knocks at the passenger door of the ute, Mandi jumps, hitting her right knee against the steering wheel.

"Sorry," says Evette as she opens the ute door. "I didn't mean to startle you. I just wanted to thank you. We were here for a week before you got here and nothing was happening. I figure they were at 65-70% of their daily production—so they were hurting...We're hurting too. As you know we've lost a few protesters to heat stroke. One is still in hospital in Darwin...Hey, I'd like to get back to Jabiru. Do you mind if I catch a lift with you? The others can finish up here."

Mandi nods her head, but clarifies, "I was going to go right back to the hotel to mark some papers, but I've changed my mind. I need to clear my head so I'm going to take a detour to Ubirr to have a look at the rock art. I haven't seen it for years, and I have some favorite spots. If you don't mind the detour you're welcome to join me."

"Sure! I could do with a break," says Evette as she climbs up into the ute. She waves good-bye to the others.

"I'll have to warn you, we've got a couple of small river crossings...They shouldn't be a problem. They haven't had too much rain the last couple of days, so we should be able to get through OK with the ute. Have you been to Ubirr to see the rock art?" asks Mandi.

"No, but I've heard a lot about it. My roommate in Nimbin, Sara, has studied Australian art, including Aboriginal art, for years. I've seen her photos and have gone to some of her presentations in Lismore and the Gold Coast. My favorites are the X-ray-style art. There's one wallaby that I really like that's here in Kakadu—I'm not positive, but I think it's at Ubirr. It'd be neat to see it in person. And you?"

"I've got a soft spot for the Rainbow Serpent at Ubirr. Well, Rainbow Serpents anywhere really!" says Mandi. "Did you know that in this part of Australia the Rainbow Serpent is a woman? She's called Kurangali. Last time I was here a few years ago a local group of Aborigines told me not to upset Kurangali with my research because she is known to eat people. If she's anything like the local crocodiles, I promised them I'd be very careful! The rock painting that I'm going to look at is one that Kurangali supposedly painted of herself. It's not as good as one I found further up north in Arnhem Land, but Arnhem Land is inaccessible except for small chartered flights, and this is so accessible—well, during the dry anyway. We'll see how we go today."

Mandi is pleased to find that the creek crossings are still easily passable. The water comes up to just above the bottom of the doors. Evette quickly pulls everything up off the floor of the ute. The water seeps in under the doors slowly.

"A colleague of mine was up here one year during the middle of the wet and his ute died in one of these creek crossings. I'm not sure why—the water was deep, but they had a snorkel on the ute. Anyway, they radioed for help and were told that under no circumstances should they get out of the car, or they'd be crocodile food. While they sat and waited for help they saw more than one set of croc eyes watching them!"

Evette looks out of the front window quietly. Mandi changes the topic. "So Evette, what got you started in protesting?"

Evette blushes. "Actually, this is my first protest per se. I've been a behind-the-scenes organizer for years, but I've never been 'in the trenches' as we say. I've been told I'm 'passionate', so I've been recruited for the actual protests for a few years, but I've always stuck with the organizing, which leaves me time for my permaculture work and my research. I only agreed to lead this one because the guy who was supposed to lead it got injured at a protest two weeks ago. Since

I organized this project, I knew all the details, and I was the one asked to fill in."

"Well, what do you think of the front-line protesting business then?" asks Mandi.

"To be honest, I prefer the organizing," Evette replies. "These days I've been spending a lot of time researching."

"What research do you do?"

Evette is quiet for a moment and then says, "Well, in brief I'm interested in the impact of pollution—alternative types of pollution—on the environment and on humans."

"Alternative types of pollution?" asks Mandi.

"Electromagnetic smog, or e-smog," says Evette. "I know that you do—or did—research in this area because I've come across some of your published papers."

Mandi smiles at Evette, then asks, "And what got you interested in this field—a love of nature?"

"No." answers Evette. "A love for my brother."

Mandi glances over at Evette, who looks straight ahead. Mandi can see from Evette's set jaw that she is not ready to speak further. They ride in silence for several minutes.

"People think I'm crazy, but I don't care," Evette suddenly blurts out. "I *know* that my brother died from an overdose of drugs, but he didn't commit suicide. He didn't leave a note or anything. He was at a high point in his life—why would he commit suicide?"

Again they ride in silence, until Evette continues in a controlled voice, "When we were growing up, he was always different. He didn't run around like I did and like the other kids did. We used to sit and play board games...He was really sensitive—I don't mean sensitive emotionally, although he was that too, but sensitive physically to everything—to pesticides, household cleaning liquids and other things. He was sensitive to, well, just *things*—things around us that we take for granted, like computers and microwaves, TVs, clothes dryers, dishwashers, e-Helpers...Mum tried to protect him, but he just didn't listen..."

"Sorry," apologizes Evette. "That's probably more than you want to know. I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I guess it's just that sitting out all day for several days in a row, chained to a fence, really gave me a lot of time to think."

Mandi looks at Evette and is about to speak when she sees something in the road. She swerves onto the shoulder of the road to

prevent the ute from hitting it. Coming around the corner she almost did not see the kangaroo carcass in the middle of her lane. Obviously someone before her did not see it either because they hit it head on. Mandi stops the ute and gets out.

"Can you help me pull this poor bugger onto the shoulder of the road before someone hits it again and has an accident," calls Mandi before she slams the door.

As they drag the large kangaroo carcass onto the shoulder, they notice movement in the kangaroo's pouch. Mandi reaches in and just as quickly pulls out her hand. She reaches in again, more carefully, and pulls out a joey. Its eyes are wide open and it kicks violently, but Mandi has a firm grip. The joey coughs and hisses in fright. Covering the joey with the lower part of her t-shirt, Mandi quickly pulls her t-shirt over her head and wraps the young kangaroo snugly inside.

"Here, you cuddle her and we'll see if anyone around here will take her in. I'll grab another t-shirt from my pack," says Mandi, handing the little bundle to Evette.

Evette holds the joey snugly, trying to stop its tangle of long legs from getting hurt. Not knowing when the mother kangaroo was killed, they decide to skip the trip to Ubirr and try to find the joey some milk.

"This is the tricky part," says Mandi. "Joeys are lactose intolerant, so we have to find some powdered joey milk, or the joey will have to do with water until someone can get into Darwin."

When they reach the Jabiru campground, where Evette is staying with the other protesters, Evette and Mandi head over to the CALM<sup>9</sup> volunteers' tent with their bundle.

"You're in luck," says Joe, one of the CALM volunteers. "We don't have any joey milk, but we're heading into Darwin tomorrow to pick up our car. We're usually not here this far into the wet, but we've been having vehicle problems and we're waiting on a part. We can take the joey into Darwin with us and see if someone knows of any carers there. In the meantime, we've got an eyedropper and we'll make sure to get some water into this little fella. Do you know how long he was out on the road?"

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<sup>9</sup> Conservation and Land Management (CALM) volunteers are found at campgrounds all over Australia. These volunteers greet campground guests, talk about the area and do general campground maintenance.

"Gauging from the state of the mother, I'd say the better part of today," responds Mandi.

Mandi turns to Evette. "I'll see you tonight at 7:00 sharp. We might not get a chance to talk 'research' then—and I'm very interested in your work—so let me get your details now..."

Mandi pulls out her e-Helper and enters Evette's contact details.

Mandi puts her hand on Evette's arm and says, "I'm sorry about your brother."

As Mandi turns to go, she calls out over her shoulder, "Oh, I almost forgot—do you need a change of clothes for tonight's meeting?"

Evette looks down at her muddy, sweaty clothes and laughs, "No, I've got a fresh change of clothes. These are part of our strategy."

When Mandi reaches the hotel, she calculates that she has enough time to mark two, possibly three, student papers before tonight's meeting. She plans to buy herself a cappuccino and a couple of truffles from the hotel to keep her awake, but she finds that the cappuccino machine is broken and they are out of truffles. She settles for a strong black coffee and a package of out-of-date chocolate cookies from the local two-aisle store. As she walks back toward the hotel, she hears someone calling her name.

"Yes?" says Mandi turning around.

An Aboriginal man dressed neatly in trousers and an olive colored polo shirt extends his hand to Mandi. "I'm Graham Hardley. You were on the interview panel last week when I applied for the part-time lecturing position in Perth. I just flew back from the interviews this morning."

Mandi recognizes Graham and extends her hand to meet his. "Hi Graham. Yes, I remember you. How did the interviews go? I flew out when you were short-listed and going to go through a second round of interviews."

Graham's smile remains, but just barely. "I don't know, I should hear in the next day or two."

Mandi looks down at her cookies and suggests they get another coffee or cold soda and share the cookies. She points to one of the benches under the towering eucalypt trees.

Graham and Mandi chat politely for a short time. Mandi asks Graham a few questions about the Northern Territory, which is

Graham's home country.<sup>10</sup> They talk about the Rainbow Serpent, the different seasons, and about how Graham feels about living in Perth so far from Jabiru.

"I'm not asking as an interviewer, Graham," says Mandi. "I'm asking because I'm curious about what it would be like for you."

Graham looks into the distance. "I've lived in places outside of Jabiru, so I'm not scared to go to Perth. Many of us speak about moving away now because there's talk of the Government selling off a large part of our home country."

"What? But, it's yours. They can't just..." says Mandi offended. She cuts herself off, fully aware that justice may not be foremost in the Government's mind.

They sit in silence until Mandi continues. "Sorry Graham, it's just not right. What about land ownership issues? Can't you fight it? Who's tendering for the land and who's representing your interests?"

There is another extended silence. This time Graham speaks, changing the subject, "We're having a corroboree tonight—just a small gathering. Do you want to come?"

Mandi knows she should mark student papers after the negotiation meeting tonight, but how many chances will she get to attend a corroboree? In her years of consultancy in the Australian bush, she has only attended one authentic corroboree, and that was in the Pilbara, following the project in Newman. She really enjoyed that corroboree and found it to be *very* different from tourist-focused corroborees.

"It's OK for me to attend?" asks Mandi. She knows that tribal corroborees are private and is surprised by Graham's offer.

"Yes, I am inviting you. We'll be doing a Rainbow Serpent dance. You'll like it," Graham smiles and looks at Mandi.

Mandi nods and smiles in agreement. They agree to meet in front of the Crocodile Hotel at 10:00pm.

Mandi's intentions are good. After her coffee break and talk with Graham, she returns to her hotel room. Not wanting to be too comfortable and thus risk falling asleep, she sits in the straight-backed wooden chair at the desk. She takes the first paper and begins reading it. Within minutes, her eyes have closed and she is face down on the paper. Although she sleeps heavily, the edginess she felt

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<sup>10</sup> 'Home country' is a term for the geographical area of a particular Aboriginal group/tribe.

when she was awake does not leave her. Mandi's body twitches and jerks, and her eyes flutter under her eyelids.

A loud rapping on the door jars Mandi from her sleep. She jumps up confused, knocking over the pile of papers as she makes her way to the door. Tom is standing at the door and takes a step back when he sees Mandi.

"What happened?" he asks. Then he starts laughing, realizing that the red marks on Mandi's face are sleep marks, not bruises.

"What time is it?" asks Mandi.

"It's 6:15. We were going to go over a few things before the meeting tonight. Remember?" asks Tom.

"I'm so sorry Tom," says Mandi obviously flustered. She steps away from the door and motions for him to come in. "Here, come in. I just need to freshen up and we can go over the negotiations."

Tom walks into the mostly dark room stepping over the papers that have fallen onto the floor. Mandi switches on the room's main lights and closes the door. She uses the physical and emotional tautness she has felt since arriving in Jabiru to help wake herself up.

"Tom, please have a seat. Flip on the TV and get yourself a drink from the mini-bar. I'll be out in a minute," says Mandi.

Mandi grabs a few things from the closet and goes into the bathroom. When she looks in the mirror, she gasps and laughs. No wonder Tom was shocked! Her face looks terrible! She has two large red marks where her face rested on the hard wooden desk. Mandi takes a quick steamy shower, then puts on loose fitting khaki pants and a long-sleeved, dusty rose cotton blouse trimmed delicately in deep rose needlework.

When Mandi comes out of the bathroom, she sees Tom sitting on the couch with his drink, looking at the TV with a grin on his face.

"You look like the Cheshire cat Tom. What's up?" laughs Mandi.

In all of her dealings with Tom, Mandi has never seen him embarrassed. But she could swear that Tom blushed at her remark. Tom reaches for the papers he has put out on the table. Mandi does not know that she has caught Tom thinking about the glimpses he got of her in the bathroom mirror. Like an SLR camera, the series of mirrors in the room are positioned such that from the rightmost couch corner—when he leaned forward—he could see a slice of the bathroom through a large, but interestingly positioned crack in the doorframe. He caught several brief glimpses of Mandi through the steamy air.

Mandi shrugs off Tom's odd behavior. They launch into an animated discussion of the evening's negotiation strategy, finalizing the few points they have yet to resolve. At 6:58, Tom stands and shakes Mandi's hand. He is pleased with the result. As they leave Mandi's room and head for the conference room, Mandi is confident that Evette and her group will be equally as satisfied with the proposal.

Mandi leaves the conference room at 9:50pm. She is both exhausted and exhilarated. The evening's negotiations were indeed animated, even aggressive at times, but the two sides finally reached agreement. In the short term Evette will pick up a consultancy project with Tom's company.

Mandi quickly readies herself for the corroboree. She goes to her hotel room, quickly drops the paperwork onto her bed and throws a small bottle of mosquito repellent into her bag. She heads to the front of the hotel to meet Graham.

Graham drives up about thirty minutes late with a long flatbed truck, the back perimeter of which holds a tall, topless cage. Mandi tugs at the passenger door and climbs up into the seat. Graham is quiet. Mandi assumes he is preparing himself mentally and spiritually for the corroboree. She checks with him to make sure she is still welcome, and then settles in for what she is sure will be an interesting night.

On their way to the site of the corroboree, they stop off at various groupings of houses. At each of their stops, camp dogs bark and run around the truck kicking up dirt. People seem to emerge from nowhere, from the dark shells of houses and from behind bushes. Some people just appear on the side of the road as they drive slowly along the dirt tracks. The back of the truck fills with noisy children, women, blankets, heavy tubs and water jugs.

By the time they reach the site of the corroboree, Mandi is completely disoriented. She tracked their general direction in relation to the hotel for the first 30 minutes, then got completely turned around during the last hour.

At the site of the corroboree, a large bonfire burns brightly and several small mounds of red coals glow contentedly. At the bonfire's edges Mandi sees small grouping of Aborigines, many of them with faces painted with uneven white stripes. Mandi looks as curiously at the faces, as they do at her.

An older Aboriginal woman nods slightly at Mandi, inviting her to join the small circle of older women sitting to the left of the bonfire. The older women sit cross-legged on the ground as they make damper<sup>11</sup>. One of the women kneads the thick white dough, while another adds water and flour alternately to the mixture. Another woman pokes the coals near them, unearthing a cooked, blackened damper about three inches thick and the size of a large dinner plate. She stands the damper on end and taps it with the stick. Bits of charcoal and dirt fall off.

Although Mandi does not fit in here, she feels that if she asks permission to be here, it will be OK. She has only felt this need one other time—when she was hiking in the remote area of Mitchell Falls in northern Western Australia. She and her then boyfriend Patrick were looking for an outcropping of rocks that were supposed to shelter several ancient rock paintings. With luck they found it. The paintings were amazing. They were not large but they were clear, as if they had been drawn recently, not some 50,000 years ago. The red ochres were still bright and the edges of the drawings still crisp. She had laid on her back on the dirty rock and just basked in the simple beauty of the drawings—emus, kangaroos, boomerangs and the outlines of hands. It was then that she felt she was experiencing something very special and very unique, and she felt compelled to seek permission from the site's ancestors.

Mandi was surprised when she subsequently found out that the outcropping they visited at Mitchell Plateau is an important Aboriginal site. The site contains not only drawings, but also skulls and bones. Mandi feels that same sense of sacredness tonight, sitting before the bonfire in front of a large, looming escarpment. She does not know physically where she is, but she senses that it is a very special place.

As Mandi looks skyward, she feels anew the pressure in her head. Her migraine has been slowly growing over the past four days until this morning, when she thought her head would explode. Before breakfast, she took a couple of painkillers—medicine that she takes with her on all her travels, just in case. She intertwines her fingers and puts them behind her neck for support. She continues gazing upward.

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<sup>11</sup> Damper is a bread made from flour and water, usually cooked in the coals of a campfire.

In the sky Mandi sees the moon emerge from behind thick cloud covering. The moon's light sharply outlines the cloud's edges and casts a soft glow onto the corroboree's setting.

With the moon's glow, Mandi can see much more around her than when she first arrived. Just fifteen feet from her is a mound of earth with two skinny emu legs jutting skyward. Next to the first emu mound is a second emu mound, which is being dug up by a group of men. Two men are scraping ground and coals away from the mound with shovels while another man is pulling upward on the emu legs. Finally the blackened emu pops out and the man stumbles backward. A fourth man walks forward with an axe. Mandi turns away—what a difference to the slicing of the turkey at their family holiday meals!

About twenty-five feet away, on the far side of the bonfire from where Mandi is sitting, she sees a line of people. She can barely distinguish their dark forms from the surrounding trees. What she can see more easily is the white striped markings on their faces and chests. As they approach, she can see that the dancers are men and boys wearing small red loincloths. They turn off well before they enter the bright light of the bonfire. They stamp their feet and tap their spears rhythmically to a single low rumbling didgeridoo and the soft tapping of sticks. They slowly follow an imaginary outline of a square. Suddenly the didgeridoo's rumbling is interrupted with scream-like crescendos. The tapping speeds up, sounding like thousands of spears clashing. The white stripes on the painted dancers move toward and away from the fire, over and over, like crashing waves. Mandi is spellbound.

Just as quickly as the frenzy started, it stops. The low rumbling of the didgeridoo and the soft, consistent tapping of sticks resume.

When Mandi turns around to face the women in the circle again, she is handed a piece of damper. She chews it, hearing the grit of sand against her teeth and tasting the blackness of charcoal. With the other hand she receives a still bloody piece of kangaroo leg. She nods and graciously accepts it.

The next few hours are a repeat of the first hour—watching, dancing and eating. Mandi's gaze drifts among her own group of women, to the dancers, to the didgeridoo players, to the large escarpment in the background. When the moon's light is full, the shadows cast onto the escarpment from the fire are as hypnotizing as the dancers themselves.

At 4:00am Mandi rises slowly to find a quiet spot to pee. She has been so engrossed in what has been happening around her that she has not left her spot among the women. Her joints are stiff from sitting. It feels good to walk and the sky is bright from the moon's light. Mandi picks a shadowed spot away from the bonfire and takes her time walking there.

When Mandi turns to go back, she is surprised to see that the bonfire looks brighter and bigger. Assuming it is her eyes adjusting to the bright light of the bonfire after navigating in moonlight, Mandi blinks and rubs her eyes. As she does, she feels her body tighten. She knows this feeling only too well. It is the edgy feeling that has been with her since her arrival in Jabiru. The tautness had made its way to the background, overtaken by the migraine, but now as she walks, the tautness returns. Within seconds, Mandi feels like she wants—no *has*—to run. Her blood pulses through her veins, her heart thumps in her throat, her skin vibrates and her breathing is short and rapid.

'What's the matter with me,' thinks Mandi. She leans over at the waist and rests her hands on her knees. She tries to catch her breath. 'It's an anxiety attack,' she tells herself.

When Mandi straightens up, she feels better. She walks slowly toward the bonfire, which has dimmed a little. She stumbles clumsily over a few small, sharp bushes, oblivious to the scratches.

Soon after Mandi arrives and sits again at the bonfire's edge, she feels another attack of edginess. The world around her changes tempo. The flames of the fire leap wildly and the dancers pound the ground with their spears. Dark shapes with arms flailing seem to be everywhere she looks. Suddenly she catches the eyes of one of the dancers. She has a flash of pain in her right temple.

'Who is that?' panics Mandi. Although his white body stripes are no different from the rest of the dancers, his eyes are different. The blacks of his eyes bore into her soul. The hair on her scalp and neck stand on end. The man is not only dancing, he is slaying something or someone. There appears to be a halo of red around him. Mandi blinks her eyes. Could it be his... chakra? She remembers when Emma, an acquaintance from Newman, told her about chakra colors. A red aura, or halo, around a person is the color of the base chakra and relates to the physical: passion, vitality, sex and strength. She laughed at Emma then, but she is not laughing now. She is transfixed.

Like the others, this dancer's moves are fast, but unlike the others, his moves are not frenzied. He is deliberate and confident. Mandi cannot take her eyes off him.

Mandi's heart races. She feels both scared of and awed by the man's intense power. A lightness suddenly enters her body and her mind sharpens. Her migraine lifts. Mandi looks at the bonfire. She can see the outline of each and every branch and log. She looks at the old woman, who is watching her. She sees the jagged worn country reflected in the lines of the weathered woman's face. Mandi has never seen such a beautiful face.

Suddenly Mandi is exhausted. She cannot keep her eyes open. Using her daypack as a pillow, she lies down and immediately falls asleep, oblivious to the thunderous sound of clap sticks and wailing didgeridoos.

Mandi enters a bizarre dream state where the dancing continues. Huge bursts of light intermittently fill the night sky, and she feels the heat on her face. The powerful man with the black eyes dances toward Mandi and then away. He continues moving away until he is the size of an iris, then suddenly he is one of the irises of the old woman's eyes. The old woman's face becomes larger and larger until it melds seamlessly into the jagged, rocky escarpment behind her.

When Mandi opens her eyes, it is daybreak. She sees the escarpment blazing orange-red in the morning sun. Without moving her head she looks around from her spot on the bare ground. Gray smoke climbs lazily upwards from the glowing coals of the bonfire. Mandi sees two Aboriginal women slowly walking. They wear loose, sun-bleached floral blouses and plaid cotton skirts. Little puffs of dirt rise around their bare feet as they walk to and fro, gathering pieces of leftover kindling. A soft breeze blows Mandi's hair over her eyes. As she closes her eyes, she hears a symphony of birdcalls. She used to love the early morning sounds in Newman when they slept under the desert sky.

An image from the previous night takes shape in Mandi's mind. She sees the blackness of the sky and the brilliance of the stars. She remembers the flashing white stripes of the dancers and the smell of the charcoaled damper. She hears again the guttural sounds of the didgeridoo and the rhythmic clapping of sticks. She remembers the beauty of the old woman's face.

Mandi feels the presence of the old woman near her. She opens her eyes and sees that she is standing next to Mandi. Mandi sits up and looks at the woman, who holds Mandi's gaze with soft brown eyes. After a moment, she walks over to a new small bonfire, and Mandi follows. She gives Mandi a small bowl of water and a cloth already stained with red dirt. Mandi thanks the woman and rinses her face and neck.

Mandi cannot remember the last time that she woke up feeling so refreshed. Her migraine is gone. Her muscles do not feel taut and her edginess has disappeared. Mandi inhales deeply.

The woman gives Mandi the bowl they used to make damper the night before. The woman pours water, flour and a pinch of salt into the bowl and then shows Mandi how to mix the ingredients. Mandi watches as the woman blends the ingredients and then uses a graceful, swift flipping action with the ball of dough. The woman hands Mandi the bowl, and Mandi tries the same kneading action. It looks simple, but it is not! The woman laughs then takes Mandi's small white hands into her own black cracked hands. Mandi lets the woman guide her hands. She enjoys the feeling of cool sticky dough on her hands.

About an hour later, Graham walks toward her from beyond the escarpment and asks if she is ready to start the trip back to Jabiru and the Crocodile Hotel. Mandi gets up and nods her appreciation and farewell to the woman.

This time Mandi gets into the back of the truck and wedges herself in among the women and the giggling children, who point at her. Two men ride up front with Graham in the cab of the truck. Mandi looks out across the red earth. The trunks of white ghost gums gleam silver in the morning light, and flocks of white cockatoos fly upward like low, shimmering clouds. She shuts her eyes and smells the musk-acid scent of the flock. She bumps along the track, happy to simply smell and listen to the sounds of the bush.

When they reach the Crocodile Hotel, Mandi thanks Graham for the invitation. She showers, bandages a few cuts, finishes packing and checks out of the hotel.

As she pulls open the door of her rental ute, Mandi looks up at the towering eucalypts. She decides to take a few minutes to get some samples—leaves, bark, roots, etc. 'There's something funny about these trees,' thinks Mandi to herself as she approaches the

trees. 'I've never seen this type of eucalypt reach such heights. This might be just the right research project for next semester. I just have to figure out how to get them past quarantine in Perth.'

Mandi picks up several samples and puts them into her daypack. As she collects more she feels a slight edginess climbing up the back of her neck. She immediately zips her bag and walks toward the ute. She looks again at the satellite dishes poised on the top of the hotel and the large generators emitting a low, monotone hum.

"I'm feeling better than I have in a long time. I'm not going to let this build up give me another migraine!" she says, determined to keep her mind clear. She *wrongly* links her edginess and migraines directly to the humidity of the wet season...

As Mandi gets in her ute, she hears her name being called. She looks up to see Evette running toward her with her backpack.

Breathless, Evette asks if she can get a ride to Darwin. With the protest finished, she wants to go to Darwin to check on the heat-stroked protesters and then catch a flight back to New South Wales. Mandi agrees, glad for the company on the three-hour drive to Darwin. This will also give them time to talk about Evette's 'alternative research'.

### 3. 'Alternative Pollution'

*Within twelve hours of signing the documents for their new Australian research facility, a convoy of trucks loaded with construction materials pulls away from the Darwin port. The loading dockets record that the goods were ordered and received over a month ago and passed through Australian customs in record time. A small man wearing unusual green wire glasses along with a young woman follow the convoy in a new, four wheel drive truck. The man likes efficiency and he has found it in his Government contact here. As promised his materials were loaded as soon as the documents were signed.*

*The man tells the woman about the previous day's meeting. The decision ostentatiously reached there was really made two months earlier. He reassures her that the meeting was a feel-good exercise to make his eleven partners feel like they were part of the decision making process to locate the facility in the Northern Territory. Although he has told the woman this several times, he can tell from her body language that she feels slighted. She has spoken about living in the 'god-forsaken nothingness of the Australian outback for up to six months while supervising the construction' so she has insisted that she should attend all meetings. He disagrees, and this is where their business relationship falters. This is where the father-daughter relationship picks up. His daughter, Samantha, should listen to him without question.*

*He has told her that she will obtain complete control of the facility when it is finished, and at that point she can make her official 'debut'—after she has proven herself. He knows that Samantha will do her job well, but what he does not know is why...She wants to leave her father no room for criticism. She reads voraciously about The Cooperative's other research locations and plans to improve 'her' facility based on their shortcomings. She has already identified three architectural design flaws in the Indonesian facility that she has rectified. She will 'pay her dues' as per her father's request, but she will make sure that her recompense is fitting.*

*November 26, 2013*  
*Northern Territory, Australia*

Mandi waits for her passenger, Evette, to buckle in before she drives out of the Crocodile Hotel parking lot. Although the past several days have been stressful with the negotiations, Mandi feels alert and rested. If she *does* need help staying awake on the three-hour drive, she is prepared. In the ute's cup holder, she has an extra large coffee with a double shot of espresso.

"Do you want to stop at the bakery or get something to drink before we leave Jabiru?" asks Mandi.

Evette shakes her head and pats her pack. "I'm alright thanks—I have cold drinks in here. If you don't mind, however, I wouldn't mind grabbing a catnap for a few minutes. I can drive then if you like. I've been up since about 4:00 this morning, trying to pull together a report and I'm knackered!"

"No worries, I'm not tired," smiles Mandi. She glances over at Evette and can see that although her fair-skinned face has a hint of a tan from the Northern Territory sun, there are dark circles under her eyes. Before they leave the town's limits, Mandi hears Evette's slow, steady breathing.

Mandi remembers falling asleep that quickly last night at the corroboree. No sooner had she laid her head on her daypack and shut her eyes, than she passed out.

'I can't believe I slept so well, considering I slept on the hard red dirt!' thinks Mandi. 'The only other time I've felt so relaxed and peaceful was back in Newman.'

Mandi thinks back to the hotel room that she stayed in when she arrived in Newman for the project. Even though the project was about ten years ago, Mandi thinks about the project often and her memories of it are surreally vivid. The room she stayed in was spacious and clean and outside her window was a large, silvery gum tree. That gum tree turned out to be the gathering spot for dozens of sulfur-crested cockatoos. Each dusk and dawn dozens of the large, white birds flexed not only their yellow crowns but also their lungs as they took turns screeching. The sharp screeches did *not* help Mandi's headaches.

The peacefulness that Mandi fondly recalls came a few days into the project when Emma, a woman who had attended Mandi's daily 'team building' workshop sessions, volunteered to come to her room for a reiki session. Emma and three of her friends practiced reiki and thought Mandi's migraines might be helped with a session or two. Emma was surprised (and appalled!) at the amount of aspirin and painkillers that Mandi had taken in the short time that she had been in Newman!

The reiki session was a new experience for Mandi. Emma and her friends came and set up a portable reiki table, which reminded Mandi of a massage table. The Reiki Master, Emma, took control of the 'session'. She carefully positioned the table and then lit candles around the room. Before she knew it, Mandi was lying on the table and the four women were 'preparing' themselves for the session. Emma later explained to Mandi that they were 'grounding' themselves. During the reiki session, the women were going to be conduits through which energies would flow into and out of Mandi. So as not to 'absorb' any of these energies, the reiki practitioners had to be properly grounded.

In this first reiki session, Mandi closed her eyes and tried to open herself up to whatever might come her way. Anything would be better than the awful migraines she was experiencing. She had also been feeling nauseous, which she attributed to the migraine pain. Mandi focused on clearing her mind, as Emma had asked her to do.

As Mandi tried to think of 'nothing', she felt hands gently touching her body at spaced intervals. Two hands—Emma's—gently cupped her head. Within minutes the pairs of hands turned from cool, to warm and then hot! Suddenly a piercing pain shot through Mandi's right temple, making her wince. Emma's hands, however, kept Mandi's head still and cradled.

In that session, Mandi lost all sense of time and space, almost as if she were in a time warp. When Emma offered Mandi a glass of water, only then did Mandi notice that an hour had passed. She felt both as if she had only just lain down *and* as if she had slept restfully for many hours. After the reiki session Mandi was still tired and groggy, but her migraine and nausea had mostly gone. Emma and her friends packed up their table and left within minutes, and Mandi went to bed. When she awoke the next morning, she felt what Emma described as 'centered'. She felt like she feels today, rested and clear minded.

'I wonder how Emma is doing,' thinks Mandi. 'I haven't heard from her for ages. I'll call her when I get back to Fremantle.'

Mandi looks out at the lush vegetation of Kakadu National Park. The colors are ablaze in the morning sun. Even though it is more dangerous to drive during dawn and dusk hours because of the increased likelihood of hitting wildlife—kangaroo, wild horses, and banteng<sup>12</sup>—Mandi prefers this time of day. At first light, the colors are deep and lush—rich greens, olives and reds, and brilliant, flashing silvers. This luscious morning light quickly dissipates with the arrival of the harsh daytime sun, in which everything looks flat and washed out.

'Or, maybe... it's time to *visit* Emma' thinks Mandi. 'I haven't seen her since the project. Maybe it's time for me to go back to Newman ... and maybe it's time to take Alan along.'

Mandi has not kept Newman a secret from Alan, but she has not been exactly forthcoming with details either. Alan has seen Mandi's photos of the impressive, jagged gorges of Karijini National Park, one of the Pilbara's hidden jewels, but he has never been there. Alan has read accounts of the project in the newspaper and has spoken with some of Mandi's friends, but to his credit he has never pried into her past. He has not pushed her to tell him about that experience. Mandi likes that he respects her privacy and has not asked her for details. She would not have been ready to talk about it—not about how it has *really* changed her.

On the Newman Project, Mandi witnessed sides to human nature that were not at all flattering to the human race. She experienced firsthand the extremes to which ego and greed can push otherwise apparently sane, sensible people. These depths, she realized, could be much more disturbing in 'real-life' than in a Hollywood movie. Mandi also witnessed the powers of the Aborigines—powers that she glimpsed again last night.

Mandi's mind drifts back to the previous evening. The man she saw shortly before she fell asleep had something about him that set him apart from the other dancers. She remembers that she had a difficult time breaking his gaze—his eyes immobilized her. She also remembers that he had a great body; his shoulders were broad and his stomach rippled. The muscles on his legs were defined even in the flickering light of the bonfire. Although impressive and erotic,

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<sup>12</sup> A banteng is a Southeast Asian Ox.

his physical traits were not what Mandi found most compelling. There was something beyond the physical, it was almost as if he radiated something...

Mandi wonders if the young dancer with the piercing eyes possesses a special talent or *gift* of some sort. Was he born with a special talent or did he inherit something—some power—from a deceased family member? Mandi smiles as she thinks about ‘gifts’ and ‘talents’ and ‘powers’. Before the Newman Project, she would have entertained discussion about paranormal powers, but only halfheartedly. Paranormal powers are more fitting to science fiction novels and movies than to scientists and researchers like herself. But Newman changed all that.

In Newman, Mandi witnessed many things that she could not explain. She recalls when for no apparent reason, a young man’s hands suddenly cramped and his fingers stiffened. They could do nothing but try to calm the man as they soaked his hands in cold creek water. They later found out that at the same time that the man had the excruciating pain, his Uncle was dying and had willed his healing powers to the young man. The older man had a ‘gift’ of healing others by placing his hands on them, which he passed on to the younger man.

During her time in Newman, Mandi began thinking less about what she *could* experience with her five senses<sup>13</sup> and more about experiences in which traditional senses played no part. Mandi knew of no scientific explanation of transferring ‘gifts’ from one person to another. She also could not explain how Aborigines communicated with each other without speaking.

Another transformational experience Mandi had while in Newman was witnessing the sudden illness of a middle-aged man, who was healthy until one of the group’s elders pointed a bone at him. The elder had cursed the younger, and the younger died within days. There was nothing physically, visibly wrong with the younger man *before* the bone had been pointed at him. Why then did he die? How can these phenomena be explained?

Mandi’s experiences in Newman increased her fascination with the realm of what she calls ‘the sense-less’—phenomena that exist outside the traditional five senses. The door into this realm opened for Mandi just a few years before the Newman Project. Mandi was

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<sup>13</sup> The five traditional senses are sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing.

involved in a series of experiments aimed at replicating and expanding existing electromagnetic pollution research, known in the press as 'electromagnetic smog' or 'e-smog'.

Electromagnetic radiation, such as that emitted by everyday appliances and gadgets, often escapes attention because it is not easily detected through the traditional senses. These products are usually odorless, tasteless, silent, invisible and cannot be 'felt', with the exception of occasional heat.

Mandi notices that Evette has woken up from her nap and is watching as they pass cone-shaped anthills the size of refrigerators. Their bright ochre color and pocked texture made them look like they could have been taken directly from a Salvador Dali painting. All that is missing are Daliesque misshapen clocks that hang on the hills like wet towels<sup>14</sup>.

"Did you know that these anthills are often likened to icebergs? Only about ten percent of the full size is showing," says Mandi. Imagining the number of ants that can live on one 'hill complex' always gives Mandi goosebumps—that is *a lot* of ants.

"Do you mind if we stop and take a closer look at one?" asks Evette. "I'd like a photo."

"Sure, there's a grouping of anthills up ahead that has a descriptive placard for tourists. There's also an anthill near a walkway that is partially broken so you can see the tunnels inside—it's really interesting to see the internal workings," replies Mandi.

Evette looks at Mandi and smiles. "You know, my brother Paul used to love investigating things. He was always curious about how things worked."

"You were close to your brother?" asks Mandi.

"Yes. Well, we were about four years apart in age, so we had different friends. But since Paul was sick a lot, we spent a lot of time together, especially after we moved and Dad died, so we were close as a family—Mum, Paul and I," says Evette.

Their conversation is interrupted as Mandi slows the ute. Usually the trip from Kakadu National Park to Darwin is a clear run, but today the traffic is stopped and pulled off the road. Mandi opens her window and leans out to see if she can see what is causing the delay.

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<sup>14</sup> A good example of a pertinent Salvador Dali painting is *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931.

They do not have to wait long as a convoy of trucks hauling extra-wide loads soon passes them.

"Looks like a construction project," says Mandi offhandedly. "I wonder if that is the project that Graham referred to last night..."

The ute is quiet until Evette speaks, "You asked me about my research yesterday into alternative pollution. I'm looking into electromagnetic fields, or electromagnetic radiation. I recently did a lit<sup>15</sup> review and I noticed that there were years—over a decade—in the '90s and early 2000s when there was a lot of activity going on in this field. Then, it suddenly dropped off. Why?"

"When I first started researching electromagnetic radiation and pollution, the discussions were passionate. There were lots of conferences and plenty of colleagues from both academia and big business who'd sit up and argue its impact on human health. We'd stay up until two or three o'clock in the morning—oblivious of the time," says Mandi reminiscing fondly.

"In 2003 and 2004, however, those discussions dwindled," continues Mandi. "There were very few conferences on electromagnetic radiation's impact on human health. The conferences were replaced with global public forums at which public officials gave well-scripted monologues on the recommended or 'safe' electromagnetic exposure levels for specific items, such as computer screens, TVs and hair dryers. They acted as if all the research had been completed and the verdict decided. That definitely was *not* the case. After their decision to 'close the door' on the research, it was no surprise to learn that the funding for it had dried up as well."

Mandi had not thought of that period of transition in months, but when she does it still stirs a deep anger inside.

"Even the ad hoc, international brainstorm and think tank sessions that happened at other 'fringe research' conferences ceased," says Mandi. "Whenever a discussion on that topic started it was, well, railroaded into discussions on 'best practices.' I can't tell you the number of times I heard about Auckland's local Acts. For example, in Auckland, major transmission power lines are strategically moved away from houses and schools; cell sites are located well away from key places; and buildings are wired appropriately to ensure 'safe' homes, offices and buildings. I really

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<sup>15</sup> Lit review is 'shorthand' for literature review.

do appreciate those steps toward providing a safe living environment, but if I wanted to learn about Auckland's safety measures, I'd read a report. I attend brainstorm sessions to do just that—*brainstorm*. I wanted to talk about data and research and theories. They tried everything to make it seem like the research had been fully and independently conducted and concluded, and it hadn't."

"That was my feeling," says Evette caught up in Mandi's tirade. "I'm reading these papers—yours included—which seem to follow a methodological process—research is progressing, preliminary results are coming in and researchers wrote about where they planned to go with their research...Then, suddenly it all just ends. I have yet to find a paper that finishes any research project. They all just end abruptly in mid-process. The most intriguing paper—and apparently the most controversial gauging by the number of rebuffs received—was a short paper by a man from... India I think. Why hasn't anyone followed up his research?"

"Dr. Ramu Visra," says Mandi, as if on cue. "He was of Indian descent, living in Malaysia. A brilliant researcher...Dr. Visra died en route to a conference back in 2003..."

Mandi had not thought of Ramu for years. "I remember Ramu's death clearly because it was the beginning of the end. He and I had been in close contact on a different project, but the project that mattered, specifically *his* project, died with him. No one knew about his research data except for him...After his death there was no data, nothing...Since his death we have not had anyone with the same brilliance in the area of electromagnetic research, nor have we had the funding."

"It was around the time of Dr. Visra's death that funds dried up," continues Mandi. "I know that research funding is always laden with power, money and ego, but there is something different about electromagnetic pollution research. There was no warning to the change in attitude from our sponsors. We went from receiving huge corporate donations to literally fiscal famine. It was like someone orchestrated a drastic, sweeping change in every corporate donor.

"Even the regulatory front is, well, suspicious. You've probably read about the national and international 'watchdog' groups that were formed to monitor 'progress'? Well, the last time I looked I couldn't find a single definition of 'progress,' nor could I find a

charter of action for any of these groups. They hold no official power to prosecute infringements, even if they happened to uncover them.”

“So the watchdog groups simply do what their name implies—*watch*?” asks Evette.

“Unfortunately, yes,” says Mandi.

In this brief discussion Mandi feels a rush of passion enter her body and is saddened at the novelty of it. During the height of her e-smog research days, Mandi used to feel this surge regularly, in heated discussions with critics and while talking with Ramu, whose obsession and passion were contagious. While she enjoys her current-day research, nothing has come close to those early days of e-smog research. In those days she felt like she was making a difference.

“And what about you?” asks Evette. “You authored several articles on alternative types of pollution, like electromagnetic smog. Why did you stop?”

“Well, there was Ramu’s death and the withdrawal of support from corporations,” says Mandi. “But I still could have gotten one more round of money from Government, which might have helped me to produce some interesting data...However, I was out of town on a project when the annual round of research grant proposals were due. I had no access to my e-Helper or my computer, so I had no way of contacting my research assistants to ask them to complete and submit the proposal applications on my behalf. As a result, I missed the deadline. And my research experiments lost funding. I supplied some of the money myself, using what I had made through my consultancy projects, but I didn’t have enough money to float all of my electromagnetic research projects...”

Mandi thinks a moment and then adds, “Had I applied in time, I don’t know that it would *really* have mattered. Anything that had the word ‘electromagnetic’ in the title—smog, pollution, fields, radiation, anything—did not receive grant money. Those who had supported the research to date had decided that enough had been said and done about e-smog. Funds were earmarked for areas considered more ‘pressing’. Being a successful grant recipient means being able to predict such winds of change. Like I said, however, this change occurred without warning. Many research projects literally collapsed without funding, mine included. All of us in academia had to make do with what we had and change our plans quickly or we’d feel it for more than a single funding season. And without research, there’s no

publishing. And without publishing...Well, publishing *definitely* improves the chances of keeping a university lecturing contract.”

“But you *did* manage to publish and so did others,” says Evette. “The research seems piecemeal and scattered, but it does form a starting point.”

“A starting point—yes...”

Mandi thinks back to her university research projects and their small part in the larger body of data gathered about electromagnetic radiation. What is the impact of electromagnetic radiation on humans, animals and the environment from such devices as e-Helpers, computers, cell phones, washers and dryers, microwaves, hair dryers and other electrical appliances and gadgets? Piecemeal data exists on many of these devices as tested on animals in laboratories. And there *does* exist data gathered from various professions—air traffic controllers, physiotherapists and welders—considered at higher than ‘normal’ risk of electromagnetic pollution. But the results of the trials are all over the board. Some researchers strongly warn of the dangers of electromagnetic pollution. Other researchers report inconclusive or non-threatening results, commenting that the worse fallout you will get from a cell phone or an e-Helper is an interruption. And manufacturers do what they are required to do, namely they include on their packaging their adherence to recommended ‘safe’ exposure levels.

“We needed to go beyond that ‘starting point’—beyond the piecemeal approach that is conducted in a sterile research laboratory. Only then might we have gotten data that might make a difference,” says Mandi. “Take Ramu’s approach, for instance. He worked in the field, and he tested the *combined* impact of electrical devices. Is the impact of electromagnetic fields a simple sum—just add up the impact of the individual items—or is there a doubling or trebling factor... or more? He looked *outside* of clean laboratory conditions, where other environmental phenomena, such as air-borne pollutants like chemical fumes and pesticides, might potentially impact outcomes. What is the *total* impact on humans, plants and the environment? *This* is what I planned to focus on in partnership with Dr. Visra when I returned from the Newman Project.”

“And you couldn’t secure funding for that?” asks Evette.

“Unfortunately I’m not independently wealthy. I’m tied into the funding system,” answers Mandi. “Much of the electromagnetic radiation research that I pursued at the time was funded largely

though private corporate donations, and many of those companies were in the telecommunications and electronics industries. I realized too late that I shouldn't rely on their corporate money, especially since I was researching potentially 'unfavorable side effects' of their products. I didn't encounter situations of conflict of interest because they truly respected my independence; well, at least they did until the media got onto Ramu's research. I found out too late that I could lose corporate funding literally from one day to the next. The companies were happy to provide seed money when electromagnetic pollution research was in vogue and relatively risk free. But past that initial support, they just weren't interested. And I only had limited funding through university grants."

Evette reflects for a few moments, and then says, "There's one paper you wrote—I think it's in your website archives—that really helped me understand the issues and complexities of e-smog—I've got it. It's called 'EMFs for Beginners'". Evette smiles. "In the paper you distinguish between ionizing radiation and non-ionizing radiation<sup>16</sup>. Your 3-D pictures of electromagnetic waves are really clear. I can see the different waves as they pass through space and physical objects. And you've made it interactive, so I can vary the waves and see the impact.

"What I like most about your website," continues Evette, "is how you make it relevant. You don't just talk about theory, you make theory *real* though application. For example, I didn't know that electric fields are present *whenever* an electric appliance is plugged in, even if the appliance isn't turned on...That seems to have an easy answer—unplug appliances when you're not using them. However, it got more 'interesting' when I read that we usually can't protect ourselves from magnetic fields. Low frequency magnetic fields can practically penetrate anything without even being slowed down. That

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<sup>16</sup> Ionizing radiation starts in the ultra-violet frequencies (above the visible light range). Ionizing radiation has the capacity to break a chemical bond and thereby destabilize an atom or a molecule. X-rays and gamma rays are examples of ionizing radiation. Non-ionizing radiation starts at visible light and continues downward. Examples include microwaves and radio frequencies. Frequency ranges include ultra high frequency (UHF), very high frequency (VHF), very low frequency (VLF) and extremely low frequency (ELF). ELF includes household current.

point bothers me. What can I do about that? How can I protect myself from magnetic waves?"

"Which brings me to my Mum...I have to tell you about my Mum," says Evette. "She went on a worldwide search for wallpaper for our Nimbin house. I thought she wanted a certain design or something, but when we got the paper, it was just beige. Only recently did I discover the importance of that wallpaper. It was supposed to shield electromagnetic radiation..."

"Produced by a German company that has since gone out of business for lack of customers?" asks Mandi.

"Yes," says Evette. "Do you mind if I ask what is probably a stupid question? While it seems that magnetic fields can penetrate many things, it also sounds like low frequency waves are too weak to get through the membranes of cells. If that's the case, how can they be harmful at a cellular level—or *are* they harmful at a cellular level?"

Mandi smiles. "That is definitely *not* a stupid question. In fact, it's a very common question! That question stirs up a lot of controversy, and there is a whole range of answers. Me, personally, I believe that the electromagnetic 'current' provides a signal to the cell. Receiving the signal is like receiving directions for action... or inaction. The function of the cell can be impacted because it's receiving a signal that may direct it to do something other than what it would *normally* do. This signal, then, might alter the cell's job, which might in turn impact the immune system, etc. Therein lies the cellular level impact."

"Take melatonin as an example," continues Mandi. "Melatonin is a neurohormone produced by the pineal gland. We all have this hormone—it helps us sleep at night. One effect of melatonin in the body is to slow the growth of cancer cells, like breast cancer cells. At night when we go to sleep our melatonin levels rise and melatonin goes through our blood and cleans our cells up. For example, melatonin scavenges free radicals, which can be nasty, damaging chemicals. EMFs—sorry, electromagnetic fields—may 'direct' or 'signal' melatonin to slow down or even stop their usual clean-up or cancer-inhibiting functions. Therefore EMFs don't necessarily *cause* cancer, per se—by mutating a cell for example—but they impact a *function* of melatonin, which is to inhibit the growth of cancer cells. The result can be the same as if they had caused cancer, namely the person *may get* cancer."

Mandi continues to think out loud. "There were tests on individuals with Alzheimer's disease who had occupational exposure to power frequency magnetic fields. I think that research points to the possibility of EMF impact on not only the *functions* of cells but also the *general properties* of cells. I think we're unknowingly playing with the way our cells speak to each other—and changing their language. That in turn might impact the way our body works, or should work. We might be changing cellular growth regulation, metabolic cooperation<sup>17</sup> and more. If these changes occur slowly, over time, maybe our bodies can adapt and change. But what if they occur quickly, and/or what if individuals can't tolerate these changes?"

Mandi looks at Evette who has a funny look on her face. Evette says, "I'm convinced that my brother was one of those people whose bodies can't tolerate electromagnetic smog—an electrosensitive. I've only made that claim to one other person—my Mum—and it didn't go over well. But you understand, don't you? I'm convinced that Paul didn't die of an accidental overdose of drugs..."

"Right before this trip, Mum and I celebrated the tenth anniversary of Paul's death," continues Evette. "I told her that I thought I knew why Paul was sick and I started to tell her about all the research I'd done. I thought she'd be just as interested as I was, but she just stared at me and then she got angry. She told me to drop it. 'We can't bring him back to life,' she said before she stormed off. But I *can't* just drop it. I want to know what happened ... probably because I feel responsible."

"Responsible?" asks Mandi.

Evette looks out the window. "I promised him that I wouldn't tell Mum that he had an e-Helper and a computer and that he watched TV after school at his friends' houses...He had just been accepted into a group at school who played computer games—a Dungeons & Dragons type game, and Paul got very sick because he was on the

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<sup>17</sup> For more information, refer to Adey, W.Ross M.D, "Electromagnetic fields, the modulation of brain tissue functions—A possible paradigm shift in biology" and "Brain interactions with RF/microwave fields generated by mobile phones." *International Encyclopedia of Neuroscience*, Third Edition; B. Smith and G. Adelman, editors Elsevier, New York.

computer all the time. These were all things that Mum said we couldn't do. We were just being *normal* kids. We didn't want to be different. We just wanted to live like we used to live.

"When we were young, I remember living in a house on the Gold Coast," says Evette. "The place was a mansion and had every kind of electrical gadget you can imagine. Dad was in the telecommunications industry and he was right into the latest gadgets and technology. We had large screen TVs, stereo systems, kids computers and playstations, and all kinds of battery-operated toys—from animals to helicopters to cars. Paul was always playing games on the computer, and reading e-books on his e-Helper."

"Although I was young when we lived in that house—we moved from there when I was six—I remember that house. And I remember how sick Paul was. He missed a lot of school and we spent a lot of time at the doctor's office."

"What was Paul's diagnosis or what symptoms did he have?" asks Mandi.

"I can't remember all of his symptoms, and Mum doesn't talk about it," says Evette. "But I remember Paul being given medicine for asthma, seizures, and allergies. Mum got quite upset when they started labeling Paul as having ADHD<sup>18</sup> and learning disabilities. They tried anything and everything to help him, and they gave him all kinds of labels. He tried lots of different pills and had injections. I remember him going through several sessions of acupuncture as well. But Paul didn't consistently respond to anything. I can't imagine what all those medications did to his system..."

"Anyway, it all changed one day when we went on a vacation. We usually went to Sydney to visit Nana, my Mum's mother, but Mum decided that we were going to go on a 'camping adventure' out of the city. It took me many years to figure out that our lives changed drastically after that camping trip not by chance, but because of Mum. Mum had had enough of doctors and medicine. It was on this trip that Mum 'forgot' Paul's medicines."

"She forgot his medicine?" asks Mandi. "Is this when he —"

"No," says Evette. "Paul didn't die until several years later. On this trip he got very sick—fevered, severe migraines, and throwing up—but he didn't die. Over the course of the four weeks and as we

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<sup>18</sup> ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and was a common diagnosis during the mid 1990s and into the early 2000s.

traveled further away from towns, he got better...When we lived on the Gold Coast and Paul was sick, it wasn't often that we played running games together, but we did on this trip. We played tag, and hide-and-seek. Paul actually ran around and played with me.

"One place we camped for a few days was along a creek, near a waterhole. There were these beautiful trees along the creek. Their branches draped over our tents and kept them cool. The water in the waterhole was icy cold, but you couldn't keep Paul and I out of that waterhole or the creek bed. We had a great time exploring everything. We collected several pounds of what we just knew was gold! We decided that with the money we'd get from the gold, we'd buy a house near the waterhole where we could all live."

"And that waterhole was near Nimbin?" asks Mandi. "Is that how you came to live in Nimbin?"

"Of course we didn't have pounds of gold—we had pounds of quartz," laughs Evette. "But, we *did* move to Nimbin shortly after that trip. Mum insisted that we change our lifestyle. We went from a house and family that had every kind of gadget and appliance to a family that had no gadgets. In Nimbin we had no TVs, microwaves, washer, dryers, home security or electronic toys. Mum had an e-Helper, but she usually kept that in her closet, and eventually she got rid of that also. It was a huge change for all of us...Mum also got more, well, secretive. She used to close her bedroom door and we'd hear her muffled voice through the wall."

"Sounds like your Mum figured out that Paul was an electrosensitive," comments Mandi.

"Yes, I'm sure she knew. That's why I'm so confused at her reaction to my research into the field," responds Evette. "Anyway, Paul got better. We weren't making as many trips to the doctor and Paul was mostly healthy. He still got the occasional rash and seizure but he was mostly OK. Mum was home schooling us both, so I can't speak to Paul's academics as compared to other kids his age, but Paul went from doing homework with me—at my level—to concepts and work that was at and beyond his own grade level. I have mostly good memories of those seven years."

"Mostly?" questions Mandi.

"Well, at first Dad made the daily commute—about 1 1/2 hours each way, but it didn't take long—a matter of weeks—until he drove out of the driveway on Mondays and returned on Fridays. Then he started staying in the Gold Coast on weekends to sail. Because of

Paul, Mum refused to take us back into the city, so we never saw Dad. It was only six months after our move to Nimbin that Dad died in a sailing accident. Mum went to the Gold Coast for a couple of days without us trying to find out what happened. Since they never recovered the body, we had a memorial service for him in Nimbin."

"I'm sorry," says Mandi softly. "What happened then—I thought Paul was doing well in Nimbin?"

"He *was* doing well," continues Evette. "He was probably doing too well. He felt good, so he wanted to go to school. He wanted to be a 'normal' kid. There were lots of arguments about Paul's going to school. I remember days where no one spoke in the house. The only sound was the occasional door slamming. Finally Mum gave in. She said that we could both go to school in Lismore. The school was good, but it was like every other school. It had computers, and everybody had an e-Helper, and there were gadgets everywhere. So Paul and I bought gadgets too, and of course we didn't tell Mum. We became just like every other kid, except Paul wasn't like every other kid."

Mandi and Evette look out the front ute window in silence. Each of them is lost in thought. Evette is bombarded with images: she is at the campsite and Paul holds her small hand in his. He leads her along the creek bed, making sure that he is between her and the creek so that she cannot slip and fall into the water. Then Evette is in Nimbin: she and Paul squat down low, their shoulders touching. They are watching three chickens in their new chicken dome, which looks like a loosely woven, upside down fruit basket. Evette can still remember the musky smell of their Nimbin yard, and she can hear the soft cackling of their three hens. Next Evette and Paul are laughing as they pick oranges from the tree just below their Mum and Dad's bedroom window in Nimbin. They try to be quiet, so as not to wake up their parents, but they just saw their first kangaroo and they are very excited...

Mandi's mind races back over her research on electromagnetic pollution. She has read numerous accounts written about electrosensitives. She read about children diagnosed with a rare immune deficiency after spending time in a home with two high voltage powerlines located only fifty feet from their home. A man described himself as a living electromagnetic detector. His detection of radiation manifested itself in various types of pain and symptoms, including kidney, back and joint pain, and tongue discoloration. And

there was the woman who described her condition as feeling like 'the plug had been pulled' on her. This usually active woman experienced memory loss, poor sleep quality, depression, apathy and general discomfort and pain. She put the cause down to poor house cabling, and when she had a demand switch installed her condition improved.

In addition to reading personal accounts, Mandi also read the published research, the results of which were consistently called 'inconclusive'. She read accounts of sheep that grazed in proximity to a high-tension mast. Some sheep had impaired immune systems while others had no health problems. And she read about cows that were exposed to magnetic fields. The results varied from no impact to low milk production, behavioral problems, and fertility problems.

Perhaps electromagnetic research was 'inconclusive' because animals, like humans, do not have a simple, single genetic map. Individual differences dictate sensitivities, allergies and immunities. One researcher who experimented with a herd of cows over a period of two years—moving them inside and outside of their grazing area, which was in the vicinity of a TV and radio-transmitting antenna—found just such individual differences among the cows in the herd<sup>19</sup>. Mandi expected that every living organism, from cows to rats to humans to plants would have individualized reactions.

Mandi had once read that 1 in 10,000 humans might be impacted by electromagnetic radiation. Were these 1 in 10,000 the electrosensitives? How was such a statistic decided? Was this statistic based on individuals who self-reported? What about those individuals who chalked their symptoms up to stress or chronic fatigue syndrome or sick building syndrome or some other modern day sickness? What were the distinguishing characteristics between one 'syndrome' and another, or were these modern day maladies a result of a buildup of pollutants in our midst?

Mandi clearly remembers research she read about rats, which inspired her to begin her own electromagnetic radiation research. About ten years ago, electromagnetic radiation research was performed in Sweden on rats by exposing them to two hours of electromagnetic radiation a day. The rats were between twelve and

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<sup>19</sup> For more information, refer to W. Löscher and G. Käs, "Conspicuous behavioural abnormalities in a dairy cow herd near a TV and Radio transmitting antenna," *Prakt. Tierarzt* 79: 5, 437-444 (1998).

twenty-six weeks old, and their level of brain development was compared to that of teenagers. As a result of medium- to high-level exposure, the rats had an abundance of dead brain cells.

The most shocking part of the research was that these cellular level activities occurred at everyday rates of electromagnetic exposure. The radiation exposure that the rats were subjected to in this experiment was comparable to that produced by an older model cell phone when held next to a head. Teenagers were holding just such phones to their heads at just such daily durations, if not higher<sup>20</sup>. The experiment was realistic, not ivory tower. The parallels between cell phone usage and dead brain cells were sobering.

Mandi knew that rats' brain cells were similar to human brain cells, so this research intrigued and disturbed her. Short of conducting trials on humans, what did these trials on rat brain cells *really* say? Could she extrapolate from the rat brains to human brains—teenagers' brains? That parallel was drawn by more than one specialist when this research first came out. But where does such extrapolation put the 'individual' factor that Mandi believes exists? Is chronic exposure an additional factor to consider? Do electromagnetic exposures build up over time or do they get 'reset' or 'zeroed out'?

As Mandi immersed herself into her research, she thought that she might be an electrosensitive herself. She had some of the symptoms—migraines, tiredness, occasional nausea and skin tingling—described in the case studies she had read about online. However, she could not pinpoint exactly what caused her symptoms. She could find many other causes for her symptoms, such as late nights, eye strain, stress, etc. Without a controlled environment there were too many variables. How could she claim she was an electrosensitive without rigorously eliminating other potential causes?

But was *not* Mandi's situation, namely the inability to show a direct causal link, the crux of the problem? How can Mandi—or anyone—make a direct causal link between cause A and result B, when result B is literally immersed in cause A? Cause A becomes normalized simply because it is the current reality, *not* because it is

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<sup>20</sup> For more information, refer to Leif G. Salford, et al. "Nerve Cell Damage in Mammalian Brain after Exposure to Microwaves from GSM Mobile Phones." *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 111: 7, June 2003.

truly a controlled scenario. In the end, Mandi decided that she had more to focus on than what she labeled as her own hypochondria and aging.

Inevitably, at this point in her thought process, Mandi's reaction is to kick herself for not continuing her research into electromagnetic fields. She has had this mental conversation with herself many, many times before. Every time she goes down this path she ends up at the same conclusion: Had she continued her research into this area, she might have produced some conclusive data by now. She *knows* the data is out there. She just needs to design the appropriate trials and apply the most fitting methodological approach, Ramu's approach...

Her inability to follow through with the electromagnetic field research always comes down to the same two factors: not enough time and not enough money. The time is what she lost on the extended Newman Project, and the money, well, her funding sources just dried up. What company will grant her money to produce data that might show their products as being health hazards?

To date, most research into electromagnetic radiation fits well within Mandi's specialty, namely the environmental impact of modern technology. There appears to be an environmental impact, albeit not 'conclusive', and the driver behind that impact is definitely technology. She has no doubt, however, that the impact of electromagnetic smog goes beyond most current research, into areas of neurology and cell biology, which were Ramu's areas of expertise. With their expertise, Ramu and Mandi were poised to make a substantial contribution through their research. Mandi is sure that electromagnetic smog somehow—either directly or indirectly—reaches deep into the genetic makeup of plants and rats and cows and humans...

Mandi sees the 'termite mound' parking lot approaching so she puts on her indicator and pulls off the road. Across the parking lot stands a cone shaped mound twice her height and at least ten times the thickness of both Mandi and Evette combined. It is time to have some fun exploring.

## 4. Discoveries

*As promised by the newly elected Federal Administration, within a month of the national elections for Australian Prime Minister, the man with the unusual green wire glasses receives his invitations and airline tickets. He and his eleven partners from The Cooperative are going to spend a couple of days diving on the Great Barrier Reef followed by a four-wheel-drive adventure into the York Peninsula of Queensland, Australia.*

*It is an archetypal quid quo pro arrangement. The Cooperative is a powerful consortium of six multinational corporations. In exchange for certain import and export privileges, The Cooperative provides the current Government with timely infusions of cash, such as the financial boost the candidate received at the end of his election campaign this year.*

*This Prime Minister is not as 'quick' as the previous one. This Prime Minister initially had 'teething problems' understanding his role in 'protecting the interests' of The Cooperative, but he learned when they put their offer in his terms. They promised at least a 10% growth in the Australian Gross National Product (GNP) if The Cooperative's research facilities were approved for the Northern Territory. That increase would boost his poll popularity.*

*The mastermind of The Cooperative also suggested that the Prime Minister have an unofficial 'chat' with the U.S. President, with whom they negotiated an equally beneficial 'relationship' during the 2012 elections. He knows that the ultimate goal of the Australian Prime Minister-like the U.S. President-is to be distinguished somehow from his predecessors. That inside knowledge gives the mastermind an upper hand, enabling him to play the Prime Minister to his own benefit.*

**December 18, 2013**

**South Kalimantan, Indonesia, Island of Borneo**

Mandi feels the seat belt cutting into her shoulder as the troop carrier lurches haltingly along the rough dirt road. Asep, a geologist at the remote Senaggin Mine, tries to navigate the potholes as best he can, but there are so many that it is impossible not to meet a few

head on. The potholes, big enough to lose a wheel completely, are filled with water. Reddish mud splashes onto the windshield. The wipers smear the mud and when Asep squirts window cleaner onto them they form thick, red bubbles.

The wet season in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, has begun with an intensity not seen in several years. Ever since Mandi got here a few days ago, they have had afternoon downpours. The water has flooded the secondary pits, so the mining has ceased in all but the main coal pit. And even in the main pit, the rain is making the pit so slippery that huge pieces of equipment with traction and weight in their favor slide slowly down the inclines. There was a break in the rain yesterday, so Mandi hopes that today will be another 'dry' day.

Despite the potholed state of the road, Mandi enjoys the drive. She likes the roughness and remoteness. The haul road is wide enough to allow two 785 dump trucks<sup>21</sup> to easily pass each other. At the road's edge there are steep embankments of mud and dirt. Atop those embankments is jungle, so thick and tangled that it looks like one tightly woven wall of green. Occasionally a monkey leaps up from the haul road onto a root hanging down the embankment and quickly climbs to the security of the jungle's edge. Once safely at the top of the embankment, the monkey usually turns around to watch the truck pass by.

Today Mandi and Asep drive toward the western edge of the mining lease. Mandi is amazed at the weather in Kalimantan—the rain literally buckets down, making driving impossible. Calm creeks turn quickly into rushing whitewaters. It is not uncommon to hear that a wall of water has rushed down the haul road, wiping out everything in its path. The rain erodes the embankments, causing large trees balanced at the embankment's edge to topple down onto the haul roads. Just as quickly the rain stops, the flooding slows and the sun comes out, as if the choreographer of the mayhem wants to see the aftermath.

As they approach the top of a hill, Mandi looks out at a vista of thick jungle. Curling up into the sky are a few columns of deep gray

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<sup>21</sup> 785 dump trucks have a payload of 130 tons. The troop carrier they are driving in, which is a four-wheel-drive vehicle, holds about eight people and is similar to a Suburban.

smoke. They feed into the thick clouds starting to form thunderheads.

'How do they live out here?' wonders Mandi to herself. She can see no break in the jungle coverage, indicating no main roads and no large villages. Yet she knows that there are villages in the jungle. They have passed through a few small ones, called kampungs, already today.

Mandi thinks back to a week ago, when she received the phone call from Herb that led to her being here today. Herb's voice was somber. He skipped the usual pleasantries and came right to the point. "Mandi, I've got to go into the hospital for bypass surgery. They're doing a few tests on me and they've booked me in for the day after tomorrow."

After answering Mandi's barrage of medical questions, Herb continued. "I've got a project going that I can't follow up. It's interesting, but it's not easy. It involves a coal mining operation in Indonesia. The players are Indonesian politicians, the military and the locals, but there are also financial backers worldwide. The project is high profile and its successful outcome will go a long way toward easing tensions in Asia Pacific. If you're game, I'll make the necessary calls to get you the required visas, travel permits, etc. Mandi, I know you can do it, but I also know you have plans..."

Thinking about her vacation plans with Alan gives Mandi a pang of guilt. She has lost count of the number of times she has rescheduled or cancelled her vacations with Alan. Although he never complains, Mandi can tell that Alan's 'cancellation tolerance' is waning. She recently had a talk with Alan, promising him she would try to be better about vacations—but Herb was in a predicament, and it would only be for a couple of weeks, and professionally it would be a very interesting challenge. Would Alan understand one more time?

Asep slams on the brakes and Mandi lurches from her thoughts. He yells in Indonesian and grabs at Mandi's seat belt. Only then does Mandi see the smoke curling up around the sides of the troop carrier's hood. They both jump from the vehicle, slipping downhill in the mud. When Mandi comes to rest a few yards from the vehicle, she can hear the crackling of wires and sparks under the hood. She sees that Asep has gone back inside the vehicle for the fire extinguisher and has popped the hood. He tries to lift the hood, but burns his hands. Mandi runs up and grabs the dropped extinguisher,

trying to spray through the vehicle's grill. By the time they are able to open the hood, it is too late. They won't be going anywhere.

Mandi goes into the vehicle to get the first aid kit for Asep. As she reaches under the seat she sees that Asep accidentally ripped the radio's wiring in his hurry to pull out the fire extinguisher.

Asep realizes they cannot radio the office for help and points up the road saying, "Village there."

Mandi and Asep start their walk toward the village—Asep gingerly holding his bandaged hands out from his body and Mandi with her daypack slung over one shoulder.

It only takes several steps before Mandi's boots are caked with sticky red mud. Her legs feel like they have weights strapped onto them. Mandi knows that this trek, no matter how short, will make her pay for having given up exercising more than a month ago.

After half an hour Mandi's legs feel like logs. Her mind goes back to her Wednesday night exercise classes in Fremantle. She liked taking the Ashtanga yoga, so why did she quit? The description of the class initially amused Mandi: 'For individuals interested in a different kind of yoga—kick ass yoga.' Mandi decided to try it. She found the Salutes to the Sun and the stretches exhilarating. But in all honesty, the real reason she kept going was Alan, another newcomer to the class. Alan felt awkward among all the women in the class, but he kept returning. Mandi later found out that he kept returning to the class because of their shared sense of humor. At times, when they should have been quietly doing balance positions, such as the Tree, she found herself losing balance while laughing at Alan's jokes.

After they started spending time together outside of Ashtanga class, Mandi found she had little time for anything but her research, her consultancy, and Alan.

'Time. It always comes down to time. I'm going to get back into exercise when I return. I'll make the time,' Mandi pledges to herself.

As Mandi looks around, she realizes that walking the haul road is a lot different than driving it. She sees so much more. The thick jungle, for example, is not a single wall of splotchy shades of green. It is an intricate woven tapestry. There are small vines with delicate purple blossoms, and large, shiny emerald leaves that could easily be mistaken for a giant's large hands. And there are dozens of bright red dragonflies flitting and darting about.

After another hour of walking, they approach a small village. Mandi and Asep are drenched in sweat and have long since drunk the last of the bottled water that Mandi had in her daypack. As soon as the children of the village spot them, they surround them. Mandi finds the loud chorus of "Hello Mister!" a welcome break to the high-pitched shrills of the jungle cicadas. The girls jostle to hold Mandi's hands. Mandi looks down into the upturned faces of the children who skip alongside them. There is not a smile among them until Mandi smiles, then the children shriek with laughter.

Mandi's face is in stark contrast to the faces of the girls. Mandi's white face and neck are blotchy red from heat. Even the whites of her eyes look reddened from the sun. Her brown hair, which usually falls in gentle waves to her shoulders, is plastered to her forehead and neck. In contrast, the faces of the children are deeply tanned, making the brilliant whites of their eyes look almost iridescent. The faces of the young girls are encircled by their starched white Muslim head coverings, making their faces look like framed photos. They are dressed in white and maroon school uniforms. Mandi smiles again, but lifts her eyes quickly to look for someplace to sit down and have an ice cold drink.

Like the children, a few men appear out of nowhere. They greet Asep with familiar hugs and lead him off down the dirt street. Mandi hopes he will find some means of contacting the mining camp. She could use a shower.

A woman in a long tunic comes out of a small wooden building and takes Mandi by the arm. Another woman brings out a sturdy plastic white chair for Mandi to sit on. She gratefully accepts a can of soda. It is not the ice cold drink she longs for—it is room temperature—but it is at least a drink! As the minutes pass Mandi is encircled by more and more women. They wear clean, pressed loose skirts, and blouses and bright red lipstick. 'They're beautiful,' thinks Mandi. 'I could be downtown Jakarta, Singapore, Hong Kong or anywhere Asia, not some jungle kampung.'

Like the children, the women look directly at her. It does not embarrass them when Mandi returns their gaze. Instead, they continue to stare. When Mandi smiles, they quickly return her smile. Someone hands Mandi a big bowl of orange colored rice with a fried egg on top. She feels embarrassed at being watched while she eats. She has still not mastered the 'art' of Indonesian eating—scooping up small amounts of rice and finely cut vegetables with her right hand—

without spilling most of it into her lap. At the mining camp, they provide forks, spoons and knives for her. Here she is served a heaped plate of food without the 'extras'. She manages to get a mouthful, which she conscientiously chews and swallows. Suddenly her eyes swell up with tears. Mandi fans her open mouth with her hand.

"Boy, that's hot!" she says, gasping as she chugs a few swallows of the soda.

The women and children laugh and a buzz of voices fill the air.

Another chair is produced for Asep, who along with his small entourage of men, walks toward them. A second bowl of the orange rice and fried egg is produced, and Asep eats heartily. The women nudge each other and children giggle. Mandi manages to only eat a few bites of the rice when she mixes it with the fried egg.

As Mandi looks above the heads of the small crowd, she notices a small boy who stands apart from the rest. He hides in a shadow against a building. He fidgets and twitches nervously. When he looks up, Mandi quietly catches her breath. His face looks somehow discordant from the rest of his body. His size is that of a small boy, but his face looks like it belongs to an old man. His brow is deeply furrowed and he seems to be arguing with someone, although no one is near.

Mandi gets up and pushes gently through the small crowd, then walks slowly toward the boy. When she gets near, he looks up at her. Like the others in the village, his eyes are a dark chocolate color. For a few seconds the boy's twitching is stilled, and the deep crevices leave his face. He looks like the rest of the curious children in the village. However, his eyes soon dart away and his hands and arms resume their nervous twitching. The deep creases in his brow return, and he runs down the dirt street.

Mandi follows the boy until he disappears down a narrow path into the jungle. She turns and walks slowly back toward the small crowd, which has thinned noticeably. Asep breaks what suddenly seems to be an awkward silence.

"Tomorrow new car. Tonight here."

Mandi smiles at Asep and the women, "Terima kasih<sup>22</sup>." Likewise Asep thanks the women for the food and pays them a

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<sup>22</sup> "Thank you" in Bahasa Indonesian language.

couple of 1,000 rupiah notes<sup>23</sup>. Mandi and Asep walk the length of the main street of the town—exactly twelve stilt houses, one stilt shop and one small, white tiled mosque in length. Mandi feels like the Pied Piper, two girls are holding her hands and a small procession of skipping, running and laughing children follows her.

There are a couple of 'traditional' houses—well...Mandi calls them traditional. They are the same type that Mandi has seen on their drives—faded, gray, tired looking wooden houses. From this close range, however, Mandi realizes that the houses are not old, but rather the raw wood is weather worn from the intense tropical sun. The houses sit atop thin stilts, just inches above pools of stagnant water. Plastic bottles and bags bob in the murky water, and insects float on the plastic islands. Where there is not standing water, there are chickens and roosters pecking about in the dirt. Tall, looming coconut palms shade many of the houses, and each yard has several fruit trees bent with the weight of bananas and watermelon-sized papayas. Mandi has never seen such huge fruit.

Asep stops in front of a house—one that Mandi classifies as 'nontraditional'. It, like the other two nontraditional houses on the street, is freshly painted. It is an electric shade of blue with pastel blue window trim. It has glass windows, unlike the traditional houses, which have only wooden shutters, closed now against the heat of the day. It also has standing water beneath it; however, the house is higher up—a foot or more above the water. A beautiful woman in a loose fitting, brightly patterned batik blouse and long skirt stands in the open doorway and greets Asep and Mandi warmly. She smiles with her full, red lips.

"Nama saya Anisa<sup>24</sup>," says the woman shaking Mandi's hand and then touching her heart briefly.

"Dr. Amanda Webber," says Asep, introducing Mandi.

"Please, call me Mandi," says Mandi. Asep interprets this to the woman who giggles.

Mandi laughs and says quickly, "That's OK. I know. I know. Mandi means 'bath' or 'shower' in Indonesian, and that is something that Indonesians find quite funny. At least I know you'll remember my name!"

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<sup>23</sup> At the time of writing a 1,000 rupiah note is worth about twelve cents (USD).

<sup>24</sup> "My name is Anisa" in Bahasa Indonesian language.

Asep looks at Mandi confused, unable to translate her quick monologue. Mandi smiles and assures him that everything is OK—no translation is necessary.

Asep leaves as Anisa leads Mandi up the wooden ramp over the standing water. They remove their shoes on the verandah area before going into the house. Mandi's mud encrusted hiking boots stand rudely next to Anisa's small, rubber flip flop sandals. Mandi does not want to leave her muddy shoes on the clean, white tile floor, but Anisa motions that it is OK.

The house that Mandi enters is empty. Anisa unrolls a woven mat for Mandi to sit on, then she disappears into another room. Mandi looks around. Not only is there no furniture, but there is no decoration—no photos, no knick-knacks, and no books. This house contrasts sharply with Mandi's 'cozy' flat back in Fremantle, which seems to bulge at the sides with travel momentos, photographs, books and papers.

Anisa returns with two glasses of hot tea and a plate heaped with small, sweet bananas pulled from the tree outside. Mandi loves the black tea, which is served very sweet. She also appreciates the bananas because she didn't eat much of her spicy lunch.

About a half an hour passes during which time Mandi and Anisa communicate with rudimentary hand signals. Mandi has found out that Anisa is twenty-four years old and has two children aged four and two. Anisa has learned that Mandi is from Australia, is forty-three years old and is unmarried with no children. The two latter points obviously shock and intrigue Anisa. Mandi has no husband or children?

When dusk arrives, Mandi indicates that she is going outside. She is surprised at the number of people on the dirt street. A group of children run by, yelling "Hello Mister" as they push bicycle tires along with sticks. Huge dump trucks are parked alongside a few of the houses, and women stroll along the street and chat, balancing small children on their hips and lazily swinging black plastic bags with their free hands. Some women are taking 'bucket baths' next to their houses. They tuck their sarongs securely underneath their arms, then use plastic long-handled mini buckets to scoop rainwater from huge drums and pour it over their heads. They lather with bars of green soap.

On the street, men stand around small, wooden food carts serving noodles, rice, chicken and vegetables. They eat, chat and smoke. The

smoke from clove cigarettes curls upwards and mixes with the smoke coming from small fires roasting corn on the cob. The evening light gives a golden hue to the giant palm fronds and the surrounding thick underbrush of the jungle.

Mandi approaches the small warung, or store. The small shop is piled high with bars of green soap, dozens of packets of two-minute noodles, and row after row of bottled water. Small clear plastic bags of pink, orange and purple candies hang like Christmas lights strung between opposite corners of the shop. And covering the glass case are tightly sealed plastic cups of fluorescent red, green and yellow gelatin.

Mandi leaves with a black plastic bag filled with goodies from the shop. She decides to skip the 'nightlife' here because her headache, which was a dull thud, is now a pounding migraine. Her vision is also beginning to blur. Mandi attributes the migraine to today's long, hot walk and her blurred vision to the smoke from the small bonfires, which is getting thicker and thicker.

Mandi returns to Anisa's house and is relieved to lie down. She can feel the coolness of the tile floor through the thin mattress, and for a brief moment her sunburned arms find relief. Sleep comes too quickly—Mandi hoped to stay awake until Anisa and her family return to the house.

Mandi's restless sleep leads her in and out of a disturbing dream. In front of her stands the little boy she tried to follow, but this time the boy's face is completely hidden in shadow. When she reaches out to the boy, he turns quickly and runs away. She chases him through a thick jungle, desperate to speak to him and to see his face. Branches slap and cut her face and neck, and vines tangle her feet. Suddenly the jungle ends and she skids to a stop atop a ledge overlooking a dark precipice. She grabs onto branches to stop from plunging into the darkness. When she peers over the edge into the precipice's darkness, she sees the boy, falling and spinning. It is then that the boy faces her. She doesn't see the face of the boy, but her own.

Mandi sits bolt upright and strikes out at the branches she feels still stinging her face. The loosened mosquito net, which is what Mandi feels against her body, comes completely untucked by her thrashing. By this time, Mandi is fully awake, her body taut and her eyes wide. She looks frantically about her.

The house is quiet. The moonlight shines through the thin lace curtains making small patterns on Mandi's black daypack. She tries

to slow her breathing. As she lies down, she feels her sweated blouse cold and wet against her back. She looks at her watch: it is 4:00am. Mandi forces herself to use the technique she learned in Ashtanga yoga to control her breathing, but she cannot fall asleep.

At 5:00am, Mandi gives up on sleep and decides to go for a walk. The fine mist makes the air feel thick and cool. The street is eerily quiet, although Mandi hears stirrings in the houses and smells cooking oil. As she walks, her mind wanders. What does her dream mean? Why does it bother her so much—it is just a series of mixed up images brought on from dehydration and too much sun. But she cannot let it go that easily. Nor can she get the image of the little boy out of her head.

As if summoned by her thoughts, the small boy dashes across the street several houses ahead of her. Mandi runs after him, but he is too quick. He runs between the houses, dodging the standing water, and while Mandi does her best to follow, she soon loses him in the shadows. The stench of the stagnant water under the houses drives her back into the street.

Mandi sees a lone figure standing on the other side of the street. As she gets closer she sees that it is a woman whom she does not recognize from the previous day, when Mandi was sure that she met all the women of the village. This woman is barefoot, wears no lipstick and although her clothes are clean, they hang loosely from her. The woman approaches Mandi, then repeatedly points from herself to the child.

"Oh, is that your boy?" asks Mandi.

The woman speaks rapidly but softly. Her urgency makes Mandi uncomfortable. Mandi points to Anisa's house and motions for the woman to come with her. Maybe the woman needs help to find the boy? The woman emphatically shakes her head. She takes Mandi by the hand and gently pulls her.

Mandi follows the woman back toward the store and back in the direction that the small boy ran. When they reach the jungle, Mandi hesitates.

'Well, her house can't be too far from the village,' thinks Mandi, letting herself be led into the jungle.

As they enter the jungle, the path is wet, but passable. The leaves are cut back from the path and the path itself is fairly level. Although the morning sky has started to lighten, the thick overgrowth keeps the jungle in twilight. The further they go into the jungle, the more

firmly the woman grips Mandi's hand, cautiously guiding her. The path rapidly deteriorates and they begin to dodge branches and fallen trees.

'Her house can't be much further,' thinks Mandi.

After twenty minutes, Mandi stops and protests, but the woman is adamant that they continue. About forty minutes in, they reach a spot where there is a slight break in the canopy. Mandi stops walking.

"Where are you taking me?" demands Mandi. She is tired of swatting mosquitoes and navigating her way through the dimly lit jungle. She also knows that if she goes much further she may not be able to get herself back to the village without this woman's help. Mandi turns around to go back to the village.

The woman grabs Mandi by the arm and again speaks urgently.

"I can't understand what you're saying," says Mandi loudly. "If your son is out here, I can't help you find him."

The woman stops speaking. She makes hand movements that look like she is talking on a phone and then she points to her temples and face. She cradles her arms like she is holding a baby and then points away from the village. She speaks with rapid determination and passion, but just as quickly stops.

The woman walks toward Mandi and takes both her hands. She looks up into Mandi's face and simply stares. Mandi feels her urgency to return to the village leave. She does not understand why the woman insists on going further, but she sees that the woman is desperate. Mandi agrees to continue.

Mandi points to herself and says, "Mandi."

The woman smiles and points to herself, "Elly."

Almost another hour passes, then Elly motions quickly for Mandi to stop. Elly runs on and disappears into the dense undergrowth. Mandi's mind races as she looks around. They have walked an overgrown, but distinct path. She lifts her head and sees a patchwork of leaves forming an umbrella against the sun. Mandi wonders how long she can survive alone in the jungle. Will Asep be able to find her? No one saw them go into the jungle, and what are those noises? And what about tree snakes and pythons...? Her head pounds so hard that she can hardly think straight.

Mandi feels an anxiety closing in on her chest, so she starts walking slowly in the direction that Elly went. Vines and branches tangle in her hair and catch her blouse and jeans. She clumsily

brushes them away. She focuses her eyes on the ground directly in front of her and takes her time.

When Mandi looks up she still does not see any sign of Elly. Her ears buzz with mosquitoes and strange jungle noises. She puts one hand on her hip and swats mosquitoes with the other hand, trying to decide if she should follow Elly or turn back for the village. Neither option looks very promising. When she looks up again, she glimpses Elly coming through the underbrush toward her. Elly smiles and whispers to Mandi, pointing ahead. They continue their trek as quietly as they can.

Mandi can see the jungle thinning ahead. A sigh of relief escapes her lips and Elly looks sternly back at her. Mandi nods, indicating that she will be quiet. Maybe she won't die here after all...

If Elly could speak English and tell her what she will see in the jungle, Mandi would not believe her. Mandi crouches at the jungle's edge. She looks down into a long, heavily treed compound of several small, but well maintained buildings. The entire area is surrounded by rolled barbed wire atop tall fencing. A couple of Indonesian men sit smoking cigarettes in the shade of one of the buildings. Two rifles lean against the wall near them. After some time, Elly points to the far left building.

"What's this Elly?" asks Mandi. "Whatever it is they're doing—I don't think they want uninvited visitors."

Mandi motions that they should go around the perimeter of the compound. She is curious about what they are keeping in—or trying to keep out. Why would they have a secured area in the middle of the jungle?

They pick their way slowly through the underbrush. From the other side Mandi sees a series of small satellite dishes and antenna that run the length of the compound.

Mandi looks at her watch. It is 9:30am. In two hours Muslim men all over Indonesia will be attending Friday service—a time set aside for weekly religious instruction and prayer. Mandi does not see a mosque anywhere nearby, but she bets that there will be Muslim men working in the compound. She wonders if they can have a closer look at that time.

Mandi motions to Elly that she wants to go inside the compound. Elly's eyes widen and she emphatically whispers to her what Mandi can only guess are objections. After to-ing and fro-ing, Elly stops talking. Mandi can see that she is trying to make up her mind.

Mandi points at her watch and shows Elly 11:30, and then she points back to the building. Elly nods and leads Mandi around to the north side of the compound. She motions for Mandi to remain and she crawls forward on her belly toward the fence. She stops and starts digging in the ground with her hands. Before long, she pulls up the bottom of the fence.

‘So you’ve done this before,’ thinks Mandi.

Mandi smiles and gives Elly the thumbs up, but she doubts she can fit through the small opening under the fence.

While Mandi waits, she notices that many of the trees and vines are the same as those she saw yesterday along the haul road. The more she looks at them, and gauges their height in comparison to herself and the buildings, the more she thinks they are much taller and thicker than the trees she saw yesterday.

"There’s something different about these trees...Are they taller than usual?" asks Mandi. "Maybe they grow taller where there is less road traffic stress on them? Speaking of stress—I need some aspirin."

Mandi points to the trees, but Elly looks at her confused. Mandi shrugs and opens her bag, pulling out a bottle of aspirin and her water.

Just before 11:30, as Mandi predicted, the guards disappear into a building. When she can hear the familiar crackling sound of a male’s voice over a loudspeaker, she nods at Elly. They have about an hour.

Mandi fits through the small opening under the fence, but only after catching and ripping her blouse and blue jeans. Despite Mandi’s motions, Elly follows her. They move as quickly as they can into the shadow of the closest building. It is lucky for Mandi and Elly that their trespassing, which is captured by cameras, is missed by the security guards, who are also attending midday prayers.

The door to the closest building is propped open. ‘Probably need fresh air in the building,’ thinks Mandi, as all the windows they pass are shut and locked. Mandi has not dared to look into the building for fear that she might look right at someone.

Mandi gets down on her hands and knees and slowly pokes her head around so she can scan the floor. No feet or legs—they are in! She quickly stands up and motions for Elly to follow her. When she turns around she is amazed at what she sees. There is a production line of some type of device.

Mandi walks into the building for a closer look. On the still, black conveyor belts she sees small components—miniature display

screens, small letters and numbers, and attractive casings. Mandi pulls out her e-Helper and looks at it, then she looks back at the components.

"If I didn't *know* that these e-Helpers were produced in New Zealand or Australia, I'd think they were produced right here in the Borneo jungles," whispers Mandi. Mandi walks along the various production lines, looking more closely at the components. "Yup, e-Helpers, *exactly* like this one."

Although the room is fairly small, not an inch of space is wasted. There are several production lines whose end components fall into small holding buckets. All of these buckets face the door through which Mandi entered.

Mandi looks around her. The bright white fluorescent lights remind her of a doctor's office, or maybe it is the antiseptic smell.

On the right wall of the room is a large map of the world. Several countries, mostly in Southeast Asia, are circled in bright green highlighter. Other countries, including New Zealand and Australia, are circled in a pink highlighter.

Close to the door is a tea-making station, and next to that is a large water dispenser. On a small trolley are dirty teacups piled neatly. A trail of ants file noiselessly through the door, up the trolley, and into the dirty teacups. That is the only movement in the room. Everything else is still.

They sneak quietly out of the building and go toward a second building. The bottom windows look frosted, but as they approach the building Mandi sees that it is condensation. Mandi rubs the water droplets from a small corner of the window and peeks in. Now she understands the condensation—the building contains computers, large flat screens and several small but high-powered pocket computers.

"Whoever runs this place has plenty of money," Mandi whispers to Elly. As Mandi speaks she feels edginess like a wave of nausea pass through her body. Mandi bends over and takes several deep breaths. Elly grabs Mandi around the waist.

"I'm OK, just feeling a bit edgy I guess. Damn, I haven't had an anxiety attack since Jabiru," says Mandi. She stands back up and turns again to look at the pocket computers.

Mandi has coveted that pocket-sized computer ever since they came on the market six months ago. They are a true 'smart' plug and play computer, compatible with any e-Helper, home/business computer or internet database—that is where the 'smart' comes in.

The computer can distinguish among operating systems and browsers and adjusts itself accordingly.

Ever since this computer came out, Mandi has mentally created lists of how she can use it, trying to rationalize buying it through research grants. She uses several flora databases in her research, and having these databases on her computer means that wherever she is, she has data at her fingertips. Even out here in the middle of the jungle, Mandi would have access to the latest information.

Mandi's current computer—considered 'robust'—cannot handle the size of even a single database. Despite the extra storage that Mandi bought for her current computer, it crawls under the weight of the multimillion-item database she accesses. And that's only one database—there are several databases that Mandi frequently uses. With a pocket computer, Mandi could have at her fingertips all of these databases as well as her research data, lecture notes and consultancy project information—and she would have room to spare. She also loves the idea of being able to pull out the pocket computer and use its built-in projection display. With that feature she can project images from an image database whether she is speaking in a lecture theatre or doing consultancy in the field.

Before the pocket computers came out, Mandi remembers reading about the controversy that surrounded them. The discussions were particularly heated, and that is why Mandi was surprised at how quickly the controversy was quashed. Apparently limited tests indicated that the electromagnetic radiation given off by one of these pocket computers was 'significantly' higher than that given off by laptops, e-Helpers or even older cell phones. Mandi heard about the debate and before she had a chance to follow up, the safety of the device was approved and the pocket computers were on the market.

Because of her professional and personal interest in pocket computers, she is doubly curious as to what they are being used for here. She motions for Elly to remain in the shadows as she goes toward the back door.

Unfortunately, the door is locked, so Mandi returns to the side of the building. Mandi looks around, but she cannot see Elly anywhere. She turns back to the building and squints through the window, trying to see detail from the large screens' displays. Although she cannot see it clearly, one screen looks like it contains wavy lines that

resemble electroencephalogram<sup>25</sup> data. If only she could get a closer look. Mandi absentmindedly rubs her temples while trying to better read the computer screens. Her migraine sends sharp pains through her temples.

Mandi looks at the building just to the left of her, in front of the production building. She can see that this building has condensation on the windows too. 'Another computer room,' she thinks to herself. 'These people must be loaded!'

Elly appears from around the corner of this building and motions for Mandi to go back up the hill. Mandi looks at her watch, it is not yet 12:00—they still have another thirty minutes before prayers finish. Mandi shakes her head and starts toward Elly, but Elly insistently points back up the hill. Elly's look is determined, so Mandi carefully, but quickly makes her way up the hill and under the wire fence. Again Mandi's blouse gets caught on the fence, and again it rips. Mandi crawls on her belly until she is at the jungle's edge. She crouches and looks through the vines and branches trying to see Elly.

Finally Mandi spots her. Elly is poised at a door to a building directly behind the production building. She has pulled up the front of her t-shirt and Mandi can see the outline of her balled fist inside the shirt. It looks as though she will strike one of the small panes of door glass. Her face is tilted to the side as if listening to something.

'What is she doing?' panics Mandi. 'She can't be serious about breaking a window!'

At that moment, a loud wail comes from the loudspeaker and Mandi sees, but does not hear, Elly push out the window. Elly quickly reaches inside and opens the door. She disappears into the building. Mandi looks from the computer room to the far building, which holds the praying men. Suddenly there is silence. Mandi's heart stops. She watches the door of the far building, expecting it to fling open at any second and men to run out. Instead, there is the sound of a long deep breath and then a second long wail. Elly runs from the building with an assembled e-Helper in each hand.

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<sup>25</sup> *Dorland's Medical Dictionary* defines electroencephalogram as a recording of the potentials on the skull generated by currents coming spontaneously from nerve cells in the brain. Variations in wave characteristics correlate well with neurological conditions.

"Oh my God," says Mandi, standing straight up and hitting her head hard on a branch overhead. Mandi sprints toward the fence and lifts it for Elly. They run quickly into the jungle.

Mandi still hears faint chanting, but she knows they will finish their midday prayers soon, and then they will see the broken glass...

Mandi and Elly make their way as fast as they can through the jungle. This time, however, they are more careful than before. Elly shows Mandi how to move fairly quickly through the jungle without breaking too many branches and vines. Unfortunately this means taking off her hiking boots and running through the thick underbrush in only her socks. There is no time to argue. Mandi does as she is directed. She ties her boot strings together and loops her boots over her shoulder.

About twenty minutes into their new route, Mandi hears heavy rain hitting the leaves overhead. Very few drops make their way through the dense canopy, but the jungle below becomes steamy and oppressive. Mandi finds it hard to breathe and beads of sweat run into her eyes. Her back stings from the fence scratches.

Although Elly looks back at Mandi often, she does not stop. At one point she takes Mandi's boots and daypack from her.

Another forty minutes pass and Elly finally stops. With a wide smile, Elly points to her right. Mandi can see nothing there but more jungle—and particularly thick jungle at that.

"You seem pretty happy that we get to fight our way through the thick stuff now," says Mandi disheartened. "I hope you brought your machete."

Elly smiles and takes Mandi by the hand. She ducks and leads her gently through the thick underbrush into a small room. Elly puts down the e-Helpers, and Mandi's backpack and boots in the middle of the room. She then lights a small kerosene lamp.

Mandi takes a look around her. She feels like she is in an upside down woven basket. All around and above her are long jungle grasses and vines finely woven to make the hut's walls and ceiling. Above the door, hanging from another vine, is a small fresh bouquet of jungle flowers. Two small pots are stacked neatly next to two rolls of woven mat. A few pieces of folded clothing are piled next to the mats.

Elly rolls out a mat and offers Mandi a seat. Elly then disappears and comes back with a bunch of bananas and three coconuts. With her machete, Elly carefully cuts a V shape into the top of a coconut

then hands the coconut to Mandi. She cuts another coconut for herself, and then she cuts a third.

"This really hits the spot. Terima kasih Elly," says Mandi.

Elly smiles. She puts down her coconut and goes to the door. She stretches out her hand and a small hand is placed upon hers. Elly gently closes her hand and leads a child into the room. It is the boy that Mandi saw yesterday! Elly stands behind the boy with her arms draped comfortably around his neck.

"Eko," says Elly.

Mandi gets up to greet Eko, but he rushes behind Elly. Elly talks gently to Eko using her hands to gesture. Eko looks at Mandi and makes hand gestures. Elly repeats the hand gestures, points to Mandi, then makes new gestures and points to the e-Helpers. Slowly Eko comes to stand beside Elly. She nods toward the third coconut. A smile erupts from his face and he grabs the coconut. As he drinks, he looks out of the corner of his eye at Mandi.

Elly motions for Mandi to sit, and then she sits in front of her, with Eko close at her side. Elly indicates that Mandi should put her head forward. When she does, she can feel Elly parting her hair. Soon after she feels the small hands of Eko also parting her hair, looking for ticks. Mandi jumps involuntarily as they cross the spot where she hit her head on the branch. Elly says something to Eko, and soon Mandi feels a wet cloth on the bump.

As Mandi leans forward, she notices that in the tear at the bottom of her jeans, a leech is stuck to her calf. She pulls it off and Eko grabs it from her hand then runs outside. Elly laughs then brings Mandi's head forward again and continues.

When Elly finishes, she takes water from a small bucket and wipes Mandi's dirty face. The cool water provides temporary relief to Mandi's headache.

'Damn pills,' thinks Mandi. 'They haven't touched this one.'

Elly hands Mandi one of her faded t-shirts. Mandi refuses, but Elly insists, pointing to Mandi's back and badly torn blouse. Elly calms Mandi, softly speaking to her while unbuttoning Mandi's blouse. She gently sponges Mandi's scratched back and neck. She then massages Mandi's temples. Mandi feels herself dozing.

After a few minutes, Elly nudges Mandi, indicating that they must go. Mandi stands up, sore and scratched. The three of them walk quickly through the jungle. Eko reminds Mandi of a

leprechaun, not so much in his looks but in how he darts about the jungle, silently disappearing and unexpectedly reappearing.

To her surprise they come to the jungle's edge not at the village, but close to where the vehicle broke down the previous day. Before they are in full view of the haul road, Elly grabs Mandi's arm and desperately tries to communicate. She points to herself and then to Eko. She imitates a monkey, then points to her son's temples and to Mandi's hiking boots.

Mandi reaches out her hand, trying to indicate to Elly that she and Eko should come with her. It is no longer safe here for Elly and Eko. What if they are tracked down as trespassers? Gauging from the security around the production facility, Mandi does not think that uninvited guests would be warmly received. Certainly the mining camp will be safer than Elly's small hut. They can all fly out tonight or tomorrow if necessary.

Elly squeezes Mandi's hand a moment and then releases it. Mandi can see that Elly chooses to remain here in her jungle home, despite the danger. Mandi leaves with the image of a mother and son, standing side by side. Eko's face is now deeply furrowed and he begins speaking to an imaginary person next to him. Mandi watches as Elly squats next to Eko and tightens her embrace. Mandi turns toward the haul road.

A group of men huddles around the burned vehicle. Asep is among them. It is raining lightly and Mandi can hear her boots slop in the red mud.

The men hear her. They stop their conversation and turn to stare. Mandi looks slowly all around her. There is no sign of Elly or Eko. Mandi is left to figure out how much she can tell and to whom.

## 5. The Lesser of Two Evils

*As the U.S. President turns off the light in the Oval Office, he thinks about the conversation he had with the Australian Prime Minister. The newly elected country head wanted to know about his relationship with The Cooperative.*

*The President believes he was vague enough in his conversation that if any pieces of that conversation should be replayed at a future national inquiry, he cannot be implicated in any deliberate wrongdoing. Likewise, he knows that The Cooperative is 'slippery' enough to withstand any scrutiny. He saw them in action before he even thought of running for the Presidential Office.*

*The President tries to push the thoughts of The Cooperative out of his head. He knows—and they continually remind him—that it was through them that he secured his terms of presidency. He worked with them throughout both election campaigns, hoping they would fade into the background after the elections. Unfortunately just the opposite has happened. Recently Max, The Cooperative's leader, has become bolder. He makes more and more decisions on his own, disregarding his partners, most of whom have a more tempered approach to 'business'. Max regularly reminds the President of not only his re-election 'debt' but also the actions of the President's daughter ten years earlier, actions which almost cost the President the 2008 election.*

*December 19, 2013*

*South Kalimantan, Indonesia, Island of Borneo*

When Mandi emerges from the Kalimantan jungle, she and Asep do not leave immediately for the mining camp. The men stand around the burnt vehicle engine for another hour before they push it to the side of the road and take a spare vehicle. As the minutes pass, Mandi becomes more impatient, pacing the road and kicking at stones. What if the men at the compound find out that it was she and Elly who broke into their facility? Is she in danger? Are Elly and Eko in danger? They have to leave this area.

When they finally start their drive back to the mining camp, Mandi is relieved. With every kilometer they put between

themselves and the compound, Mandi feels lighter. If she had been less preoccupied with a clean escape, she might have noticed the looks cast her way by Asep, who wanted to speak with her. And she might have better prepared herself for what lay ahead. Instead, when she reaches the mining camp, she is ambushed.

Asep drives their vehicle up the long dirt road to the mining camp area. Mandi sees Terry, the Senaggin's contract manager and her project contact, come out of the office with four Indonesian men closely following him. One Indonesian man talks very animatedly and points toward the vehicle. Terry leaves them standing at the bottom of the stairs while he approaches the vehicle waving.

Mandi rolls down her window.

"Mandi, I'm glad you're back. I've been getting an earful. You didn't 'visit' anywhere about midday today, did you? These guys are claiming that you've been trespassing."

"Terry, I—" Mandi tries to explain, but Terry cuts her off.

"Shit!" Terry's face quickly reddens. "Whatever reason you had for trespassing, it better be good, because I've got a lot of oiling to do now. I suggest you go back to your room and start packing. When you finish, come by the office." Terry stomps off.

Asep drives slowly toward the sleeping quarters. The same Indonesian man who was talking with Terry meets him in the middle of the road, blocking Asep's way. Terry and the man exchange words, then they both walk toward the vehicle.

"Mandi, give me your bag," says Terry. "They want to check it. One of the conditions of them *not* taking you with them—which is something you *don't* want, believe me—is that they get back whatever it is you took."

Mandi holds fast to her daypack. They have no right to search her bag. Mandi thinks back through the morning. She did not put anything in her bag from the jungle facility, but might Elly or Eko have put anything in there? She has not looked...

Mandi opens the door and gets out, holding her daypack tightly against her chest. She knows she is grasping at straws, but she has to buy time to think. She wrongly trespassed—true—but is there something shady going on in the jungle?

"I will *not* give them my daypack. *They* are the ones who have questions to answer. They have a production line going of what I'm sure is a pirated product. They are producing e-Helpers, and e-

Helpers are produced exclusively in Australia. They are in breach of patent laws," bluffs Mandi.

Mandi is sure that the company owning the patent on e-Helpers is located in either New Zealand or Australia. She has a fifty-fifty chance of guessing the right country.

Mandi is also bluffing on her assertion of exclusive production rights. She remembers reading earlier about the company *not* outsourcing production. This decision made an impression on Mandi because of its novelty. Most businesses outsource production to locations with cheap labor costs for production savings. The parent company *could* have decided to outsource its production line to Indonesia for cost containment. Their choice of outsource location, however, seems suspect. Would a company outsource to a remote Indonesian jungle location?

"You're accused of trespassing and possibly stealing," says Terry under his breath to Mandi. "Believe me, you don't want to spend even one night in an Indonesian jail."

Mandi's strategy for stalling and putting the men on the defensive is ill conceived. She wants to know what is going on at that facility, but she has trespassed. There is no bluffing around that. She reluctantly gives Terry the bag.

"I want my bag opened right here in front of me," says Mandi. Although Mandi's face stays composed, her heart races. She remembers sleeping briefly at Elly's house, at which time they might have put something in her bag...

Terry unzips the main compartment, which contains Mandi's water bottles, her project documents and a notepad. The Indonesian man watches closely and questions Terry, refusing to address Mandi. The man points to the folder of project documents, but Terry shakes his head. Terry flips through the papers in front of the man to assure him that they are the documents from the Senaggin Mine project.

"Is this it, just the main compartment?" asks Terry.

Mandi nods her head, but the Indonesian man grabs the daypack from Terry. Mandi just as quickly grabs the daypack back and hands it to Terry.

"The other compartments are small, but go ahead Terry, open the other zips."

Terry opens up a second section and sees Mandi's ripped blouse.

"Shit Mandi, you could have at least hidden the evidence. It's all right here. He didn't have to bother bringing the digital recording," says Terry.

"What digital recording?" asks Mandi.

"Apparently they have cameras all over that compound. He's got images of you and an Indonesian woman," says Terry.

Now it is Mandi's turn to swear. "Terry, what will they do to Elly? They can't put her in jail— she has a son she has to take care of. They—"

"Mandi, I don't know what they've done with the Indonesian woman. And frankly, that's not my problem. Getting your ass out of Indonesia in one piece is all I'm worried about right now. I don't know what's out there, but whatever it is they don't want you to have any part of it," Terry says curtly.

As Terry is about to close the bag, the Indonesian man snatches it and pulls out Mandi's e-Helper. Mandi tries to grab her e-Helper back, but the Indonesian man is too fast. He looks at it quickly, then turns it over and scans the back. Just as abruptly he returns the e-Helper to Terry.

The Indonesian inquisition continues. The main Indonesian man eyes Mandi up and down. Two other Indonesian men walk behind her, ogling her. Mandi's clothes fit her snugly, especially Elly's borrowed t-shirt, so it is quickly obvious to the Indonesian men and Terry that Mandi has nothing hidden in her t-shirt or jean pockets.

"Are we done?" Terry asks impatiently. He turns to the men and ushers them back toward his office.

Asep drops Mandi off at the sleeping quarters. She is glad to be able to take off her hiking boots. The two e-Helpers that Elly smuggled out of the jungle facility are hidden securely in Mandi's hiking boots. They are pressed so tightly against her ankles that she has black and blue bruise marks. Mandi takes two more aspirin, then showers and packs. She takes her bags with her to Terry's office. The men have left and Terry sits at his desk with his head in his hands.

"Mandi, what the hell was that all about?" asks Terry.

Mandi closes the door to Terry's office, then explains the last twenty-four hours as briefly and clearly as she can. When she hears her own account, she agrees that it sounds farfetched, but something *is* happening right there on the Senaggin mining lease.

"Mandi, if you knew of all the illegal activities going on right here, right outside that door—the illegal mining, logging, prostitution, animal trade, etc—you'd be shocked. And if you tried to stop it, you'd not only fail, but you'd never get anything done. You'd be lucky if you weren't lynched. These 'illegalities' are people's livelihood. It puts food in their mouths. There's been improvement in the last ten years, but it's just a reality of life. I don't know what to say about the production of e-Helpers, except that things are sometimes not as they appear." Terry smirks. "Let me rephrase that—things are *seldom* as they appear."

Terry continues. "You caught me off guard. I've never had to deal with this type of thing before. But I've paid them off to buy you time to get out of the country. Disappear for two weeks. Go to Singapore or somewhere. That's how things work around here. I'll call you from Australia in two weeks—I'm on my break, and we can go from there."

Terry stands up. "If Tom weren't so damned adamant about you being the right person for this job, I'd fire you...and I still might. I don't know what is really going on out there, and I'd like to keep it that way for the time being. It's one less thing I have to do something about. And frankly by their reaction this afternoon, I think whatever's going on out there is messy."

Mandi catches the night boat and charter flight back to Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, where she stays overnight and flies out the next day to Singapore. On the plane, she sleeps. She is tired from her trek in the jungle, and she is still shocked from her abrupt dismissal from the Senaggin Mine.

When Mandi arrives in Singapore, she sorts through her thoughts. It is only then that she realizes that Elly had foreseen the ambush of the men at the mining camp. When they were at Elly's house, Elly insisted that Mandi hide the e-Helpers in her boots. Mandi protested but Elly was adamant. Elly also tried desperately to explain something to Mandi, but Mandi could not understand her. Mandi finds it very frustrating to work in a country where she knows so little of the language. Bahasa Indonesian is an easy language to pick up, and Mandi has picked up quite a few words in her short time in Kalimantan, but she has not learned enough to discuss what Elly was obviously so desperate to tell her.

The first two days in Singapore, Mandi is so concerned about Elly's welfare that she sees Elly's face in any brown-skinned Asian woman she sees—and there are many.

Mandi's concerns about Elly are well founded. While Mandi's daypack was searched at the mining camp, Elly's house was being ransacked. Several men from the compound, armed with rifles and machetes, ruthlessly slashed the beautifully woven walls. Had Elly and Eko been inside, their fate would have been the same. Elly had predicted the backlash and had fled with Eko after she took Mandi to the haul road. She and Eko would not return for at least a month.

After those first two days of thinking of Elly and Eko and beating herself up for not foreseeing what transpired at the mining camp, Mandi's days and nights fill quickly with research. Who holds the patent for e-Helpers? What Australian or New Zealand company produces them?

What should have been an easy internet search turns into extended investigative research. Mandi easily comes up with the name of the business that holds the patent for e-Helpers. Salvage & Rescue Inc. (SR Inc.) is located in New Zealand, but company specifics beyond this general information are sparse. Mandi cannot even find the specific city in New Zealand where SR Inc. is based.

Mandi gets creative in trying to locate a contact name for SR Inc. She goes into stores and checks the information that comes with new e-Helpers. The telephone number dials through to an India-based call center. They cannot—or will not—give her the information she seeks. She goes into internet-based chat rooms and list servers to see if she can find or obtain internal company contacts. Again, she runs into dead ends, locating more call center numbers. Finally Mandi digs into subscription-only research archives. She remembers reading a published paper on the e-Helpers when they were first marketed. Perhaps the name associated with that research can provide a lead into SR Inc.

The research angle provides a lead and Mandi's luck turns. She finds that a 'Klaus Baumgartner' was co-author on not one, but several e-Helper related publications. After dozens of long distance calls, Mandi contacts what she assumes is 'her' Klaus Baumgartner. On his answering machine she leaves a short message that is hopefully 'interesting' enough to get the right person's attention. She says that she has confidential information regarding the questionable production of SR Inc.'s patented e-Helpers. Mandi is bluffing again.

She is not sure whether exclusive production rights are held within New Zealand since she cannot find anything specifically stating that. Now it is a waiting game. Will Klaus return her call?

Mandi sits outside the Borders Bookstore Complex sipping an extra large Columbian coffee, waiting for her e-Helper to ring. In the meantime, she finds distraction in the bright Christmas lights and decorations hanging over Orchard Road. Across the street is a monumental Christmas tree with blue glass bulbs the size of basketballs. The street buzzes with chatter and laughter. Mandi watches the passersby—the diversity of life here in Singapore is entertaining. Mandi sees the full spectrum, from fully covered Muslims to scantily clad, fashionable Asian girls.

As Mandi sips her coffee, her e-Helper rings with an incoming call from a New Zealand number. She cannot display the full number because it has a block on it, so she cannot tell if it is one of the numbers she had dialed earlier, but it *has* a New Zealand area code. A man by the name of Marcus Waller introduces himself as the President of SR Inc.

Mandi drops her bluff. With Marcus on the phone, she plans to reveal what she has come to believe is the 'truth': she suspects that SR Inc. is exploiting cheap labor in Indonesia to produce their e-Helpers.

Exploitation of natural resources and/or labor goes against all Fair Trade business codes of ethics. In the last several years, Fair Trade has gained popularity and has become a cause embraced by the public. Although there are laws regarding Fair Trade, they are specific to countries and states. What has a greater impact than law is the pressure that the masses apply. If the public finds out that a company is engaged in Unfair Trade, *all* of that company's products are boycotted. Several strong, affiliated volunteer organizations coordinate global protests against companies participating in Unfair Trade. The consequence of such protests and boycotts is much more effective and destructive than anything that could be imposed by law.

Unfair Trade is a topic for which Mandi has a great deal of passion. She was heavily involved with the Southeast Asia volunteer affiliate for several years. She does not believe in exploitation of any type—of the environment, of the local flora or fauna, or of offshore labor.

Mandi opens the conversation with Marcus on a friendly tone. She truly *does* admire SR Inc.'s initial research into the impact of the e-Helper's electromagnetic radiation. Instead of simply selling the new device, SR Inc. went one step further. When the e-Helper was first put on the market, the company actually performed and published research on the impact of the e-Helper's electromagnetic field. They showed that the e-Helper's electromagnetic radiation reading was below (approximately half) the recommended electromagnetic rating for electronic devices. When Mandi searched for an SR Inc. contact name, she re-read the company's published papers on e-Helper electromagnetic research.

When Mandi re-read SR Inc.'s research papers, she remembered her initial impression of the company, which was positive. The company *could* have sold their product without extended research, but they did not. SR Inc. had displayed concern for the welfare of the public by thoroughly investigating the electromagnetic fields emitted by their e-Helpers. She is used to companies with a focus only on their bottom lines. SR Inc. seemed different from the others, but perhaps she was wrong in her initial assessment.

After Mandi's opening praise, she turns the phone conversation with Marcus to business, and to her true reason for calling. "I wish my conversation with you could be all praise for your business practices Marcus," says Mandi. "However, what I'm calling about questions your business decisions regarding your production facilities."

Marcus sounds confused, so Mandi continues. "Do you incorporate Fair Trade in your offshore production facilities?"

"Offshore production facilities?" asks Marcus.

"Yes, offshore production facilities. Are you paying offshore employees a fair and equitable wage? Are you practicing Fair Trade or are you exploiting your labor force?" asks Mandi.

Marcus's reserve is gone. "Who are you and why are you making groundless accusations?"

"My accusations are not unfounded," counters Mandi. "I have in my possession two e-Helpers produced outside of what you claim is your 'only' production plant—located in New Zealand. *And* these e-Helpers were produced in a developing country. The evidence doesn't look good for SR Inc. Do you know the implications for conducting Unfair Trade?"

Mandi can tell by the tone in Marcus's voice that he is outraged. If Marcus were defensive in his anger, it would seal his fate. That would indicate to Mandi that SR Inc. *is* involved in Unfair Trade practices. His vehemence, however, is not aimed at Mandi.

Marcus has a lot at stake. Mandi thinks Marcus is angry for one of two reasons: either he *is* conducting Unfair Trade and has been caught *or* he is the target of a pirating ring. Actually, there is an entirely *different* reason for his anger.

Marcus's anger and fear runs much deeper. It is true that e-Helpers are a large revenue source for SR Inc. and those funds support the business that SR Inc. is actually in, namely using parabilities to help people. The revenue from e-Helpers supports SR Inc.'s research department, which produces tools to assist them in rescue operations. The revenue also helps them further research the parabilities of Marcus and the other parapersons comprising SR Inc. Marcus is concerned about the revenue, but he is more concerned about the publicity that will ensue if Mandi makes this accusation public. SR Inc. functions as well as it does *because* he and the others with parabilities can work outside the limelight of attention.

Mandi can understand Marcus's insistence on evaluating the pirated e-Helpers. SR Inc. *does* have everything at stake. However, she does not want to send him the evidence. It does not sound like Marcus is lying about having his patent stolen, but what if he is? Mandi can detect a lie when she speaks with someone face-to-face, but she is talking with Marcus long distance. She does not know Marcus—perhaps he is a good actor?

After a lengthy discussion, Marcus and Mandi reach an agreement. Mandi will fly to Auckland in three days. Rather than meet in Singapore, Marcus suggests meeting in New Zealand so they have access to the SR Inc. research department. They can use the company's research facilities to assess the e-Helpers that Mandi has with her. The e-Helpers, Mandi's evidence, do not have to leave Mandi's possession. Mandi agrees.

As Mandi leaves the Borders complex, her e-Helper rings again. This time it is Alan.

"You're where?" exclaims Mandi. "But you're not supposed to be here for another few days! Of course, I'll be right there!"

Alan was not scheduled to fly into Singapore for another two days. However, he finished his project and caught an earlier flight. Alan arrived two hours ago and is waiting for Mandi in the lobby of

her hotel! This gives them three days before heading off to New Zealand.

Alan sets the stage for the next three days by greeting Mandi in the hotel lobby with a huge bouquet of long-stemmed red roses. Mandi has a surprise of her own in her bag. She had eyed a beautiful black lace negligee in 'Victoria's Secret', but decided that it was too expensive for such a small piece of material! However, on her way to the hotel she changed her mind. She'd been having a rough patch with Alan and they both promised to try harder at their relationship. The negligee is not a typical Mandi purchase, but why not? She wants to make an effort at spicing up their relationship.

The next three days pass in a whirlwind, time being split between the bedroom, the restaurants and the sites of Singapore. Mandi loves the relaxing afternoons they spend along the river at Boat Quay and the night safari at the Singapore Zoo. She enjoys the incense smells that waft through the streets of Little India and she loses herself in the computers, neon and glitz at the IT mega-mall.

Mandi's favorite Singaporean site is the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple in Little India. As soon as they walk into the temple, Mandi feels like she has wandered through a door into another world. Gone are the sounds of car horns and the smell of car fumes. Instead, Mandi hears the muffled chants of pilgrims and the tinkling of dozens of gold bracelets. There are people everywhere—lining up for monks' blessings and sitting cross-legged in meditation. The women are dressed in gold trimmed saris of brilliant reds, purples, greens and blues. The inside of the temple has a soft glow from wall-mounted gas lanterns and hundreds of votive candles. The air is thick with sandalwood incense. Mandi sits in the atmosphere of the temple for over an hour.

During her time in the temple Mandi feels herself relaxing. She has gone through a series of intense emotions lately: fear for Elly and Eko's well-being, concern for her own professional image, and anger at potentially uncovering a company engaged in Unfair Trade. Mandi has felt the stress knotting up in her shoulders for several days. As she sits in the temple, she feels the stress slowly leave her body.

On the night before they are scheduled to fly to New Zealand, they plan to dine at Raffles Hotel<sup>26</sup>. Since Mandi expected to be at a

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<sup>26</sup> Raffles Hotel, named after Sir Stamford Raffles, is a reminder of colonial Singapore and includes an upmarket hotel and restaurant.

mine site, she did not bring any clothes appropriate for fine dining. Mandi asks Alan to go with her and is surprised at his tasteful choice of evening gowns. Like her, Alan usually wears casual clothing, so she has no idea about his eye for elegance.

As she tries on the clothes, Mandi realizes more fully the impact her dismissal has had on her. She knows that it has shaken her professional image. The consulting circle in Australia is small, and if she blows a single project through 'unprofessional conduct' that news will spread like wildfire. Such 'gossip' could easily result in the end of her consultancy career. What surprises Mandi is not the uncertainty she feels in her professional life, but rather the insecurity that has crept into her personal life. When she first saw Alan she was happy but somewhat withdrawn. Her usual confidence was obviously shaken. Alan's attention and 'spoiling' over the past couple of days has started to quell Mandi's overall anxiety and has given her a focus apart from her professional image.

At Raffles, Mandi and Alan relax to the heavenly sound of a string quartet. Mandi feels elegant, dressed in a graceful black evening gown whose spaghetti straps, low neckline and drop waist are trimmed in tiny blood-red beading that match her maroon stiletto pumps. For the first time in months, Mandi feels like dancing and laughing.

Mandi also feels amorous, and Alan looks irresistible. During dinner Mandi slips her right foot out of her new red pumps and inches it slowly up the front of Alan's left leg. Alan works hard to maintain his composure, as the nearby tables cannot see the happenings under their table. Long white tablecloths are draped in full folds to the floor. Mandi winks.

By the time Alan and Mandi reach their hotel room, Alan can hardly contain his passion. He wants to rip Mandi's dress from her, but Mandi holds up her hand and stops him. It is Mandi who is calling the shots tonight. She pours them a bubble bath and she lights candles. She takes off her new stilettos and pours champagne into them, then toasts their time in Singapore. She keeps the pace slow and sensual, as she has all evening.

While Mandi enjoys her reunion with Alan, Marcus and the team at SR Inc. prepare for her visit. Just as Mandi is suspicious of Marcus, so too is Marcus suspicious of her. Is Mandi really who she claims to be—a university lecturer and mediation consultant? Is her concern Fair Trade, as she claims, or does she have another, ulterior

motive? Does she want to expose SR Inc. and disband their parabilities?

It is this latter question that leads Marcus down a frightening line of thought. Might Mandi have ties to Dirkman of the European Union (EU) Commission? Dirkman gave orders to kill Marcus almost exactly ten years earlier because Marcus refused to cooperate with his para-research unit (PPU). Might Dirkman have located their small group of parapersons with the PPU's new paralocator system? It is rumored that the PPU might have a paralocation system that will be able to detect all individuals with parabilities within a radius of twenty kilometers.<sup>27</sup>

The goal of the PPU is multi-pronged. They want to flush out all individuals with parabilities worldwide. These talented individuals will be put into paraprisons and forced to cooperate with Dirkman's personal and political agenda. Is Dirkman already onto them? Might the trip they took to Europe only two years ago have provided Dirkman with a link to their location in New Zealand?

As soon as Marcus gets off the phone with Mandi, he speed dials contacts in Australia. He needs an investigation and fast. He wants to know everything about Dr. Amanda Webber—her work, her hobbies, her interests, her contacts—everything. He needs a full report within twenty-four hours.

Next Marcus calls a meeting of the small core team of SR Inc. individuals with parabilities: Klaus, Sandra, Maria, Monika and Barry. He will bring Herbert, Aroha and Cynthia into the conversation later, after he finds out more about Mandi. As the group assembles, Marcus thinks about how fortunate he is. He has been able to gather a tight, loyal band of special individuals with the same focus, namely the desire to use their parabilities to help others.

Marcus looks around the room. Everyone chats while they wait for the meeting to begin. Klaus is the Knowledge Manager for SR Inc. and the group's paralocator. He sees a glow around individuals with parabilities. Klaus was the person responsible for locating Marcus ten years ago, before Marcus even heard of parabilities! Sandra is an emotiopath. With her skills she can intuitively detect intense emotions, such as moods, feelings, anxieties, arousals, etc. Maria, Marcus's wife, is a paraseer. She can use her eyes like everyone else *or* she can swap her paravision skills to either

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<sup>27</sup> See *Xperts: The Paradoppelganger*.

'binocular' or 'microscope' mode, giving her incredibly flexible sight. Monika is a paralocator who functions much like the PPU's paralocation system. Monika's parabilities, however, far exceed the supposed twenty kilometer range of the PPU system. After meeting someone, Monika can determine that person's location, beginning with the continent and getting increasingly more specific. Barry is a doppelganger and has the parability of paraprojection. He can project images of himself that appear real, not only to sight but also to touch. And there is Marcus himself, a physicist who has telekinetic powers. Using his numerous pseudohands, Marcus can move small and large objects and can reach through most solids, except lead. Marcus can also speed up his subjective time, which has enabled him to escape from situations where he might otherwise have been killed.

Although their group appears to be eclectic, their parabilities and personalities are well suited. Marcus feels very lucky to be part of this group.

When everyone has arrived, Marcus begins the meeting. He briefs them on his telephone conversation with Dr. Amanda 'Mandi' Webber. Klaus is particularly interested in what transpired between Marcus and Mandi because he initially received the unusual message.

Like Marcus, the group fears some connection to the PPU and Dirkman in Europe.

"I've requested an investigation into both Mandi and the PPU," assures Marcus. "I've requested that the information on Mandi be delivered within twenty-four hours, so we should have something tomorrow morning. The PPU report will take longer, but hopefully there will be enough in the report that we can determine the likelihood of whether she has a PPU affiliation."

Marcus hopes the meeting will act as a brainstorming session into Mandi's possible motives and their possible responses. He is not disappointed. The discussion among the group is lively and the views varied. After several hours, Marcus wraps up.

"Let's meet again tomorrow morning, at which time I'll have the report on Mandi," says Marcus. "With more information, we'll be able to put together a plan of action. In the meantime, I'd like us—individually and with each other—to continue brainstorming various scenarios and options. We've been working together as a strong team for over two years now—and some of us longer. We've helped numerous people who might otherwise have died without our joint

parabilities. We will not let one woman—whatever her affiliation—deter us. We have too much to offer."

The group files out of the room, lost in thought. What Marcus says is true. The group means a lot to each one of them. Within the group they have found friendship and support. For Maria, Marcus, Barry, Klaus and Sandra that support has meant living a 'normal' life as part of a community, rather than living life as outcasts. Through various avenues, these individuals learned of their parabilities. They also learned that these parabilities make them freaks and in some people's eyes, dangerous. Individuals such as Dirkman view their parabilities so threatening that killing parapersons seems the only option beside lifelong control and/or imprisonment. For Monika, the group meant the discovery of her parabilities, after which time her life and her options have opened up.

As a group, they find great reward and satisfaction. SR Inc. is regularly called upon in New Zealand and more recently in other countries to respond to emergencies. They have also established a strong professional and personal relationship with Jenny, New Zealand's Prime Minister, through whom they receive requests for rescue services outside of New Zealand. On numerous occasions, SR Inc. has responded to natural disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes, saving dozens of lives. SR Inc. has also responded to fires and explosions, saving both lives and infrastructure.

They are now faced with a person who might—knowingly or unknowingly—expose SR Inc. to the public. Her exposure could ruin everything for which they have worked so hard.

Maria and Marcus are glad that they have another hour before their children—Lena, aged five, and Stephan, aged nine—finish their afternoon classes. They will ask their children's tutors, Inge and Rolf, to keep the children busy after school with a project so that Marcus and Maria can have time for themselves.

They head to the beach, one of their favorite spots on Great Barrier Island. En route, they pass through the Winter Garden where a whirlpool empties into a natural waterfall. They walk just close enough to feel both the cold mist from the waterfall and the hot vapor from the whirlpool.

When they reach the beach, Marcus drops their beach towels onto a pile, and they take off their clothes. Both Marcus and Maria hope that the refreshing saltwater will clear their heads. This afternoon their discussions have been serious. They have talked about losing

SR Inc., leaving Great Barrier Island, and returning to a life on the run.

Maria remembers her first months with Marcus. The PPU pursued Marcus until they finally caught him. They planned to either control him for their own political gain *or* kill him. If it came down to it, Maria knows which route Marcus would have taken. He would have chosen death over a life of being controlled or imprisoned. Sure, she and Marcus worked together to get Marcus out of the high security prison in Krems, sixty kilometers upstream from Vienna, but will they be as lucky if Marcus is caught a second time? Can she put the children at risk? It has been ten years since the PPU pursued Marcus. Will they be better prepared to capture and hold Marcus a second time?

As they float in the water Marcus looks up and down the coastline. He surveys their home and the home of their parafriends and the estate's staff. This location is not only safe but also idyllic. Besides the estate area and a few houses in the distance, the coastline is untouched and wild. Beautiful trees sway gently in the breeze and a few birds soar lazily overhead. Marcus fell in love with this island the very first time he saw it. He cannot imagine living anywhere else.

Marcus looks at Maria. She floats on her back, letting the gentle waves rock her to and fro. He swims over to her and kisses her forehead. Maria opens her eyes and looks at Marcus. They both smile. For a moment they push their fear of losing their paradise out of their minds. They need to bring themselves into the present.

Maria takes Marcus's hand and they swim toward shore. Marcus watches as Maria swims gracefully through the water. He loves the sight of his wife swimming. Her body glistens as she rises to the top to draw a breath and then submerges again. Maria is a powerful swimmer. When they play and race in the water, she easily keeps pace with Marcus.

When they reach the shore, Marcus leads Maria to their piled beach towels. But instead of handing Maria her towel, Marcus grabs them and runs playfully but quickly toward the trees. Maria chases him. When he reaches the trees, he begins building something. Maria laughs when she sees that he is building a fort. Maria and Marcus have shared stories about building forts as children. Maria used to love building forts in the living room of her childhood home, draping blankets over the corners of couches and chairs until she had a labyrinth of tunnels and small, dark rooms. The fort that Marcus

builds on the beach is a single room. Before she knows it Marcus disappears inside the fort. The only thing visible is Marcus's outreached hand inviting her in.

Maria is surprised to find that Marcus's fort has a beach towel floor and a candle. When they left the house for a quick swim, she wondered why Marcus grabbed such a large bundle of beach towels—now she knows why! Marcus had mentioned 'distraction', but she thought he was talking about the swim! Marcus obviously has other distractions in mind...

Although Marcus and Maria enter the fort in a playful, spirited mood, their lovemaking is gentle and loving. The intensity of the afternoon's discussions has left them reflective and mentally exhausted. In each other's company they forget about Mandi and the PPU and the threat that hangs over them. Instead they shut down their minds and open up their bodies and their senses.

That evening the house is filled with quiet conversations. Lena and Stephan are happy to watch a documentary on 'Our Closest Relatives: Primates Around the World.' They learn about monkeys, gibbons, proboscis monkeys, apes and orangutans. As an animal activator, Stephan can tell animals what to do without actually verbalizing directions. This parability has given Stephan an insatiable curiosity about any and all animals. Stephan is also able to look around corners and like his father, influence his subjective time.

Although Marcus, Maria and the other parapersons retire to their rooms earlier than usual, no one sleeps well, except Stephan who dreams about a land of red haired orangutans...

By mid morning, Marcus has a report on Dr. Amanda 'Mandi' Webber in hand. He quickly scans the content before the meeting with the group. When Marcus enters the room, his brow is less creased than the previous day.

"From this report, I can see no link—not even a tenuous link—between Mandi and the PPU," says Marcus. He smiles broadly, looking directly at Maria. A collective sigh fills the room.

"We were in agreement yesterday that a connection between Mandi and the PPU would have been—in essence—the beginning of the end for SR Inc. It was for all of us, a nightmare scenario."

"But," continues Marcus enthusiastically. "That is not the case. The largest part of our nightmare is over. Anything other than PPU involvement seems light in comparison! To celebrate, I think Aroha, Herbert and Cynthia should join us."

On cue, the door opens and the three others enter the room. They push before them a cart beautifully decorated with small plates of strawberries and three bottles of Dom Perignon champagne.

"Let's toast to our good news," says Marcus. "But remember, we still have a Plan B to formulate this morning, so easy on the champagne! Although we don't have the PPU looming overhead, we still have an accusation of Unfair Trade to contend with."

As glasses are passed and toasts are made, Herbert, Aroha and Cynthia join in the relieved chatter of the group. After everyone is settled, Marcus reads excerpts from the report on Mandi.

*Dr. Amanda 'Mandi' Webber is a university lecturer of Environmental Impact Studies at Baxter Holmes University in Perth, Western Australia. She regularly supplements her income by taking employment as a mediation consultant in the mining industry. She has a reputation in the consultancy field as being an outstanding, creative negotiator—second only to her mentor, Dr. Herbert Folsum, who teaches at the same university and is the chair of the department.*

*Mandi is currently employed on a short-term consultancy project based in South Kalimantan, Indonesia. However, she has been removed from the mine site indefinitely because of a recent trespassing 'incident'. We are currently investigating that 'incident' and will provide more detailed information. To date we have determined that Mandi did not act alone. She worked with another woman (Indonesian), named Elly.*

*Mandi is currently in Singapore with her boyfriend Alan Peters. They are scheduled to arrive in Auckland (at the request of SR Inc.) on 25 December 2013 to meet with SR Inc. representatives. While in Singapore, Mandi has been intensely researching Fair Trade re: SR Inc. She has been involved with Fair Trade volunteer organizations in the past.*

Marcus continues reading, skipping to a part of the section titled Professional History. "This part may not pertain to us directly in our discussion today, but I think it gives us insight into *who* Mandi is. She has had some interesting experiences..."

*Mandi was the key negotiator involved in what the press called the 'Newman Project', which took place in late 2003, in Newman,*

Western Australia. The Newman Project appeared to be an archetypal negotiation. There was an internal mining company dispute between union and non-union workers. Mandi was to conduct a series of half-day workshops followed by an eco-survival package.

The Newman Project turned out to be anything but straightforward. It was not a dispute between union and non-union workers. Instead the Newman Project was a complex situation involving sibling rivalry for ownership of the lucrative mine site. The players were two sons and a father. When the father became seriously ill, he contacted the younger son, who is in the electronics industry, and asked him to return. The father spoke of nothing but the younger son's arrival. The older son, who had run the day-to-day operations of the mine for several years, was threatened by the younger son's return. It was a classical case of the 'return of the prodigal son'<sup>28</sup>. The older son was jealous. As a result, he staged the 'dispute', which in turn required the hiring of Mandi as negotiator.

What was planned and what actually occurred could not have been predicted by anyone. After attending five half-day team-building workshops led by Mandi, a hand-selected group of fifteen people (including Mandi and the two brothers) went to Rudall River National Park, a remote park in Western Australia. They were going to participate in a ten-day eco-survival package to apply their newly learned team skills. Within that group was an 'instigator' hired by the older brother to cause problems. These problems were meant to convince the younger brother that he did not want to be involved with the mine. The older brother wanted to buy out the younger brother's share of the mining company.

While the team was at their remote location, a hurricane came in over the Pilbara. Heavy rains there and in the Kimberleys caused flash floods in Rudall River. The group was climbing in a gorge when the flash flood came through. The lead tracker, who was also a

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<sup>28</sup> The parable of the Prodigal Son can be found in the Bible in Luke's Gospel. In brief, the parable tells of a young son who goes away and squanders his share of the father's estate. The son returns later and is welcomed with open arms by the father. The older brother, who has stayed and toiled on the estate, is angry at the father's warm reception of the younger son.

trained and experienced SES<sup>29</sup> volunteer, tried to reach the younger son, who was caught on a ledge. The tracker, however, was swept away in the flood. The tracker died and the younger son suffered severe injuries. Also lost in the flood were the group's communication tools, two satellite e-Helpers, their food, and their medical supplies.

Mandi held the group together as best she could, but she did not have the required bush skills. Without outside help, the younger son would have died from injuries. The rest of the group might have survived on water until help arrived, but that is speculation only. As it happens, help did arrive.

One of the persons within the group was an Aborigine. It is speculated that the Aborigine communicated in some manner with other Aborigines in the area. Help arrived in an unusual form: an Aboriginal family (two children, one woman and one man) who had just walked in from the Central Desert. With that family came bush skills that enabled the group to survive.

The group, including the Aboriginal family, spent two weeks in the Rudall River area. The flooding had cut off both dirt roads into the park. That fact adds to the intrigue surrounding the appearance of the Central Desert Aborigines.

The group emerged from the eco-survival tour two weeks later. The younger son survived, and became majority owner of the mining company. To date the older son still manages the day-to-day operations at the Newman Mine. This unpredicted outcome is attributed to Mandi's extraordinary negotiation skills, which excel even in unusual and extreme circumstances.

At this point, Marcus looks up. He can see by the faces of everyone in the room that they are as interested in meeting Mandi as he is.

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<sup>29</sup> SES stands for State Emergency Service—a Western Australian service that takes a lead role in managing the State's actions for floods, cyclones, storms, earthquakes and tsunami threats.

## 6. A Crescent Moon

*Being the child of a politician is not easy. Combine that pressure with the stress of trying to define one's own identity, and well, there may be hiccups along the way. Stephanie's life is a series of hiccups in her father's eyes, but in her own eyes, life means following one's convictions, something her father must have forgotten when he became a politician.*

*This is the tenth Christmas that Stephanie is spending with her friends, rather than her family. Her father supported her chosen profession, environmental research, until he got into politics. After his decision to lead a public life, having things—a big house, a big car, the right friends and the right networks—became more important than having an environment that we can proudly pass onto the next generations.*

*Sure, she bounced from fad to fad in search of her 'calling', but when she heard about Dr. Ramu Visra while living in an ashram in India, she knew that it was more than a passing whim. With him she used her education in environmental science and in him she found an inspirational mentor. She attributed her father's hate of Ramu to his alternative views, but it was her father's warning that rang in her ears before she passed out after the car 'accident' that she and Ramu had while en route to a Colorado conference ten years earlier. As far as Stephanie was concerned, her father was implicated in Ramu's death because he had warned her of an impending 'accident' if Ramu went public with his findings. Even if he did not do it, he was an accomplice.*

*Stephanie survived the wreck, and she vowed to avenge her lover's death, even if it meant bringing down her own family.*

*December 25, 2013*

*New Zealand*

Only one week has gone by since Mandi was 'kicked off' the Senaggin Mine in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, but it feels like light years have passed. In that week, Mandi has accused a company of Unfair Trade, has been invited by that same company to come to New Zealand with all expenses paid, and has had a mini whirlwind vacation in Singapore! What a close to the year. Mandi does not know that there are still a couple more surprises awaiting her before her year is finished.

As Mandi looks out of the New Zealand-bound flight, she enjoys the Singapore twilight. She picks out spots where she and Alan visited. She is amazed at the compactness of the island, especially in comparison to Australia, her home 'island', which is anything but compact.

Although Mandi loves the eateries and stores of Singapore, she misses the open spaces of Australia. Perhaps it is the arrival of the holidays that make her homesick. Today is Christmas, and she and Alan spent it shopping and eating and touring Singapore, just as they had the previous two days. She has never spent a holiday outside of Australia, and she misses her family's Christmas tradition. Each Christmas day the family packs a picnic basket of salads, and the whole family spends the day at the beach. They eat, play in the surf with nieces and nephews, talk, doze and eat some more.

The Christmas tradition that Mandi remembers is exactly the type of Christmas that Maria and Marcus and their children enjoy at their home on Great Barrier Island, New Zealand.

On Christmas Day, Maria packs up leftovers from their feast on Christmas Eve. In the picnic basket are Marcus's favorites: containers of a salad garnished with pumpkinseed oil, potato salad, and apple strudel. Marcus also packs a bottle of his favorite Styrian wine: Schilcher. Lena helps Maria and Marcus pack by preparing her own picnic basket in which she carefully places several small stuffed animals and a small container of chocolate covered strawberries, a favorite of hers. Laden with picnic baskets, beach towels and shade umbrellas, Marcus, Maria and the children make their way slowly to the beach.

As always, Stephan runs ahead of his parents, calling out to his dolphin friends. Although Lena tries to keep up, her little legs cannot move as quickly as her big brother's legs. By the time Lena, Marcus and Maria reach the beach, Stephan is waiting impatiently to go into the water. Several of his dolphin friends jump and dive in the shallows. Maria and Marcus laugh as they watch Lena and Stephan splash in the water with the gentle mammals.

Thanks to Stephan, who has ordered the insects to stay away from their picnic, the family has a tasty, bug-free picnic lunch. After lunch, Stephan, who likes to impress Lena, decides that they will not only build the world's biggest sandcastle but also recruit crabs to guard it. Marcus and Maria watch as the children work together to build a foundation for what appears to be a huge sandcastle.

"We're so lucky that the kids play together well," says Maria. "It's so remote here that I sometimes wonder if we should introduce them to other kids. They lead sheltered lives. I know we have to be careful because of their parabilities, but sometimes I wonder what we could do for them socially."

"They seem to get along well with everyone on the estate," says Marcus.

"Yes, but we're all adults here," responds Maria. "They're comfortable around adults, but what about being around kids their own age? I just don't want them to be 'different' socially as well as because of their parabilities."

"Well, we're going to Auckland tonight to meet up with Mandi and Alan. Why don't we take the kids along? We can take them to a few places and we can meet up with friends who have kids," says Marcus. "However, we'll have to talk with them before we leave about our family 'secret'. They have to keep their parabilities in check when we're around others."

Marcus's concern about the possible exposure of their parabilities is well founded. Stephan uses his parabilities openly, and without much forethought. Marcus points toward where Lena and Stephan are building the sandcastle. Stephan has tired of filling and carrying buckets of sand, so he has organized an assembly line of crabs, which push up sand with their claws. Stephan uses that sand to build the castle walls. Two crabs are already standing guard at the sandcastle's entrance, and they make Lena giggle and clap.

Mandi is surprised when Marcus and his entire family meet her and Alan at the Auckland airport. They seem to be genuine people, but she knows she has to keep her distance, at least until she determines whether SR Inc. is involved in Unfair Trade. Keeping her distance is especially difficult with the child called Lena. She is a precocious little girl who seems to have taken an instant liking to Mandi. From the start, Mandi has a little shadow.

Mandi finds that Marcus and Maria are the perfect hosts. Marcus has reserved a room for her and Alan in a hotel in Ponsonby and has insisted that they call him on his e-Helper if they need anything. Marcus, Maria and the children are in an apartment nearby the hotel. Marcus has arranged a taxi to take them to their hotel, but before they leave, they make tentative plans to meet in the morning over breakfast. Maria can join them for a short time before she takes the children to a friend's house.

Mandi is impressed with Marcus's restraint. She *knows* that Marcus wants to see the stolen e-Helpers as soon as possible, and she cannot blame him. She knows that she would want to see the evidence if she were accused of Unfair Trade! Although she is tired from the flights, she assumed that Marcus would want a meeting as soon as she arrived. Instead, she and Alan are whisked off to the hotel.

As soon as Mandi and Alan are gone, Maria, Marcus and the children go to the nearby airport café. They sit at a table for six. Sandra and Klaus join them.

"Well, Sandra, what do you think?" asks Marcus.

Marcus asked Sandra to pose as a traveler and to stay within earshot range of Mandi, Alan, Marcus and Maria to observe their interaction. As an emotiopath, Sandra can read the emotions of others. She can also tell whether someone is lying.

"She was tired and guarded," says Sandra. "But that is to be expected. I get a general 'good' feeling about her. She didn't come across to me as hiding anything, and she has a particular affinity for Lena. Alan seems to be genuine as well. Although Alan appeared happy, I got a strong sense that he is not. I don't think his negative emotions are directed at SR Inc. They seemed directed at Mandi, but I could have been misreading that."

"I know I didn't ask her anything directly about her Unfair Trade accusations and SR Inc.'s role in those accusations, but in your opinion, is she open to discussion?" asks Marcus.

Sandra thinks a moment and then says confidently. "Yes, I got the feeling that she's fair and open. She didn't exude feelings of harsh judgment toward you. I think we have a chance Marcus."

Marcus knows that Sandra cannot be 100% sure that Mandi will retract her accusation, but it consoles him to know that she is who she claims to be. Both Sandra's assessment and the report on Mandi have given him that comfort. It is now up to him to convince her of SR Inc.'s innocence.

At breakfast the next morning, it is only Mandi, Maria and Marcus who meet. Alan decided to sleep in and the children are preparing for their day out. Maria apologizes in advance for having to leave early, but she and the children are meeting up with friends as soon as Stephan and Lena are ready.

Marcus thinks back to the report he has on Mandi. He imagined a middle-aged woman with very different looks from the woman who now sits before him. Mandi is tall, maybe 5'8" in height, and slim. She wears a pinstriped olive and white knit top, which emphasizes the green in her blue green eyes. She has wavy brown hair that falls easily and naturally to her shoulders. Marcus can see from the soft, but definite outline of muscles in her arms that Mandi is fit. Although she dresses nicely, she also dresses comfortably. Marcus would have guessed from her clear skin, bright eyes and trim body that Mandi is in her mid thirties; however, he knows from the report that Mandi is forty-three years old.

Although Marcus, Maria and Mandi make small talk, they are obviously uncomfortable. Finally, Mandi says, "Marcus and Maria, I'm very sorry, but I'm finding it difficult to chit chat. I feel I need to keep a professional distance and address the issue at hand." Marcus agrees completely. He likes Mandi's straightforward nature. "I've been involved in uncovering Unfair Trade practices in the past," explains Mandi. "I need to know what is going on with SR Inc. I appreciate all that you are doing for me—flying me here and putting Alan and me up in a very nice hotel. I thank you for that. However, if you're involved in Unfair Trade, I want you to know right up front that I will expose it. I'm happy to pay my own expenses because my silence can't be bought."

"Mandi, we wouldn't have invited you here unless we were sure of our innocence. You're our guest," says Marcus. "I'm confident that you'll leave *knowing* that SR Inc. is not involved in Unfair

Trade. I don't know how a production facility got started up outside of New Zealand, but I assure you it was *not* under our direction or with SR Inc. approval. You haven't said where that facility is located so I can't begin to guess how our patent or manufacturing specifications could have gotten there."

"The production facility is in South Kalimantan, Indonesia. That is located on the island of Borneo. Do you have any professional connections with Indonesia?" asks Mandi.

Marcus is quiet as he thinks. He cannot think of any affiliation—professional or personal—that he or his SR Inc. colleagues have with Indonesia. "Obviously I can't speak definitively for all of my SR Inc. colleagues. However, from what I know of them, I don't think any of us have any affiliation. I can speak definitively for myself—and would you agree Maria—that neither of us have any professional, or personal, connections with Indonesia."

"I can't think of any connection with Indonesia," agrees Maria. "But we can check with our colleagues."

"I would like," continues Marcus, "to see what it is that this production facility is producing. Do you have the pirated e-Helpers so we can look at them?"

Mandi reaches in her purse and pulls out two boxes, containing the e-Helpers. She places one on the table. Marcus opens the box and is surprised to find what appears to be an SR Inc. e-Helper.

"Are you sure this is one of theirs and not one of SR Inc.'s?" asks Marcus.

"Yes, I'm sure," says Mandi. "I saw the production facility with my own eyes."

Marcus looks closely at the e-Helper. He then gets out his own e-Helper. He cannot believe the similarity. They are exact duplicates! Who has done this and *how* have they done it? Marcus compares everything, every mark and groove on the front of the e-Helper. He does the same to the back and sides of the stolen e-Helper. He can see no differences whatsoever.

Maria takes the e-Helper from Marcus and turns it over. She quickly takes out her own e-Helper.

"I see a difference," says Maria. "It isn't obvious, but it's there."

With Maria's paravision she can see that there is a very faint moon-like scratch in the uppermost right hand corner of the casing. To Maria, the faint crescent moon outline is obvious. However, to

someone with 'normal' vision, it is unlikely, if not impossible, to detect the difference without being told.

"Take a look at this Marcus," says Maria. She hands the e-Helper to him, pointing toward the upper right of the casing.

"I don't see anything," responds Marcus.

"There in the upper right corner. There is a faint shape that looks like a crescent moon. Right here." Maria takes a pen and points to the upper right corner.

"Is it a scratch?" asks Mandi. Mandi looks at it and then looks at Maria's e-Helper. She takes the second stolen e-Helper out of its box and turns it over. She turns it various ways in the light. "There, there it is!"

Mandi quickly pulls out her own e-Helper and examines it closely. She shakes her head.

"How did you...I've compared these e-Helpers with mine, well, I can't tell you the number of times! How did you spot that?" exclaims Mandi.

"Believe me, I've looked at thousands of these e-Helpers. I know them better than my own hand," lies Maria. "I was part of quality control when we first started production of the e-Helpers."

They are interrupted by Maria's e-Helper. "OK, I'm on my way. Don't forget your hats and sunscreen."

Maria apologizes as she stands, telling them that she will phone in about an hour.

Mandi is relieved that SR Inc. has passed the first test. The SR Inc. e-Helper and the stolen e-Helper are not *completely* identical. Marcus is still not in the clear, however. The crescent moon marking could be an SR Inc. 'labeling' code that indicates where the e-Helper was produced. SR Inc. *could* still be implicated in Unfair Trade, but Mandi has a gut feel that SR Inc. is *not* involved in Unfair Trade.

"Excuse me," says Mandi as she leans toward the woman sitting at the next table. "I know this sounds strange, but can I have a look at your e-Helper, right there on the table? I'll just have it a second, I promise. I'd like to look at something on the rear of the casing. I'll only be a second..."

The woman looks slightly surprised, but smiles. She hands her e-Helper to Mandi, who thanks her. Mandi looks at the woman's e-Helper: no crescent moon. She hands the e-Helper back and turns to face Marcus, smiling.

"Good. Now how about an analysis on the components," suggests Mandi. "Is your research department nearby? That might help clarify whether or not this e-Helper is being produced using your technical specifications. Hopefully it is not..."

"The SR Inc. research department isn't far from here," says Marcus. "We can perform an abbreviated analysis immediately and a full analysis later. The holiday season has started and we have a skeleton staff. That's why we can't conduct a full analysis right away. Of course, you should take part in the first, basic analysis. We're headed back to our estate on Great Barrier Island in two days. I'd like you and Alan to join us then."

Mandi is surprised at Marcus's invitation. She could *ruin* SR Inc. if she suspects them of Unfair Trade, and he has invited her and Alan to their home. She can see that Marcus is also visibly embarrassed; he shifts in his seat and blushes slightly.

Mandi hears the loud clink of a cup on an adjacent table. She turns to look at the woman sitting at the next table, the woman from whom she borrowed the e-Helper. The woman appears to have bumped her coffee cup while reading the newspaper. Although Mandi can only see the woman's face from the side, she appears distracted.

"Yes, we'd like that," answers Mandi, as she turns to face Marcus. "Of course it depends on the outcome of the analysis."

Mandi has a good feeling about Marcus. She likes him. She just hopes that her quick decision to go to Marcus and Maria's estate does not get her into hot water with Alan. They had hoped to start their New Zealand tour in the next couple of days, but she really must follow up this potential case of Unfair Trade and bring it to closure, one way or the other.

Later that morning, Marcus takes Mandi and Alan to the SR Inc. research department. Alan and Klaus hit it off instantly, talking 'shop'—software and computers. Mandi and Marcus agree on the philosophy of work before play, which means that they immediately begin analysis of the pirated e-Helpers. Before Klaus disassembles the e-Helper into its components, he does a preliminary electromagnetic radiation reading.

One trademark of the SR Inc. e-Helper is its low emission of electromagnetic radiation. This characteristic is not something that happened by 'accident'—it was a requirement that Marcus incorporated into the e-Helper's original specifications. The design

and development of the SR Inc. e-Helper occurred during the height of the interest in electromagnetic pollution. Instead of simply conforming to the recommended standard—the easy option that many companies chose—Marcus insisted they develop a product whose electromagnetic radiation is lower than the recommended rating.

Mandi and Marcus watch as Klaus re-cleans the tools and re-tests the e-Helper. Klaus has a quizzical look on his face.

"I think something must be tainting or impacting the reading," says Klaus. "Can I see that second e-Helper?"

Mandi hands him the second e-Helper. Klaus reads the electromagnetic radiation emitted from the second pirated e-Helper. He shakes his head. "Nope, it's right," says Klaus.

Klaus looks at Marcus and says, "These e-Helpers have a reading ten times that of our e-Helpers and five times that of the recommended electromagnetic rating. Look."

Klaus shows both Mandi and Marcus the reading. He cleans the analysis instruments and then takes a reading from the SR Inc. e-Helpers. He re-cleans the instruments and re-analyzes the pirated e-Helpers. The readings are significantly—dangerously—high!

"Individuals are using those e-Helpers," whispers Mandi, staring at the data. "They're putting them up to their heads. They're keeping them on their bedside tables and they're keeping them in their front and back pockets. Can you imagine what is happening to their brain cells, and to their internal organs..."

Marcus goes to a locked metal cabinet, opens it and pulls out a large black file marked 'CONFIDENTIAL'. "Mandi, these are the results of our e-Helper research trials, conducted both in our labs and in several independent labs around the world, including labs in Russia, Sweden, and Belgium." Marcus lays the file on the table and opens it up. "We conducted a series of tests using rats as our main test subjects. We made a conscious decision to use rats instead of monkeys, which I know was criticized in some research circles because monkeys are considered our closest 'relatives'. However, our reason for selecting rats was that the cells in rats' brains are very similar to human brain cells. As you'll read in this file, we followed the precedent set with the early, published electromagnetic radiation research into rats' brains and then we tailored that to fit our testing of e-Helpers.

"As you know, in the late 1990s and early 2000s there was significant interest in and around electromagnetic 'pollution'.

Researchers focused mostly on the 'heating' aspect, which provided them with only a partial picture. Later research, including our research, focused not only on the heating aspect but also on the biological aspect—the impact at a cellular and cellular interaction level. For example, you'll see in our testing that we identified breakage in DNA in rats' brains when there were 'high' levels of electromagnetic radiation. The radiation lowered the levels of melatonin produced, which in turn lessened the ability of the melatonin to prevent free radical damage. The radiation also had a significant impact on the blood-brain barrier in the brain. There were so many paths that we could have chosen to investigate that if we pursued every lead we had, we would still be focusing exclusively on the impact of electromagnetic radiation research of e-Helpers to this very day. We focused on those trials that we felt were most relevant to our product."

"I've recently re-read several of your discussion papers," interrupts Mandi. "You talked about looking into the impact of chronic low levels of electromagnetic radiation emitted not only from your e-Helpers but also from the many everyday products that surround us. We have products all around us that emit electromagnetic radiation. We are exposed day in and day out to electromagnetic fields. How can that *not* impact us? Have you pursued any of those leads? Like you, I think there is a large contribution that can be made."

Marcus shakes his head. "We did *some* research into that area, but unfortunately in a very limited fashion. We focused on SR Inc. e-Helpers. I do, however, sit on a New Zealand committee that looks into other electronic and electrical goods. But getting back to e-Helpers, we also looked at a variety of factors that could be impacted by the emission of electromagnetic radiation, including hormonal balance, biorhythms, immune system, nervous system and other behavioral and psychological functions that can impact health. We define 'health' holistically—it is the whole package and how all the different bits of the package work together. All the 'bits'—the cells, for example—can be technically 'sound', but if they don't work together well, then there's not a sense of good health. My explanation is simplistic, but do you understand what I'm getting at?"

Mandi nods her head.

Marcus continues. "I think the biggest benefit in this field will be gained by progressing the work of researchers like Dr. Visra and Dr. Lawrence Schuler, the latter of whom was actively involved in electromagnetic radiation research testing up until several years ago. He used to be an active participant in the same New Zealand organization—the Committee of Electromagnetic Smog Deterrence, the CESD—that I was involved with, and he was integral to the passage of many of New Zealand's anti e-smog Acts, but several years ago he pulled out because of his workload. He had just started a new job within private industry that required him to travel extensively. I occasionally meet up with him when he's in New Zealand, but we've lost touch professionally."

"Yes, the research community has definitely missed the contributions and visionary leadership that Dr. Visra could have made with his novel approach to e-smog research," says Mandi. "And I know that Dr. Schuler, a colleague of Dr. Visra's, tried to pick up where Dr. Visra left off. I worked closely with him for about six months right after Dr. Visra's death, until he got pulled in too many directions and my 'extra' funding ran out. I know that he too went beyond discrete product tests because he, like Dr. Visra, did not believe that lone tests reflect our daily reality. We do not own *only* an e-Helper, or *only* a microwave, or *only* a television—many of us own and use all of those things and more simultaneously. I've not corresponded with or thought about Dr. Schuler for years."

"Anyway, back to the business at hand," says Mandi. "What was your target level again—I remember your target being under the recommended electromagnetic standard of 1mG."

"We used .5mG as our highest acceptable electromagnetic radiation reading for an e-Helper," says Marcus. "Any e-Helper that produces readings above that level is not sold. We have tight quality control on the electromagnetic radiation that is emitted. Any SR Inc. e-Helper on the market today is guaranteed to have a .5mG or less electromagnetic rating. Well, any e-Helper that is produced by SR Inc..."

Mandi tells Marcus and Klaus the story of the jungle facility. She starts at the fences topped with rolled barbed wire and does not stop until she fully describes the small, efficient production lines and the first class computer facilities. At Marcus's request Mandi sketches out the layout of the compound, the arrangement of the buildings and

the internals of the two buildings—the production facility and the computer lab.

"Whoever is there, has money. Just take the investment in that computer room alone," says Mandi. "And whoever is there is not thrilled about getting uninvited visitors."

"I've got to go there," says Marcus. "They have no right to produce our product and endanger lives in the process!"

"That's a tricky one," says Mandi. "I don't think I can be of any help there. I was kicked off site after I was caught for trespassing onto the jungle facility grounds. I don't think they'll let me anywhere near that mine site. And the jungle facility is on the mining lease."

"Can't we go through the management at the mine site? Surely they—"

Mandi cuts off Marcus. "No, I've tried that route. I was asked to leave by mine site management. And he was an expat, a fellow Australian. I wrongly assumed that he would be more understanding of my situation. I don't know where we go from here...perhaps there's a legal route. If you prove your product's patent is breached, you might be able to prosecute from here, but how *and if* New Zealand laws apply internationally, I don't know. I expect there'd be some amplot—sorry, bribery—involved somewhere along the line."

Marcus agrees that checking with legal counsel is a good idea, but he openly states his preference for staying out of the limelight and the media.

"How about entering Indonesia as tourists and then getting to the facility by some circuitous route?" asks Marcus, grabbing at straws.

"You might be able to get a tourist visa," says Mandi. "But even those visas are getting about as scarce as hen's teeth these days. There's a lot of political tension there right now. But if you *did* manage to get a tourist visa, there's no way you can blend in—physically or otherwise—believe me. Everyone knows you're there. And they know where you're going. There is absolutely no traveling incognito. With such a high population density, someone somewhere is always watching. The digital recording of Elly and me is proof of that. You just don't know when you're being watched and by whom. Another example is Elly's initial appearance. She just appeared early one morning—standing on the side of the road in the dark—she appeared as if out of thin air. Her son has an uncanny way of doing the same thing in the jungle. One minute he's here and another minute he's gone."

After a two-hour discussion, Alan excuses himself. Seeing Alan's impatience, Mandi asks if they can continue their discussion later. Mandi feels comfortable with their initial, preliminary readings and fairly confident that SR Inc. is not involved in Unfair Trade. Marcus suggests they take a break from their work and meet up with Maria and the children to do some sightseeing.

The small group takes a ferry ride to Waiheke Island to enjoy the relaxed, alternative lifestyle. Lena gets her hair fixed into dozens of small braids. Stephan eagerly gets his face painted with an assortment of apes and monkeys. Ever since the documentary, he has been reading everything he can about these primates.

They end the day with a lovely meal at the 'Mudbrick' restaurant. Maria and Marcus comment that it has not changed much since their last visit ten years ago.

The next day, Marcus and Mandi go again to the SR Inc. research laboratory. Klaus, who worked late into the previous night, walks Marcus and Mandi through the results of his analysis. He has conducted several readings on one of the pirated e-Helpers. He has also contrasted and compared the components of the pirated e-Helpers with the SR Inc. e-Helpers. The differences are significant in both electromagnetic readings and component composition. Klaus has tracked down the manufacturer of two of the numerous components: They are produced by a large multinational corporation.

Although Klaus appears happy with his progress, he requests more time to finish his analysis. He suggests—and the others agree—that it is time to enjoy the holidays.

That afternoon Marcus, Maria, Lena, Stephan, Mandi and Alan go to Great Barrier Island. Mandi is impressed with their exquisitely designed estate, which was built to fit in with its surroundings rather than dominate them. Mandi is equally impressed with Marcus and Maria's winter garden and their blended waterfalls. What a paradise they have created! Mandi originally thought it strange for Marcus to have an estate located away from the Auckland business district and the SR Inc. offices, but once she sees the estate, she can understand their choice. It is idyllic.

When they arrive, Lena pleads with Mandi to go for a walk to see the Pohutukawa trees, which are in full bloom. The contrast between the flame red blossoms of the tree and the deep blue of the late afternoon sky is stunning. Mandi smiles at little Lena, who points out

various trees and bushes to Mandi while talking non-stop about picnics and dolphins and sandcastles.

That evening at dinner, the Wallers, Mandi and Alan enjoy talking about hiking and the outdoors. Mandi listens attentively to Marcus and Maria's stories about the Hochtör, and she adds it to her list of mountain 'must climb's'.

The next day, Mandi and Alan go with Lena, Stephan, Inge and Rolf to the hot water springs. This gives the parapersons at the estate time for a meeting.

Marcus opens the meeting with four e-Helpers sitting on the table—a pair at each end of the table. He asks the group if they are the same. For a few minutes, the individuals closely examine the e-Helpers, then agree that they are the same. He asks them to have a second, closer look. Still they cannot see any differences between the paired e-Helpers.

Maria asks them to look in the upper right corner of the back casing. Even with this clue, most of the group cannot see any difference. It is not until Maria physically points out the small, crescent-shaped moon in the upper right hand corner, that they see it.

"That is the only *visible* difference we can see on the e-Helper, thanks to Maria's paravision," says Marcus. "Klaus, can you tell us about what you've found out during your analysis of the e-Helper and its components?"

"Although the physical differences may be minor and almost indistinguishable, the *invisible* differences are huge," says Klaus. "There are many differences between their and our e-Helpers that are not readily apparent. These differences show up under analysis of the whole product as well as in some of its individual components."

Klaus points his pocket computer toward the wall and displays his first slide.

"I'm starting with the bad news first. This slide shows the biggest difference between our product and theirs, namely the electromagnetic rating. Our product is rated at .5mG, which is half the recommended safety standard of 1mG. The pirated e-Helper has an electromagnetic rating of 5mG. That means that persons using these pirated e-Helpers are exposing themselves to five times the recommended safety standard! Unknowingly, people are putting these dangerous devices to their heads many times a day. They are carrying them in shirt and pant pockets. And they are throwing them in purses, which may be set down next to infants and children. You

can imagine the amount of electromagnetic smog, or poison, that people are getting exposed to. And they are exposing themselves because they believe the exposure to be *under* the recommended safety standard, not multiple times *over!*"

There is silence in the room as the impact of Klaus's words sinks in. The parapersons stare at the slide hoping to see something other than what Klaus displays.

"But, how—how—did they get our specifications? How are they able to produce something that looks so similar?" asks Sandra.

"Klaus and I have been wracking our brains for the past twenty-four hours, trying to answer those same questions," says Marcus. "I maintain that someone leaked our specifications, but we can't possibly think of who. The only other explanation that we can come up with—and that was with Mandi's input—is that there are craftsmen or scientists—call them what you may—who are experts at taking an item and producing an 'exact' duplicate. I qualify the term 'exact' because these products are not *exactly* alike. They *look* the same, but they are significantly different, as Klaus just pointed out."

"But that difference," adds Barry, "is not something that the regular 'Joe Smith' on the street is going to see. He will buy that product and he will expect our product. There are huge ramifications to this."

"Exactly," agrees Marcus. "If someone develops a brain tumor or hypogammaglobulinemia, a rare immune deficiency, both types of illnesses that have been linked in previous research—albeit tenuously—to electromagnetic pollution, an astute relative might ask the relevant questions that will unveil the culprit, namely electromagnetic pollution—e-smog. They will naturally link that e-smog to SR Inc. as manufacturers of e-Helpers."

Marcus pauses, then continues. "We know that research into electromagnetic fields has drastically fallen off, and discussion about it is no longer 'in vogue'. However, we also know that this poison has not gone away. If anything, it is more pervasive now than ever before. We surround ourselves with gadgets that emit e-smog."

"And if we are implicated in any way to illness or death, well, we may as well just close shop right now," says Barry.

"That's not good enough," counters Marcus. "We can't wait for this to be unveiled through such grim circumstances. There are people being impacted now, yesterday, today and tomorrow. We

have to do something about this now. We have to stop production. Those pirated e-Helpers must be recalled."

"And we have to do this without exposing SR Inc.," adds Maria. "Or we'll all be on the run and unable to do *anything* about it."

"Where is the production facility located?" asks Monika.

"In South Kalimantan, Indonesia, on the island of Borneo," says Marcus. As Marcus says this, Klaus changes the current projection to display a map of Southeast Asia. The province of South Kalimantan is highlighted.

"Can Mandi be more specific?" asks Monika.

"I'm sure she can be more specific," says Marcus. "We haven't yet asked her for mine site specifics, which brings us to another complication. The production facility is located on a mining lease. Mandi says that the mine management doesn't know about the facility. We talked about it further and agreed that while the expat mine manager whom Mandi works for doesn't know about the production facility, other individuals might. There are others on the management team—expats and locals—one or more of whom might know about—and possibly even sanction—the facility. So, we don't know whether we'd be welcomed onto the mining lease by the mine management. To date, they haven't been supportive of Mandi. As we know from the report on Mandi—and Mandi confirmed it—she has been temporarily kicked off site for trespassing into the facility."

"Do we know where or how these e-Helpers are distributed?" asks Sandra.

"No," answers Marcus. "Mandi bought a couple of e-Helpers when she was in Singapore, but we looked at them and they are SR Inc. e-Helpers. We don't know where their target market is—although a likely market might be in Indonesia itself—"

"Wait," interrupts Klaus as he flips through papers. "I can't believe I didn't think of this earlier...Remember this morning, when we were talking with Mandi? You asked her to draw sketches of the jungle facility—the layout of the compound, the arrangement of the buildings and the inside of the building with the production lines, and the computer building. Here it is—here is the picture I'm looking for—the sketch of the building with the production lines."

Klaus pulls out a crude sketch of a room with several long dark lines running the full length of the page. He quickly scans it into his e-Helper, turns it into a digital graphic and projects it onto the wall.

"You asked her to draw absolutely everything she could remember," says Klaus.

He places his e-Helper on a table and approaches the image on the wall, ready to point out specific areas on Mandi's sketch.

"Mandi talked out loud as she drew. These long dark lines are the production lines, and these are the drop buckets that catch the completed components. These x's are the individual components on the conveyor belts. When you said 'everything' Marcus, she drew *everything*. She drew the teacart—here—complete with tea bags, water dispenser, sugar and stacked dirty cups. She drew two wastebaskets—here and here, *and* she drew an outline of a map! Here, this rectangle is her outline of a map, I'm sure of it."

Marcus smiles as he remembers Mandi's sketch. "Yes. If we're really lucky that map could be a link into their distribution channels. It's a long shot, but it's possible. If Mandi can tell us anything about that map, we may have a starting point to find out where these products are being sold. Then we can figure out how to get them out of the stores and away from the people who've already bought them."

As Marcus and the rest of the group continue their discussion, one of their biggest obstacles—Mandi's untimely dismissal from the mine site—is in the process of taking care of itself. While Lena and Stephan show Mandi and Alan the hot springs, Mandi receives an unlikely, but opportune call on her e-Helper.

When Mandi looks at her e-Helper display, she is surprised to see Terry's number. Since he is calling her earlier than he said he would, Mandi gets ready for the worst. She expects that he will ask her to *not* come back to the Senaggin Mine to finish the project. Although Mandi has prepared herself for this moment, she can feel a knot rise in her throat. She has never been released prematurely from a project. And she has never been accused of trespassing, of breaking the law, or of unprofessional conduct. Mandi excuses herself and walks away from the group to take the call in private.

Mandi cannot believe what she hears.

"What? Yes...What conditions are those?" asks Mandi.

What Mandi does *not* expect, namely Terry's offer of a contract extension, is exactly what Terry proposes. She cannot believe her luck!

Terry's offer, however, is not a clear-cut continuation of her existing contact. Terry has conditions that Mandi must agree to

before she is allowed to return. She has to agree to three things: first, she has to return to finish the contract; second, while she is billing hours to him, she must focus on nothing but his project; and finally, while she is working on his project, she must stay clear of the jungle facility.

As she listens, Mandi notices that Terry chooses his words carefully. Mandi interprets this to mean that without overtly sanctioning her actions, Terry is giving Mandi full reign to continue her exploration of the jungle facility—but on her own time, at her own risk, and *after* the completion of his project. Terry makes it clear that she will be fully responsible for getting herself out of whatever it is that she might get herself into. He bailed her out once and he does not plan to do it again.

Mandi smiles and agrees to Terry's terms. He will fax the new terms and conditions to her today, and if she can arrange it, she should fly to Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, by January 2nd. He wants to have a short briefing with her before they travel to the Senaggin Mine in South Kalimantan on January 3rd.

Before he hangs up, Terry asks Mandi to wait—someone wants to speak to her. Before Mandi can figure out whom, she hears another man's voice on the line.

"Hey Mandi, you been raising some heckles I hear," says Tom.

"Tom! I knew it had to be you behind getting me back on site! I owe you one," says Mandi excitedly.

"Mandi, I know you well enough to trust your judgment. I don't know what's going on out there, but take care—watch yourself," says Tom. "And have a Happy New Year."

"You too Tom. I'll be in touch when I get back," says Mandi.

Mandi runs back to the group and excitedly shares her good news. Although Inge, Rolf, Stephan and Lena don't fully understand what Mandi is talking about, not knowing the full story, they can easily see Mandi's relief. Her happiness is contagious. Soon they are all laughing and congratulating Mandi on—well, whatever it is that she is excited about!

Alan smiles and nods, but Mandi can see that he is smiling with his mouth only and not his heart. He looks disappointed. They had planned to travel around New Zealand for the next two weeks. Instead, Mandi is heading off to Indonesia. Mandi gives him an extra long hug, and whispers, "Thank you."

As they walk around the bushes and trees in the area of the hot spring, Mandi notices an abundance of wildlife around them. She sees a small kiore—a Polynesian rat—scurry among the underbrush. She also watches numerous large birds overhead.

"I was distracted before so I might have missed it, but do you notice that there are a lot more birds and small animals now? I don't remember seeing that many when we arrived," says Mandi.

Mandi sees Lena throw Stephan a dirty look. She also sees Rolf and Inge exchange looks, but they say nothing. Stephan looks disgruntled. He clenches his hands and sticks his balled little fists into his pant pockets. Mandi can just barely hear what he says: "Barry liked seeing the animals when he was here the first time, and now he's part of the group. I thought if Mandi liked seeing the animals too, she might become part of the group. I'm just trying to help. Mandi's *not* a stranger."

Inge catches up to Mandi and puts her arm through Mandi's. She suggests that the time of day is the reason for the increased wildlife presence. Dusk always seems to bring out more animals.

When they arrive back at the house, the meeting of the parapersons is just breaking up. As the SR Inc. members walk out of the room, still talking, Mandi sees Sandra. Mandi is positive that Sandra is the woman she saw in the restaurant in Auckland, when she, Maria and Marcus had breakfast—the same woman from whom Mandi borrowed the e-Helper to compare it to the pirated version. Mandi opens her mouth to say something to Sandra, who also looks at her, but then she closes it. She just nods and smiles.

Marcus, Klaus and Maria are the last to leave the meeting room. Mandi walks up to them with a large smile on her face. "I'm in," says Mandi. "I just got a call from Terry—from the Senaggin Mine—and he's decided to continue my contract. We're still working out the details, but the bottom line is that I'm back in!"

Maria spontaneously reaches out and gives Mandi a hug. Marcus and Klaus vigorously shake Mandi's hand.

"Does that mean you'll help us get into the mine site and the jungle facility?" asks Marcus. "Because if it does, I want to know now so we can organize a celebration!"

Mandi rubs her hands enthusiastically and smiles, "I'll certainly try. And in the meantime, let's plan the celebration!"

## 7. A Land of Possibilities...

*The Cooperative mastermind, as he likes to refer to himself, gives himself at least a week at the beginning of each New Year to review and set annual goals. This year he easily completes his goals in just two days. It will be a good year.*

*Within four months the Australian research facility will be finished and handed over to his daughter. He knows that she is getting antsy and wants more responsibility and exposure. By taking over the Australian facility he is sure that she will get both, and he will finally get peace on the family front. His contacts have informed him that the Australian Prime Minister recently spoke with the U.S. President, who—he is sure—gave the Prime Minister a positive slant on The Cooperative. The President simply cannot afford to speak ill of The Cooperative.*

*The U.S. facility, located in Virginia, will celebrate its five-year anniversary, having successfully met its short-term financial and research goals. He will revise their long-term plans, incorporating much more financially aggressive goals.*

*Lastly, the mastermind plans to celebrate the 'mother' of all facilities—the Indonesian jungle facilities. The quagmire he encountered in setting up the research facilities seemed to be an endless nightmare, but that nightmare did end and the result was worth the patience. He, as mastermind and initial risk taker, is making money hand over fist. His offshore accounts look very healthy, and he makes sure that there is enough payout to keep The Cooperative partners hooked. He still needs their technical expertise and their corporate contacts.*

*With The Cooperative's planned extension into the Chinese, Tibetan and Russian markets this year with pirated e-Helpers, the profit margin should continue to increase. The mastermind's retirement may be close.*

*January 2, 2014*  
*Indonesia, Island of Borneo*

When Mandi arrives in Balikpapan, Indonesia, she is ready to do whatever it takes to successfully complete the consultancy project. She feels confident that she will overcome the negotiation impasse. She has outlined a day-by-day, blow-by-blow schedule of meetings and negotiations.

At the mine site, Mandi works in high gear to finish Terry's consultancy project. Her determination and focus, trademarks of her work, are readily apparent in her second stint at the mine site. Within two weeks, they have successfully negotiated a resolution to the impasse. Terry tells Mandi that he is astounded by the speed and finesse with which she has obtained agreement from divergent parties. In Indonesian terms, she has performed a miracle.

The problems stifling this mine site are not unique and are not location specific. Other mine locations and other mining companies in Indonesian provinces suffer the same problems. Since Indonesia is one of the world's mining hubs, any problems ripple out globally in the form of resource shortages, delays, and high costs. This worldwide impact has made the process and outcome of any negotiation something that is high profile and high stress.

Various Indonesian islands, such as Borneo, have actively and creatively solicited foreign investment through symbiotic national-international partnerships. Politics, however, at every level—national, regional and local—add layer upon layer of complexity and cost. The international investors know that these partnerships *have* to work if there is to be stability in the Asia-Pacific region and if they are to reap any return on their already hefty financial investments. Instability in Indonesia means instability in the whole world.

The last several quarterly reports sent to the stakeholders have not been good. The mine site has had dramatic decreases in production and thus revenue. Secondly, the mine site is suffering image problems. Mine sites are reporting high lost time to injury (LTI) statistics. Truck rollovers and collisions are becoming weekly events. Reports of pit wall collapses caused by the undercutting of walls by illegal miners are also becoming more frequent, the most recent killing four people. Endless payouts to the military for 'protection' are also gouging deeply into the mine's budget. The

Indonesian mines, of which this one is being held up as an example, are losing their ability to produce and to attract investors.

To find a solution palatable to all parties, the negotiation team led by Mandi has come up with a multi-phase, multi-year plan. In Phase I, the mine site has agreed to buy all mining equipment off of local illegal miners. They will also employ an agreed number of illegal miners and provide them with safety training. The kampungs rely on income from illegal mining, and the company will offer them medical assistance, schooling and portable water. It will use the threat of withdrawing all assistance if illegal mining resumes.

To the military, who are making money by playing both sides of the fence—'protecting' company land and 'turning a blind eye' to illegal miners—there is an offer of productive employment. Instead of hiring outsiders to implement the kampung action plans, the company will hire the military as a 'contractor' to coordinate the delivery of kampung services.

Kampung services will be further extended in Phase II of the project to include skills training. New skills, such as crop rotations and permaculture, will replace current 'skills', such as illegal mining, illegal logging, and poaching of protected animals. Skills training will also continue into the third phase.

The third and final phase of the project, and that which most excites Mandi is a flora and fauna survey of the mine's land lease and the surrounding area. She has not yet been officially contracted for this phase of the project, but her prospects look good to secure Phase III. Terry has purposefully kept this phase untendered to ensure that Mandi finishes her employment with the mine. When she is no longer under the mine's employment, Mandi can then—if she receives special permission—remain on the mine's land lease for 'research' purposes. This enables Mandi to investigate the jungle compound while preparing for Phase III.

The survey data that they will collect in Phase III will drive the return of the land to its natural state. Native flora and fauna will be reintroduced and actively and aggressively protected. During Phase III a focus on eco-tourism will replace the mining focus. Tourist money will replace mining company support.

Over a bottle of wine in Terry's office, Mandi and Terry celebrate the successful completion of the project.

"Terry, I thought the mine site was dry—no alcohol allowed," says Mandi.

Terry smiles. "Mandi, I thought you already learned that in Indonesia, anything is possible. Speaking of which, now that you're officially off my payroll, when are you heading out to the jungle facility to do more 'research'?"

Mandi laughs uncomfortably. Are her intentions that apparent?

Before she speaks, Terry continues, "At some point I'd be interested in hearing more about this jungle facility you located Mandi, but not tonight. I take the 5:00am speedboat tomorrow morning and then fly to Jakarta for a stakeholders' meeting. They don't waste any time. They want to know how we did what we did, and how it can be repeated at our other Indonesian mine locations. If you can finish the updates to your report before I leave, I'll take those with me. You're leaving tomorrow for Balikpapan?"

Mandi responds, "Possibly. A couple of colleagues will fly into Balikpapan—maybe tomorrow if their visa clearances come through. I'd also like to ask permission to return to the mine lease with them for environmental research purposes—you know, Phase III."

Terry smiles. "Mandi, you're transparent. I figured as much. I've got the paperwork here. I just didn't know how many visitors' passes and mine inductions you need. Asep can give the inductions. You understand that when the project finishes, you have permission to be on the Senaggin Mine lease land for environmental research purposes only. Your research is to provide input to Phase III of the project. Anything else you get up to is your own responsibility. Once you're off our land lease, your research permits are no longer valid. Legally speaking you should then have travel documents and permissions. I wasn't going to mention anything to you, but I think I should. Watch your back."

Mandi nods.

Terry continues, "The scene we had here from the guys at the compound—insisting on searching your backpack... They wanted you in prison Mandi. I did a lot of oiling to get you out of that predicament. There's more there than meets the eye."

For a split second, Mandi's intuition aligns with Terry's warning. She feels a sense of foreboding. "Thanks Terry—for everything."

"Well then," says Terry getting up and shaking Mandi's hand. "Good luck with your research."

As Mandi walks toward her room, she quickly sends Marcus a text message on her e-Helper: 'Project done. See u tomorrow in Balikpapan?'

'Unlikely. Maybe 2 days more' comes Marcus's prompt reply.

Mandi messages back: 'Try routing thru Singapore. Visa on arrival'.

'In process' comes the reply.

Mandi smiles and says, "I should have figured as much. Where there's a will there's a way—I'm sure they'll find a way in. That group comes across as being creative and resourceful!"

Since Mandi probably has at least an extra day before Marcus and the others arrive, she decides to try to find Elly. The very first thing she wanted to do when she arrived at the mine site was go to the kampung to see if Elly and Eko were OK. However, she had her promise to keep to Terry. She did not dare step outside the conditions of their agreement. Tomorrow, however, she steps into research mode.

Before first light, Mandi is ready to go. She sends her report off to Terry, then gets in a truck with Asep. He has agreed to take her to Tanggar, the same village they stayed in when they were stranded. He will pick her up thirty-two hours later. Although Asep seemed distant to Mandi during her first stint at the mine site, he has warmed considerably. He volunteered to take her to Tanggar. Mandi had asked him about catching a ride with one of the truck drivers or the local transport, but he insisted on driving her himself.

Mandi practices Indonesian words with Asep as they drive. She has the internal cab light on and she reads words out loud. Asep laughs at her as she speaks, but he repeats the words so she can hear the correct pronunciation. Mandi feels quite proud of herself for remembering numbers, colors, greetings and a handful of other words in just two weeks of study. What else can she do in the evenings on a remote mine site? She downloaded a Beginner's Bahasa Indonesian package from the internet and has practiced every evening.

Mandi is surprised when Asep slows before they reach the kampung, at almost exactly the spot they broke down before. Mandi looks at Asep questioningly. Asep points up the embankment, but Mandi sees nothing. He points again, this time more insistently, and when Mandi looks, she sees Elly cautiously take a step forward before moving back into the shadows.

"Elly!" shouts Mandi. She grabs Asep's still outstretched finger and squeezes it tightly. "Oh, sorry," she quickly apologizes. "That

was far too friendly wasn't it? Never mind, you know what I mean. Thanks Asep!"

Mandi gives Asep the thumbs up and shouts out in Indonesian that she will see him in thirty-two hours, at this very spot. Asep nods, smiles, and drives off.

Mandi tries to contain her excitement. She looks at Elly, who motions for her to cross straight over the haul road. Elly points to a few exposed roots on the embankment, which Mandi uses to crawl up. Although she is puffing when she reaches the top, she gives Elly a big hug.

"Oh, thank god you're all right Elly. I was so worried about you and Eko," says Mandi. She knows that Elly cannot understand her, but that is OK because Elly is talking excitedly in Indonesian as well.

Mandi holds Elly at arm's length to have a good look at her. Although Elly did not have much spare weight to begin with, she has thinned since Mandi last saw her. She has also cut her hair. Her black hair used to fall half way down her back. It is now cut short; it is almost abrupt. Mandi asks about Eko. Elly smiles and nods.

Elly pulls Mandi into the shadows of the trees. They walk slowly through the jungle. Since her last jungle adventure with Elly, Mandi has often thought about the jungle. Sometimes she has dreams about it. In the middle of the night she wakes up, thinking she can smell jungle dampness or hear jungle sounds. In most dreams she runs through the jungle, stumbling and tripping on vines and roots, but she always gets up and continues running. She never reaches anywhere specific; she just keeps running. And the jungle never seems to end.

About fifteen minutes into their walk, Eko appears, standing next to a tree. Mandi jumps in fright, and then she smiles. One thin little arm stretches out, offering Mandi a small purple flower. Mandi takes it and smiles. She sees that Eko twitches less and his brow is less furrowed. He even manages to hold Mandi's gaze for a few seconds before looking away. He then quickly runs to stand beside Elly.

Elly says something to Eko, which he obviously does not like. He stamps his feet and hurls words at her. Elly speaks to him patiently and calmly. Again Eko has a tantrum. Elly continues to talk quietly but firmly, squatting before him and looking directly into his face. Eko becomes quiet. He looks at Elly and then disappears into the jungle. With Eko gone, Elly and Mandi walk deeper into the jungle.

Mandi can only guess that they are headed in the direction of the production facility.

When they come to a break in the jungle, Mandi can see that they have arrived at the far end of the jungle facility. The route they took is longer and more circuitous, having doubled back on themselves several times. They have also passed more towering trees than she remembers. Elly cautiously pokes her head out of the jungle. It is 11:00am.

'I'm sure they've tightened up security since we've been here,' thinks Mandi. 'I don't think we'll be fortunate enough to have another midday 'tour.''

Instead of staying here to observe the facility, Elly motions for Mandi to follow her. Mandi is confused, but follows Elly in silence. They cannot risk being caught again.

After about fifteen minutes of walking, they come to another clearing. Mandi cannot believe her eyes—there is another jungle facility! This compound, much smaller than the first, has three buildings—two larger ones and one small one. Like the other facility, it is guarded. Scattered between and around the buildings are small and medium-sized satellite dishes. Mandi has seen these dishes advertised in Australia for remote locations, such as remote cattle and sheep stations and remote Aboriginal communities. These powerful satellite dishes enable impressively quick telecommunication; they should, their price tags are equally 'impressive'!

Mandi continues looking around. In the foreground is a tall but narrow cage, which almost looks like a crude, cramped playground. There are two old tires hanging from ropes and there are small platforms at different levels. In front of the platforms hang long pieces of rope tied intermittently with large knots. The door to the cage is shut, but nothing is in the cage. Against the closest building are spare tubes of thick cable insulation stacked into a pyramid shape. A huge black dumpster sits apart from the buildings, at the far side of the compound.

At the call for midday prayer, Mandi and Elly watch as men file out of the first and second buildings. They wear traditional prayer attire: loose shirts that hang over long, striped 'skirts'<sup>30</sup>. Atop their

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<sup>30</sup> These skirts, or sarongs, are long, rectangular pieces of material that are sewn together at the shorter ends to form a circular piece of material.

heads are rectangular caps. Last time Mandi was in Balikpapan, she had a closer look at these caps, which can be quite ornate. Her favorite was made from black velvet material and was ornately embroidered with gold and teal. It was a piece of art. Mandi watches the men as they carry their rolled prayer mats under their arms. They file into the third, small building, which must act as a musholla, which is reserved for prayer.

Although Mandi wants nothing more than to look inside these buildings, she knows from experience that they will probably be caught on digital camera. She takes her mini-binoculars out of her daypack and looks closely at the buildings.

"Where are you little fellas," says Mandi under her breath.

She expects to see surveillance cameras about six inches squared, similar to those used in stores and museums. She puts the binoculars down and turns to Elly.

"Elly, are there surveillance cameras here?" asks Mandi. As she speaks she tries a variety of hand signals to indicate photos and cameras. She was never good at charades...

Elly looks at her quizzically. She reaches out to look at Mandi's binoculars. She puts them up to her eyes, then takes them away. She puts them back up and takes them away. Mandi shows her how to adjust them, and Elly looks through the binoculars for several minutes.

"Elly, are there surveillance cameras here?" repeats Mandi using her hand gestures.

Elly points to something, then makes a diamond shape with her two thumbs and fingers. She returns the binoculars so Mandi can look. It takes Mandi several minutes, but she locates a small, black diamond shape almost hidden by the thatch of the roofs.

"Ah, are those our little camera spies?" asks Mandi.

Elly motions for Mandi to follow her again. They go into the jungle and emerge a few minutes later at a different side of the compound. From their new angle, the second building blocks the view of the third building. From this view, they can look into the

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The wearer stands in the center and wraps the material around himself, then rolls it at the top (waist) to secure it. Alternately, the material is not sewn together; again the material is wrapped around the body and rolled at the waist.

second building. Elly motions for Mandi to use the binoculars to look into the second building.

Mandi is surprised at what she sees. Inside the second building are what look like monkeys in small cages. She cannot be sure because the windows have some type of mesh or curtain over them, but she swears that she can see monkeys. She rubs her eyes and looks a third time.

'Maybe they're not monkeys,' she tells herself, 'because they don't seem to be moving much.' She has to find out...

Mandi motions to Elly that she wants to go inside. Elly is obviously prepared this time for Mandi's request because she starts clearing an area to draw in the dirt.

"OK," says Mandi. "Our game plan. Good thinking Elly."

Mandi watches as Elly starts scratching in the dirt. She draws squares for the buildings. She then takes a leaf from the ground and points to herself. She takes a small piece of stick and points to Mandi.

"OK, you're the leaf and I'm the stick," says Mandi.

The leaf goes into the first building and then comes back. The stick goes into the second building and then comes back.

"That's good—that's you and me taken care of," says Mandi. "But what about all those men in the third building—"

Mandi raises her finger a moment. "Worse case scenario is that we're caught right here, right now," says Mandi. "And then we go to an Indonesian jail. I shudder to think about that, but that might happen. It's more likely that we'll have a repeat of last time. We'll get caught *after* we leave the compound. In that case, we can't head back to the mining camp. We have to go somewhere else. I'll contact Marcus and we can make alternative arrangements to meet. We can 'hide' until Marcus and his colleagues get here, and then plan from there. Best case scenario, we get away unnoticed...But I don't think that's going to happen."

If only Elly and Mandi could communicate, Elly would tell Mandi about a multitude of other scenarios...

Mandi looks at Elly, nods her head and points to the compound. Elly places her small brown hand in Mandi's hand and squeezes it. Mandi does not realize what she is asking of Elly, nor does she realize what she is really getting herself into. Elly, on the other hand, knows exactly what she is doing. Having grown up in Central Kalimantan, Elly knows the laws of the jungle. She knows the

significance—and insignificance—of life. And she knows that no cost is too high to protect the secrets held within these buildings. She looks at Mandi and winks. Mandi winks back. Elly points to a section of fence that has already been partially dug out.

"Ah, so you've done some work ahead of time—you really *are* prepared Elly," says Mandi.

They crawl under the fence, then make their dash. Elly runs quietly to the first building and disappears inside. Mandi runs to the second building and cautiously looks through one of the windows. The meshing over the open windows is netting to keep out mosquitoes. Mandi sees about a dozen small cages lining the walls. There aren't monkeys in the cages, but orangutans half Mandi's size or smaller. Most of the orangutans have wires attached to them somewhere. She sees wires coming out of temples, foreheads and necks. The orangutans that are not lying limp at the bottom of their cages start screaming when they see Mandi peek in the window. Mandi quickly jumps away from the window. She walks around to the side of the building.

Mandi flattens herself against the wall so she can look into the building, but not be seen by the orangutans. A little orangutan closest to the door watches her, but does not scream. Instead he looks at her through scared chocolate eyes. His wispy red hair is thinned where the wires stick into his head. He sits crouched in a corner rocking slowly back and forth and picking at his eyebrows—or where his eyebrows used to be—with his fingers. Mandi wants to grab him and take him along, but she sees that his cage, like the others, is padlocked.

This time Mandi is better prepared—she remembers to use her e-Helper. She snaps several digital images and then switches her e-Helper to video mode and slowly scans the room. They can make still images from the video and enlarge them to display room detail.

"You're busted," mutters Mandi under her breath. "Orangutans are an endangered species. You *cannot* experiment on them. And look at these conditions! You're going to have an unbelievable number of animal rights activist groups crawling through this facilities within days of my getting these images out."

A table stands in the middle of the room piled high with a jumble of items—electric prods, leather gloves, and a variety of cell phones, mini-TVs, and other small gadgets. Neatly stacked on shelving and lined up against the wall on the other side of the room are large TVs,

microwaves, hair dryers, washers, dryers, blenders, electric mixers, and a variety of everyday gadgets. The cages are interspersed with several machines, only two of which appear to be turned on. Although their lights flash, Mandi cannot see any output device.

‘Either they’re writing direct to a databank or the data is going to another location— maybe the other building?’ thinks Mandi.

Mandi tries to see what machine is attached to what orangutan, but she cannot make out the wiring nor can she read the manufacturer’s writing on the machines. She blinks and rubs her eyes, but her vision does not clear.

“Great—time to get blurred vision,” mutters Mandi. She jumps when Elly tugs at her arm and motions frantically for them to go. Mandi follows Elly’s lead, trying to leave quickly and quietly, but she trips, her blurred vision obscuring a small vine that crosses the pathway.

Elly moves them through the jungle quickly, occasionally letting Mandi rest while she tramples vines and branches to confuse their trail.

"So they’re going to come after us," says Mandi, not really expecting Elly to respond. She already knows the answer.

"Tidak pulang. Tidak pulang," says Mandi. She is trying to tell Elly they should not go home.

Mandi does not know that Elly has no intention of going back to the mine site or to her home and Eko. Going back means putting Eko at risk, and Elly will not do that.

Elly and Mandi go further into the jungles of Borneo. Mandi tries to gauge their direction from the occasional glimpse of sun. She guesses that they are heading for the river, which leads into Central Kalimantan and Dayak country.

After an hour of moving quickly through the jungle, Mandi and Elly arrive at a modest thatched wood house in a small clearing. Even though there is no water beneath it, the house is built up on stilts. They do not walk into the clearing; instead they crouch at the jungle’s edge. Elly seems to be listening to something, then Mandi hears it. A woman’s voice alternates with a man’s voice. Elly quickly pulls Mandi further back into the jungle under the camouflage of the underbrush.

Mandi can barely see through the thick brush, but she glimpses two men walking around the side of the house with rifles. They are dressed in light brown police uniforms. Another two men, in

traditional dress, follow them. All four men stare into the jungle. Mandi and Elly do not move. After several seconds, the men turn and walk toward the front of the house.

When the traditionally dressed men turn, Mandi sees that each man carries a kris<sup>31</sup> flat against his back. The kris is held fast by a thick cloth band tied around their waists. Mandi has seen such traditionally dressed men walking along the haul roads. They did not look menacing from the safety of the vehicle, but they certainly look threatening now.

For at least thirty minutes, Mandi and Elly sit motionless on a tree root in the jungle just behind the house. They do not speak. Finally, Elly indicates that she will go and Mandi is to wait until she returns.

While Elly is gone, it hits Mandi that she is completely out of her league. She cannot speak the language. She does not know where she is. *No one* knows where she is. And she is not even supposed to be here!

From Mandi's recollection of the mining lease map, the production facility sits on the westernmost edge of the lease. If Elly walked westward, which Mandi expects they did because of the direction of the nearest river, then the spot where she is waiting is not on mining lease property. Mandi *might* have received some protection while on the mining lease, but once off of it, she is out of its jurisdiction.

'The only things going for us,' thinks Mandi, 'are Elly's knowledge of the jungle and the people, and amlop. This time I've brought plenty of bribe money.'

For what seems like hours, Mandi does not move a muscle. She barely breathes. Finally, she decides to turn her head and stretch her stiffened neck. She sees movement out of the corner of her eye and jumps. She looks to where she saw the movement and sees nothing. She could have sworn she saw a small figure. Might Eko have followed them here? Mandi shakes her head, doubting that he could

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<sup>31</sup> The kris is not just an ordinary knife or machete. It is said to be endowed with supernatural powers. If a son inherits an heirloom kris, he can draw on the powers of his ancestors, which are stored in the sacred weapon. Distinctive features of the kris include the number of curves in the blade and the design on the blade. The hilt and scabbard may be beautifully decorated.

have kept the pace at which she and Elly ran through the jungle. She must be seeing things.

Mandi closes her eyes and listens to the jungle noises—shrill calls, trilling cicadas and sudden squawks. She opens her eyes again and looks around her. ‘Good, no snakes,’ she thinks. She looks over her right shoulder to where Elly was sitting and does a double take. Documents? What documents are these?

Mandi slowly reaches behind her and picks them up. ‘This looks like... but it can’t be...’

She flips through them. ‘Data? Elly’s got data here! She must have gone into a research laboratory!’ thinks Mandi.

Mandi scans the data greedily. It looks familiar—the way it is displayed. She knows this research style, but cannot place it. Where has she seen data displayed like this before? It is definitely a record of electromagnetic radiation, but what products are being tested? Are they the ones she saw in the jungle research facility? Each item must be coded. The data shows dangerously strong electromagnetic fields that make the readings from the pirated e-Helpers look ‘safe’!

“Oh my god,” says Mandi. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees movement again. Her heart catches in her throat as she turns to look. Elly approaches quickly but silently, motioning for her to get up and follow her. Elly grabs the papers from Mandi and puts them in a black plastic bag that she pulls from her pocket. Mandi tries to take them from her, but Elly hides them in a tree.

Mandi looks around her. ‘How will I ever remember which tree they’re hidden in?’ she thinks desperately. Elly sees Mandi’s panic and takes her hand firmly. She leads her into the jungle. Mandi wonders whether Elly is lost. She seems to wander aimlessly, stopping here, turning there and coming back around.

‘No,’ Mandi tells herself. ‘Elly is not wandering aimlessly. She is *not* lost. She stops and looks because she is reading something that I can’t see—a particular bend to a tree, or a grouping of plants, things that guide her. To me the jungle is a tangle of vines and plants, and one tree looks just like the others. But there *are* differences, and Elly can read them. The Aborigines read signs in the desert where I thought there was nothing.’

About thirty minutes later, Elly and Mandi emerge at the edge of a brown, murky river. A small boat waits for them. It is a long, shallow boat made crudely from a few long planks. An old, thin man perches on the end of the boat. He squats there, rhythmically

scooping water out of the boat with the bottom half of a plastic water jug. He throws the water into the river. The man looks at Elly and nods slightly. He looks at Mandi with gentle eyes and gives her a soft smile. His gentleness stops Mandi momentarily. It reminds her of the general feeling she gets from the people here.

Getting into the boat is not as easy as it looks. Mandi climbs into the boat, which rocks from side to side and several times comes close to tipping. Elly climbs quickly and carefully into the boat without creating a ripple.

'What grace and balance Elly and this man have,' thinks Mandi.

The loud cough and sputter of the boat's engine interrupts the jungle shrills of birds and cicadas. Colorful birds of green, blue and red fly up along the river's edge, squawking as they take flight.

'Well,' thinks Mandi. 'If the local mob squad didn't know where we were before, they certainly do now!'

About fifteen minutes into the ride, they round a bend in the river only to be met by two big speedboats, one on each side of the river. Although the old man tries to gun the engine, his shallow plank boat stands no chance against the high-powered speedboats. One speedboat crowds their shallow boat toward the river's edge while the other blocks the front. The old man has no choice but to slow the engine and move the boat toward the river's edge.

The speedboat alongside them suddenly hits them hard, throwing the old man off balance and into the brown water. The engine, which he was holding up, falls back into the water. Mandi watches in horror as the man's arm gets sucked into the motor's blades. Mandi tries to pull the motor up, but she is too late. The old man is pulled under the boat. The brown water turns red. Mandi looks up into the face of the man driving the speedboat. She sees no emotion in his face. She looks back at the water where the old man fell in. There is no sign of him. The water swirls a murky brown color.

The session of 'bumper-boats' continues. The speedboat to the side hits their shallow boat again, almost capsizing it. One of the men in the front boat yells. Mandi decides that she would rather jump out of the boat than be shoved and possibly be sucked under like the old man. She grabs Elly's hand and pulls her overboard with her. She jumps away from the boat's engine and kicks the shallow canoe into the speedboat with as much force as she can. When Mandi comes up for air, she sees Elly's arms flailing in the water.

"Shit," splutters Mandi.

In three long strokes Mandi reaches Elly and grabs her around the neck from behind. She swims with her to shore as the men in the boats circle back round. Mandi has two choices: run into the jungle, leaving Elly on the shore to possibly die, or give Elly mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. She picks the latter. She drags Elly's body up onto a piece of flat land.

Mandi works on reviving Elly. She hears the boats pull up along the river's edge and expects to be shot at any moment. She hears the motors cut, and she hears footsteps. Then, she hears nothing. She only hears herself counting out loud as she tries to bring Elly back to life.

Mandi alternates between mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and cardio resuscitation by pumping Elly's chest. Elly does not respond. "Dammit Elly, don't die. You can't die."

Mandi keeps working on her. Suddenly Elly coughs up a small fountain of water. As Elly begins to breathe on her own and opens her eyes, Mandi sits down on the ground beside her. When she looks up, she sees the men standing there, watching them.

As if ordered, the men raise their krisses and rifles; however they seem less aggressive now. One man dressed in a police uniform speaks, rather than shouts. Elly tries to get up, but falls backward. Mandi helps her up.

Elly and Mandi are separated and bound to small hard wood chairs in the middle of the speedboats. The boats turn back the way they came.

As they pull away from the shore, Mandi sees her black daypack bob in the water near some reeds and then disappear into the brown murk. 'I wonder if anyone will find any trace of me?' she thinks. 'Maybe I'll be added to a missing person's list. I wonder how long you stay on a list like that before you're written off as dead?' Mandi stops herself. 'No more morbid thoughts,' she tells herself. 'We're not dead. Not yet.' She thinks of the orangutans in the cages and the old man from the boat. 'These bastards aren't going to win. Just think. Think. There's got to be a way...' An image of Marcus enters Mandi's head. 'If only I could get in touch with Marcus and his group.'

In addition to studying Indonesian in the evenings at the mining camp, Mandi has also done some research on SR Inc. Although they are rarely mentioned as being directly involved with rescue operations, their name pops up enough to imply involvement in

everything from rescue operations involving fires and explosions to natural disasters like cyclones and earthquakes. 'Miraculous' is a word often used in the news reports. 'Well, miraculous would be appropriate in this situation,' thinks Mandi.

Mandi observes the men in the boat with her. One man, the one 'guarding' her, leans against the side of the boat right across from her. His knife has been put back into its cloth holder at his back. His face looks more like Elly's than it does the other man, the policeman, driving the boat. His and Elly's faces are a bit wider and a bit heavier featured. Mandi wonders if the differences are Dayak versus Indonesian. Elly seemed to be heading toward Central Kalimantan, and Mandi knows Central Kalimantan is Dayak country.

She wonders about what she heard one night in a Singapore pub. She and Alan met a couple of Australian men who had flown in from Kalimantan for a break. They drank together and soon the men began telling tales about the Dayaks of Central Kalimantan. They talked about their headhunting rituals, their odd blend of Christianity and animism, and their belief in the power of their dead ancestors. They said that the Dayaks believe in ghosts, and that is why women are not allowed outside during dusk. Ghosts are said to 'come out' then, and women—being the weaker gender—must stay inside. They also said that the Dayaks believe that if the heads and hands of their victims are cut off, then these victims cannot come back as ghosts to haunt them. Seeing Mandi's expression, the men laughed and said that they 'never let the truth get in the way of a good story', which is a good Australian saying.

Did Mandi believe them? Regardless of where the truth lies, Mandi knows one thing: the Indonesians Mandi has met certainly exhibit a healthy respect for the Dayaks.

Mandi watches as they speed down the windy river. Only about five minutes into their ride, the policemen decide to get Mandi and Elly out of view. They keep them tied to their small chairs, but they lay the chairs onto their sides. Mandi and Elly are now well below the sides of the boat. They throw a light cloth over Mandi.

Mandi feels the vibration of the boat's engine against her thigh, shoulder and head. It is stuffy and hot underneath the cloth and there is not much airflow down on the floor.

Mandi shouts "Permissi. Permissi. Hey, excuse me!"

The traditionally dressed man lifts up the edge of the cloth. Mandi says, "Yes. Yes. Bagus. Good." She takes several deep breaths so that he can see that she is trying to breathe.

The policeman says something to the other man, who arranges the cloth so Mandi's face is covered, but she can still get air.

Mandi has no idea of how much time passes before the boat slows. She becomes hyper vigilant, listening for sounds that might indicate where they are. She hears nothing but jungle sounds and men's voices. Before setting Mandi's chair upright, the policeman blindfolds her. She hears the voices of other men and feels the boat rocking as people get on and off. She feels the cool shadows of people as they step in front of her and block the sun. Mandi loses count of the number of times the sun is blocked and the boat rocks.

After a few moments, they decide to move her. Mandi feels hands placed firmly on both her arms. The rope confining her to the small chair falls away. Her hands are quickly placed behind her back and bound again. Someone pulls her up from underneath her arms. Unfortunately Mandi's legs have fallen asleep from being tied, and they buckle under her when she tries to stand. Before they can catch her, Mandi falls headfirst into the side of the boat. She feels a sharp pain above her right eye and feels a trickle of blood wet the blindfold. There is shouting and commotion. Mandi tries to move her legs. Pins and needles still shoot up and down. By the time Mandi feels a cool cloth against her forehead, she has regained some of the feeling in her legs. They help her up again and this time she can stand.

If Mandi had known the length of the trek that lay ahead of her, she might have enjoyed her 'rest' in the boat more! That night they walk for over four hours in the jungle. The first part of the trek is slow going. Mandi is still blindfolded and she often stumbles and falls, only to be jerked upright again. Finally, they take her blindfold off, leaving her with only her gag and her bound hands.

Mandi's relief at seeing Elly is overwhelming. She feels her eyes swell with tears. When Elly's blindfold is removed, she too looks around wildly, until she sees Mandi. Their eyes meet and hold. Neither smile, but there is comfort in that gaze.

They are in the jungle, and the same four men accompany them. They walk for a couple of hours, then stop for a break. During the break one policeman gives Mandi and Elly drinks from a bottle of water, and each of the policemen smoke a cigarette. Mandi notices

that the policemen and the Dayaks sit in separate groups. She and Elly are separated.

'I wonder how much allegiance there is between the Dayaks and the policemen,' thinks Mandi. 'Maybe that's an angle I can play...'

Having noticed a separation at break time, Mandi tries to be more vigilant of group dynamics. Although there is not much speaking while they walk, there is a 'way of doing things'. The Dayaks are the ones who blaze the trail when there is a particularly thick patch of jungle to hack through. Their role might result from the Dayak's prowess with the kris, but could it also be a sign of the pecking order—the Dayaks doing the manual labor and the policemen giving the orders? Anytime anything is deemed 'unusual'—a thick section of jungle, a particularly big log, or spongy ground—a Dayak is sent ahead. Once the way is cleared or tested, the taller of the two policemen shouts and the Dayak resumes his position in the group.

Mandi thinks that what she most wants is to stop walking, but when they do actually stop, it's not as good as she imagined. When they walk, they are moving, and although there are mosquitoes and bugs, Mandi can keep a lot of them away from her by moving her head slowly from side to side; however, once they stop, the mosquitoes attack from all angles. She feels them on her forehead and face, and she hears them in her ears. She shakes her head to keep them from biting her, but she gets dizzy and falls down.

There is activity all around her. Mandi watches as the men set up camp for the night. Around one oil lantern the Dayaks construct sleeping platforms from vine and branches. Around the other lantern, the policemen build a small fire. They pull out a collapsible pot and put measures of water and rice in it.

Before they begin to eat, Elly grunts sharply to the men through her gag. One of the Dayaks takes a length of cloth and wraps Mandi's head and face with it. Although it is hot and confining, the cloth prevents Mandi from getting bitten by mosquitoes and bugs. Mandi bows and thanks the Dayak man.

Although Mandi does not usually eat it, the small portion of plain, white rice that she is given tastes wonderful. She notes that the Dayaks are not given any rice. Shortly after Mandi and the others start eating, the Dayaks disappear into the jungle.

Mandi is not sure how long the Dayaks are away because she quickly falls fast asleep on the platform. But before she does, she and

Elly share a long look, but cannot speak because their mouths have been gagged again.

The next day is another day of walking, which revolves around the Muslim policemen's prayer times. Their first call to prayer is at 5.00am. When they finish their prayers, Mandi and Elly get a small portion of rice. By 6:00am they are walking. At the 9:30am prayer stop, Mandi and Elly get water while the Indonesian policemen get water and cigarettes. At 11:30am they stop again for prayer, water, and cigarettes. The 11:30am stop, however, is an extended break, and a much needed rest stop. They eat another small portion of rice and they take a nap. It is the hottest part of the day, and Mandi is tired and thirsty. The same Dayak man as yesterday comes to Mandi and wraps her head in cloth. Mandi bends her knees and leans forward to make it easier for him to reach her head. She smiles and thanks him. She tries to catch his eye, but he looks away. That same Dayak is on duty, keeping watch as the rest of the group sleeps. Mandi guesses that he watches for pythons, of which she has heard horror stories.

The afternoon is broken into prayers and breaks at 3:00pm and 6:00pm. Again they make camp and again they climb on top of their platforms to sleep. This time, however, Mandi does not sleep well. Mandi dreams that she is alone in the old man's shallow boat. His thin hand reaches out of the\*brown murky water, and Mandi grabs it to pull him into the boat. Instead, the old man pulls Mandi into the water. Holding his hand they swim past the brown water into a midnight blue ocean. Mandi looks around her and sees men and women, and babies and children with large tumors protruding from their heads. The water flashes with small sparks. Mandi cannot see where the sparks are coming from until she swims into their midst. Around her floats millions of e-Helpers and from them shoot tiny thunderbolts of energy. Her head pounds and she sees a young boy, about Eko's age, swim toward her. He looks like Elly, and he has a tumor on the right side of his head. He reaches out his hand toward Mandi, but she recoils. Mandi wants to swim to the surface, but she does not know which direction is up because it all begins to swirl and churn...

Mandi sits up quickly, almost knocking Elly off the platform. Elly tries to quiet Mandi by indicating for her to lie back down. When Mandi rolls onto her side she feels Elly's body against her and she feels comforted. Again she sleeps.

Day two in the jungle starts much the same as day one, except on day two Mandi awakes with a headache from dehydration. The camp is still quiet. She thinks she sees a flash of movement behind a tree, but it is too dark to be sure. Mandi wonders if you can get hallucinations from dehydration.

Mandi also wonders how many days she can keep this up...

## 8. ...And a Land of Illusions

*Dr. Lawrence Schuler, the head researcher of the well-funded jungle facility, cannot believe that there has been a second breach of security at the facility. What are all those security guards doing out there? Does he have to do everything himself—research and intrusion prevention?*

*When he hears that data went missing in this latest fiasco, he immediately buys a ticket back to Indonesia, canceling the rest of his vacation. If that data falls into the wrong hands, his career is over. But then again, his career is probably over anyway...*

*When did things go awry? When he started with The Cooperative he was excited to lead their research efforts into an area he was particularly passionate about, namely e-smog. In this area he was sure that he could make a contribution to humankind. He wasn't thrilled about 'borrowing' Dr. Ramu Visra's research, but he could rationalize that: science stops for no man.*

*But, then he heard about the mysterious deaths of the jungle children. He was sure that those deaths could be traced directly back to the e-smog generated by their jungle trials. If he had not learned the local language, he never would have known about those deaths. But he does know about the deaths, and it is too late to get out. He has seen firsthand what The Cooperative does to deserters. Take Dr. Visra Ramu...*

*He wonders if the end can ever justify the means, especially if there does not appear to be an endpoint.*

**January 17, 2014**

**Indonesia, Island of Borneo**

When Marcus, Maria and Barry arrive in Balikpapan after being granted their visas earlier than expected, they look for Mandi among the many faces in the airport's small arrival hall, but she is not there. Before they left New Zealand, Marcus had sent Mandi a text message with their arrival details, but Mandi has not responded to any of his text or voice messages. They try calling her at the Senaggin Mine but she does not answer. Additionally Mandi's e-

Helper does not switch over to the message bank. Is her e-Helper broken? Is Mandi out of service range? Is she in trouble?

When they still cannot contact Mandi the morning after their arrival, they decide to take Ami up on her offer. Ami works at the Borneo Bar in Balikpapan where Marcus, Mandi and Barry had a few drinks when they arrived. She knows of someone with a small seaplane who can take them into the jungle. She recommends a pilot called Dave, and though he is pricey, he can do the job.

Dave is not surprised at Marcus's story—it is one that he has heard at least half a dozen times: Two backpackers on a trek across Kalimantan are lost. Kalimantan has some of the only tracts of primary rainforest left in the world, and they are supported by tourists who pay outrageous prices to trek in them. A lot of backpackers who know little about the terrain and conditions of the jungle sign up for the adventure, only to find out that the trek can be physically difficult and dangerous.

Dave is unaware that Marcus has made up the story about finding the trekking backpackers; he is really looking for Mandi, but he cannot tell Dave that.

Dave agrees to help Marcus if Marcus and the others can get themselves from Balikpapan in East Kalimantan to Kota Baru in South Kalimantan. There are daily commercial flights between the two cities, so it should not be a problem. Dave tells Marcus that he plans to be in Kota Baru on January 19th, and he can take them up in his seaplane first thing in the morning.

In fact Dave doesn't yet have any plans to be there on the 19th, but if Marcus agrees to meet him there, it will give Dave a reason to fly out of his home in Palankaraya in Central Kalimantan. Once chartered, he can start networking with other people who cannot afford the cost of a plane ride to the large city of Kota Baru. On this particular trip, Dave is planning to take Cecil with him, an old Dayak man who needs kidney dialysis.

As soon as Marcus finishes organizing when and where they will meet Dave, he sets another plan in motion. They have a full twenty-four hours before they have to meet Dave, and if the flight between Balikpapan and Kota Baru is early enough, they will have time to take the speedboat an hour up river to the mine site. If Mandi is not at Senaggin Mine, they will be able to get back to Kota Baru in time to meet Dave and search for Mandi. She might be at the jungle facility...

Luck is with the paratrio; Marcus, Maria and Barry arrive at Balikpapan airport two hours before the next flight is scheduled to leave for Kota Baru. They buy tickets and wait for their flight.

Balikpapan is an Indonesian hub for the mining and oil industries. As such, expatriates working in those industries fly in and out of the Balikpapan airport. Most oil and mining work is done remotely, so while a small expatriate community lives and works in the city itself, they comprise a small percentage of the total city residents.

Although locals are used to the comings and goings of expats, they are still curious about these 'strangers' living among them. It is quite common for an expat to be stared at by dozens of people. The small children at the airport are particularly curious about Maria. They stand only an arm's distance away from her and look up into her face. At first Marcus can see that Maria is visibly uncomfortable with the crowd of children that is gathering around her. Soon, however, Maria plays the same waiting games with the children that she plays with Lena and Stephan.

As Maria laughs and entertains her growing audience of children, Marcus looks around the airport. He has read that Balikpapan is a melting pot of ethnic groups, and he can see it reflected in the faces of the people waiting to travel. Although he cannot place particular features to any specific group, he *does* notice differences in facial features and body builds. He remembers from his reading that there are numerous immigrants from the Indonesian islands of Java, Bali, and Madura. Additionally, Dayaks, who live mostly in Central Kalimantan, are beginning to trickle into the Balikpapan area for the same reasons as everyone else—employment.

As they fly along the southeastern coastline of the island of Borneo, Marcus is amazed at how it is developed. Small, perfectly squared plots of land demarcate individual rice paddies. Just inland from the waterlogged paddies are sprawling oil palm plantations. These plantations have acre upon acre of palm trees planted meticulously in straight rows.

From his seat Marcus can look down and see water swirling at the mouths of the rivers where strong undercurrents churn. Here the blue ocean water turns a murky brown color from the agitated sand and debris. Further inland, Marcus can see rivers reflecting silver in the sunlight. They look like kinked, dozing snakes. He follows the

paths of the rivers with his eyes until they are lost in the thick smoke-like haze that hangs over the hinterland.

Once they reach the Kota Baru airport, eager taxi drivers flank Marcus on all sides. Only one, however, speaks broken English. Marcus asks him to take them to a speedboat that can take them up the estuary and river to the Senaggin Mine.

Marcus is prepared for this journey. He has several maps with him that Mandi drew while on Great Barrier Island. In addition to the sketches of the jungle facility, Mandi drew several rough maps of the Senaggin Mine, and what she believes to be the roads to Tanggar, the small village near the jungle facility.

The taxi driver repeatedly talks about 'Polisi' and 'papers'. Marcus quickly flashes the man a few documents, which satisfy him. He pops the trunk of the car for their bags and starts the engine of the taxi. Marcus gives Barry and Maria a quick look. Maria winks. Before Mandi left New Zealand, Maria had insisted that they photocopy some of her travel documents to make forgeries for the three of them, just in case.

Although they do not stay in Balikpapan for long, they stay long enough to notice the differences between driving in Balikpapan and driving in Kota Baru. In Kota Baru the cars and trucks not only share the road with the motor scooters and pedestrians, but also with bicycles and man-powered, two passenger tricycles called becaks. In a becak, the driver pedals from a bicycle positioned behind a small covered seat where the passengers sit.

The becaks are run down and dented, and pedaled by thin, determined men. As cars honk and trucks drive perilously close, the becak men steadily pedal and maneuver their becaks through the streets. Maria points out the many faded, colorful patterns that cover the becaks. She says that they remind her of the Dayak paintings that she saw hanging in the Dusit Hotel where they stayed in Balikpapan. Marcus and Barry laugh and point out that becaks transport a lot more than people—they carry everything—from people to packages and furniture and chickens and goats!

The taxi driver stops when they reach an area of long wooden houses built on stilts over the water. Women sit on open planked areas at the backs of the buildings, watching as their children jump and play in the water. Small plastic bottles, paper, and black plastic bags bob up and down in the water. All laughing and action stops when Marcus, Maria and Barry approach, led by the taxi driver.

The taxi driver and one woman speak for several minutes, before the woman disappears into the house. Marcus glances after her and sees that there is a large screen TV leaning against one wall, and nothing else. There are no chairs, bookshelves, sofas or tables. Although there is a small satellite dish in the back, the TV does not appear to be hooked into it. There is bright blue material hanging in front of the windows, but they do little to hide the black, prison-like bars.

While a boat is arranged, the driver motions for Marcus, Maria and Barry to sit on the wooden bench. The woman, who was sitting there before she went into the house, has left a few banana peels laid at the end of the bench. Within a few minutes the woman emerges carrying a small tray and four glasses of traditional, sweet black tea. She also offers them a small plate of spiced cassava chips<sup>32</sup>. They graciously accept.

Looking around, Barry sees that they are the current local spectacle. The children, having come away from their water play to look at them, create little puddles at their feet. The house they stand on juts out further than the surrounding houses, and Barry can see that more than likely these dishes were washed in the same water that the children play in. He can see women not only dishwashing, but also bathing and washing clothes. Barry wonders if he will get sick from drinking the tea. He looks at Maria and Marcus and notes that they too hesitate before tasting the tea. Maria is the first to take a sip and smile her thanks to the woman.

When the boat arrives about forty-five minutes later, they speed toward the Senaggin Mine. The boat of this man, Imam, is newer and faster than many of the other boats in the water. There are numerous small fishing boats, with nets hung limply off the back, and there are over a dozen barges piled high with mounds of black coal. Tugboats pull these barges slowly along.

Instead of arriving at the Senaggin Mine unannounced as they had hoped, they are met by Sarif, who introduces himself as the mine site's Community Relations Officer. In good English, Sarif apologizes that Terry cannot extend a welcome personally as he is currently offsite. He also apologizes that Mandi is not there to greet them herself, but she left the mine when her contract finished the day

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<sup>32</sup> Cassava chips are similar to potato chips in texture. They are from the genus *Manihot* and the plant has starchy, tuberous roots.

before. Hadn't she contacted them in Balikpapan with her arrival details?

Marcus thinks back to his conversation with Mandi. He is sure that she said no one on site except for Terry, the Australian manager, speaks good English. So where does Sarif fit into the picture?

"I've been having problems with my e-Helper," lies Marcus. "Like you said, we probably just missed each other."

"That's a pity," says Sarif. "It might have saved you an unnecessary trip. But you're here. Come and I'll show you the mine's camp. We can eat something, and then you can catch the evening boat back to Kota Baru."

Sarif does not wait for a response. He motions for them to go to his troop carrier while he walks over to the river where the speedboat driver is waiting. Sarif says something to the driver and gives him money. The speedboat driver is obviously unhappy because he speaks loudly and points toward Marcus and the others.

Marcus quickly approaches the two men. "Sarif-Imam and I agreed on an amount before we left Kota Baru. I'll pay him what we agreed on. I—"

Sarif cuts off Marcus. "There is no need for him to wait for you. You will take our mine transportation back. We try to closely watch who comes and goes from the mine site—safety regulations you understand. Beside, you pay too much. I take care of it. Come, we leave now for the mine camp."

Sarif ushers Marcus away from the speedboat driver, who angrily speeds away.

Although none of the group has ever seen a mining camp before, somehow they expected it to look different. They imagined something rugged and uncomfortable, but instead they find the opposite: sturdily constructed wooden buildings in a tidy camp set in neatly groomed surroundings. Sure, it could do with a coat of varnish or wood sealant, but generally everything is in good order.

Marcus recognizes the buildings from Mandi's sketches. Several large brown wooden structures are the senior managers' sleeping quarters. The mess<sup>33</sup> is located near to them, as is a Recreation Center, which has two ping-pong tables, two dartboards and a few old weight machines. There are several more buildings further away

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<sup>33</sup> A mess is a place at the mining camp where the workers eat their meals communally.

that are dormitories for a few middle managers and office workers. Most of the employees of the mine—the truck drivers, digger operators, etc—live locally in kampungs.

Sarif takes Marcus, Maria and Barry into the closest senior management building. "This is where Mandi stayed when she was here working on the project." They walk into the building and Sarif opens the door into Mandi's room. He does not move from the doorway. They can look inside, but not enter Mandi's room. "As you can see, she has already packed and gone," says Sarif, closing the door.

Maria examines everything carefully. With her paravision she can easily see through the walls and closed doors into individual rooms. They enter the building through a central common area containing two rattan couches, a TV, and tea and coffee making facilities. There are rooms for four people and Maria can see that they are basic, containing only a bed, a small end table, a crudely assembled desk and a wardrobe for clothes. Three of the rooms look like they are inhabited—clothes, shoes and papers are scattered about. Only Mandi's room is empty.

Maria walks to the back door, which opens onto a wide wooden veranda. She looks straight into a wall of jungle. Again, using her paravision, Maria looks through the tangle of leaves. She sees gibbons and proboscis monkeys resting quietly in the trees. It is another steamy day in the jungle. She watches as a three-meter python slithers quietly toward a young monkey that has wandered too far from its mother. She does not want to watch what happens next, so she looks further a field. She sees a narrow river and more jungle.

After a few moments Sarif leads them to the mess where he organizes for them to eat freshly prepared nasi goreng<sup>34</sup>. As they eat, Maria continues to use her paravision to look around the mining camp. She does not know exactly what she is looking for, but she hopes that if something looks 'suspicious', she will notice it. She scans the area looking for a clue that can help them locate Mandi. Although she and Marcus have not known Mandi long, it seems out of character for her *not* to contact them with a change of plans.

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<sup>34</sup> Nasi goreng is fried rice often cooked with spices, vegetables and small pieces of chicken.

Most of what Maria sees around the mining camp appears 'normal'. A couple of cleaning women catch glimpses of TV while they clean the senior managers' houses. The men on night shift sleep in their bunk beds in the dormitories. A couple of camp dogs sniff at the garbage piles, particularly interested in the furthest corner. They dig and scratch until they pull out a small plastic bag. When they tear open the bag, several grape-flavored fruit rolls spill out.

'Mandi always ate fruit rolls between meals when she was on Great Barrier Island,' thinks Maria. 'She said it was part of her upcoming New Year's resolution—to cut back on chocolate. Maybe it's coincidence, but I don't think so. How often would there be an unopened bag of grape-flavored fruit rolls in a remote mine site's garbage area?'

Maria tries to get Barry's attention, but she cannot do so without attracting the attention of Sarif. If Barry can excuse himself and then paraproject an image of himself over to the garbage area, he can get a closer look.

Maria asks if she can use the toilet. Sarif says that the nearest toilets are at the Recreation Center.

"Barry, do you mind coming with me? You know how terrible my sense of direction is," says Mandi. "That way Marcus and Sarif can continue talking."

Maria stands up and walks away from the table. At the door, she turns and looks impatiently at Barry. "Barry, hurry up," she says. "It's urgent!"

As they walk briskly to the Recreation Center, Maria and Barry are silent. Once inside Maria tells Barry what she saw. Barry quickly goes into the men's toilet. He lies on the floor and closes his eyes, projecting an image of himself to the garbage area. By the time he gets there, nothing is left of the fruit rolls except a few torn wrappers. At his sudden appearance the dogs yelp and run.

ParaBarry's eyes span the mountain of garbage before him. What exactly is he looking for? He holds his nose and kicks with his foot at the garbage pile near where the dogs were rummaging. He breaks off a stick from a nearby tree and begins digging. Suddenly he uncovers a full bottle of Mandi's shampoo. He pokes further and discovers her deodorant and her moisturizing cream.

Barry is not usually aware of someone else's personal hygiene products, but he does know Mandi's selection because he, Monika and Mandi had an extended conversation about them. One evening

when Mandi was on Great Barrier Island, Monika and Barry continued their dinner conversation in Alan and Mandi's room. During the course of the evening, Monika used the bathroom, where she noticed Mandi's shampoo. Barry remembers them because he has since ordered the shampoo and conditioner for himself. The products are 100% natural and their by-products do no damage to the environment. He thinks they are the perfect products to use on Great Barrier Island, which is a pristine environment.

ParaBarry looks at his watch. They have already been gone ten minutes, so he better return. Since he can only carry back one item when a paraprojection ends, he takes Mandi's full bottle of shampoo with him.

Just as Barry and Maria come out of the Recreation Center, Sarif and Marcus walk up to it.

"Is everything OK," asks Sarif, looking suspiciously at Mandi and Barry.

"Yes, sorry for the delay. I have bad cramps today. My period has started and the first day is always the worse," lies Maria.

Maria's words have the impact she wants. Sarif asks no more questions. Marcus and Maria exchange glances before Sarif steps between them to escort them back to the truck.

"Sorry that you cannot stay longer, but I'm sure that you want to catch up with your friend. She is probably in Balikpapan as we speak," says Sarif. Sarif puts them aboard the mine's speedboat, which leaves for Kota Baru just as dusk falls.

Finally, Marcus can find out what is going on. Maria and Barry fill him in, giving him the full bottle of shampoo as proof. "OK, we all agree that Sarif was lying, and we don't know what role he really plays at the mine," says Marcus. "What I want to know is why did they dump her things and where is she?"

"I'd say we'd be right in guessing that she went to the jungle facility again," says Maria. "At least that sounds like a good place to start looking. Let's ask Dave if he can fly us over the mine site tomorrow, and I'll see if I can't see something using my paravision."

Looking out the scratched windows of Dave's single engine Tiger seaplane, Marcus sees patch after patch of thick Kalimantan jungle. He looks at Dave, the pilot, whose eyes move continuously from the horizon to the seaplane's instruments and the jungle, looking for any break in the canopy.

Marcus is startled when he feels Maria grab his shoulder and point emphatically out the window. "Marcus," shouts Maria over the noise of the Tiger engine, "I saw something back to the right—can you have Dave circle back around that way?"

Sitting in front, Marcus and Dave can talk using their headsets. Barry and Maria are in the backseats, which have no headsets. Dave circles around and gets a bit lower. He looks for broken canopy but there is none. He looks at Maria, whose nose is pressed against the window, looking.

"There's no broken canopy anywhere around here," says Dave to Marcus. "Is this the spot that Maria wants? Did she see an orangutan nest, or maybe an orangutan?"

Before they left Kota Baru, Dave briefed the group on things to watch for in the jungle to help them find their friends. They should look for broken canopy or clearings, where the trekkers might position themselves to be more easily spotted during a search-and-rescue effort. They should also look for smoke rising upwards from a cooking fire or any glints of metal or mirror, which might be the trekkers trying to signal them.

Dave also told them about the other things that they might see as they fly over the jungle. They might glimpse small stretches of rail lines that the illegal loggers use to transport logs out of the jungle. Additionally, if they are lucky, they will see orangutans in their nests resting. Even if they do not see orangutans, they might see their large, basket-like nests, which orangutans weave in the upper reaches of the canopy. Dave is surprised that Maria knows so much about orangutans already. She says that her son Stephan recently developed an interest in them.

Maria grabs Marcus's shoulder again—it *is* them! She's sure. Four men—two with rifles and two with long knives or machetes are walking Mandi and an Indonesian woman, probably Elly, through the jungle. Marcus looks around for the nearest river, which is nearby. He asks Dave if they can land on the river and Dave says he can. They can land about ten kilometers from their current location on a short, straight stretch of river.

"Great! Let's do it," says Marcus.

Dave shrugs his shoulders. He changes the dials of the radio to 257, the local channel, to report that he will make an unexpected landing. "You're crazy," says Dave. "But it's your money."

Marcus feels the seaplane bank to the left, preparing to land. The river is clear of traffic, so Dave brings the seaplane in on the first pass. It skids smoothly across the top of the deep brown water as if sliding across ice. As Dave slows the engine, the heat and humidity of the jungle rush into the small seaplane. Dave opens his window as does Marcus, then shouts that he will bring the plane as close as he can to a small 'jetty', four vertical logs supporting a few horizontal planks.

While Dave goes ashore to ask the owners if they can use their jetty, Marcus and the others try to work out a plan. According to Maria, they have to get to Mandi quickly. From the air, Maria saw Mandi stumble as she walked. It looked as if the group was heading for the river. But at their pace, they will not reach the closest river's edge for at least another hour, *if* that is where they are headed.

"We have to get Mandi and Elly out of there as fast as we can," says Marcus. "But we have to keep our parabilities hidden at the same time. We don't need any more attention than what we're getting already."

Marcus nods his head toward the small thatched house near the river's edge. Dave, a woman, a man and three children look at them while Dave points toward the seaplane.

Marcus continues, speaking more quickly. "Maria, using your paravision, can you see if we're in the best position to go inland? Or can we get closer if we go upstream? Barry, when we're positioned, you can easily project paraBarry inland. Because of the tangle of the jungle, it may take me a couple of minutes to get inland. Normally, I can speed my subjective time and use my telekinesis skills to run up to 120 k's per hour, while carrying Maria. However, with the jungle tangle, I may not be able to do it as quickly. You may need to stall them. We need to come back out via the river because we'll have Mandi and Elly with us, and I don't want to give Mandi 'forgetfulness powder'<sup>35</sup>. I want her to clearly remember everything that has gone on..."

As Dave approaches the river, Marcus calls out, "Dave, one more question. Do they have a boat that we can borrow to go upriver? We won't have it for long, just a short while."

Dave continues walking toward the seaplane. From the shore, he calls out. "No, they don't have a boat, and they don't want us to

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<sup>35</sup> See *Xperts: The Paradoppelganger*.

come ashore. Apparently two policemen came here a couple of days ago and searched their house. The two policemen flashed their rifles around a lot and scared the woman. She doesn't want any trouble, so she's asked us to leave."

"Did you explain our situation?" asks Marcus. "We need to find our friends. They might be in trouble."

"Sorry," says Dave. "We can motor up or downstream if you like and try to find a boat, but we're not welcome here."

As Dave steps onto the first planks of the jetty, the seaplane engine roars to life. Dave yells, but it is too late. Maria has seen with her paravision that to get closer to the group, they need to go further upstream. Marcus speeds his individual time, and in just a couple of seconds he has swapped seats and prepared to taxi. Marcus maneuvers the seaplane through a difficult, multi-point turn and taxis upstream.

"Sorry Dave!" shouts Marcus. "We'll be back when we finish."

Using Maria as his navigator, Marcus taxis up the river. Maria monitors the group's position with her paravision. The group has stopped, apparently for lunch. Mandi eats very little. She leans against a tree. Elly is a short distance away, finishing a small helping of rice. She also leans against a tree. The policemen have finished eating and are smoking cigarettes and drinking bottled water. The Dayak men stand at a distance from the group, one in the front of the group and one behind. They scan the area while slowly walking back and forth. Maria also sees a small child, who is hiding behind a large tree, watching at a distance behind the group. He carries what looks like Mandi's black daypack.

As they taxi upriver they do not pass any boats or jetties. The river is narrow in spots, but still passable with the help of Marcus's pseudohands pushing plants and trees back from the riverbanks.

"Maria, from what you see, what looks like the best way to attack—from the front, back or sides?" asks Marcus.

Maria stares into the jungle, considering the situation. "I think the best way is for paraBarry to very obviously appear out of nowhere in front of the Dayak men. From what Mandi said on Great Barrier Island, the Dayak are superstitious and believe in ghosts. If we can get them to believe that paraBarry is a ghost, hopefully they will run into the jungle. With them gone, we'll only have the policemen to contend with. Marcus, you can easily overpower them with your pseudohands, and there are plenty of vines to use as ropes. The only

thing I'm confused about is the child following behind them. He's got Mandi's daypack. It might be Eko? Mandi mentioned Elly's son, Eko. He doesn't look well either..."

Without further discussion, Maria and Marcus leave Barry by himself in the seaplane. After a minute Barry appears to fall into a deep sleep. Suddenly paraBarry stands behind the Dayak man at the front of the group. When he clears his throat, the Dayak man spins around, his kris drawn and ready.

ParaBarry does not move. He knows that his actual self—Barry—cannot be killed or even injured by the Dayak man's kris while he is in his paraBarry state. Sure, his paraprojection can be severely injured, but he—Barry—cannot. Despite this knowledge, paraBarry shudders at the look on the Dayak man's face and the deadly manner with which he wields the kris. The Dayak man lets out a shrill trilling sound from deep within his throat. The second Dayak man sprints toward the first with his kris raised.

'Where's Marcus?' thinks paraBarry, frozen. 'They should be here any second. This isn't going as planned. They're not running, and the policemen have also gotten up. They're coming at me with their rifles drawn.'

Suddenly the policemen and the Dayak men feel their weapons yanked roughly from their grip. Their weapons float and spin in mid air, just out of their reach. At the same time, Marcus uses other pseudohands to shake the giant trees overhead. Loosened branches and leaves fall in a flurry around the men. The birds sitting in the trees screech and take flight. The monkeys leap and scream. Dust and commotion fill the air. Maria has taken the gags from Elly and Mandi's mouths and has helped them to a single large tree. She faces them away from the action so they do not witness anything.

The two Dayak men look around them, then back at paraBarry who starts to walk toward them, slowly raising his hands as he approaches. The two men back up slowly and then turn to run, knocking down the policemen en route. The policemen get up only to see paraBarry rushing at them, yelling. What the policemen don't see is Marcus behind them, using his pseudohands and his increased subjective time to tie them up and blindfold them.

The first thing Maria does after she moves Mandi and Elly is to give them water. Mandi seems to be on the verge of passing out and Elly is not far behind. Maria gently pours small amounts of water from her water bottle into their mouths. Next she pours water on

their gags and puts the cool, wet cloths on their foreheads, covering their eyes.

Marcus and paraBarry walk past the bound policemen toward Maria. It is then that they see the small, thin boy watching them from a distance. He looks like he might run, so they stop immediately. Maria looks up and sees Marcus staring behind her. She turns and sees the small child, most likely Eko. She stretches out her hand to him, remaining completely motionless for several minutes. Finally he walks toward her.

When Eko reaches Maria, he walks around her to Elly. Eko sits next to Elly, snuggling tightly into the crook of her arm. He takes the cloth from Elly's face so he can see her eyes. Eko's gaze returns to Maria, who is looking at the thin child. She can see the outline of his chest bones through his worn shirt. His face, neck, arms and legs have numerous scratches and bites. He has long lines crossing his forehead where his brow must have been deeply creased. He reaches for the water bottle and takes several large gulps.

"Slowly, slowly," says Maria to the small boy.

Elly watches the whole scene, weakly hugging Eko with her right arm. Eko puts his face less than an inch from Elly's and looks at her anxiously. He smells her breath and looks at her again. He grabs the water bottle and pours water into Elly's mouth.

Eko then looks at Mandi. Although he puts more distance between his face and Mandi's, he repeats the same ritual. He looks at her, smells her breath and then pours water into her mouth.

Thinking it is safe to approach, Marcus and paraBarry resume walking toward Maria and the women. Eko jumps to his feet and runs into the jungle. Within seconds they cannot see him or hear him.

"Maria, where's he gone?" shouts Marcus.

Maria focuses her gaze. She watches the little boy run nimbly through the jungle, leaping and dodging. He seems to be running with a purpose, not just to escape. He runs for several minutes and then he comes to a large, rotting log. He reaches into the log and pulls out Mandi's black daypack.

"He's got Mandi's daypack!" shouts Maria. "He's carrying it and running toward us."

Suddenly the two Dayak men step out from behind trees. They grab the bag, knocking Eko over in the process. Eko gets up. He

reaches for Mandi's bag, but the men speak sharply to him. Eko freezes in his tracks, looking back in the direction of Elly and Mandi.

"Barry, Marcus, quick!" shouts Mandi. "They've got Mandi's bag."

There is no time for Maria to explain where the boy is, so Marcus and Maria embrace tightly. When they do so, Maria can transfer her paravision parability to Marcus. Marcus closes his eyes as he feels his world spinning. He holds Maria tighter. He feels like he is falling...

When Marcus opens his eyes, he shares Maria's paravision<sup>36</sup>. He reaches out his pseudohands and grabs the bag, then he shakes the trees surrounding the two Dayak men. Again there is a flurry of screeching animals and birds. Leaves and dust fill the air, while large branches clatter to the ground. One large branch would have hit Eko, but Marcus's pseudohands form a protective umbrella over his head. Another pseudohand gives the bag back to Eko and gently nudges him along. Eko does not need a second nudge, he runs through the jungle, bag clutched tightly to his small, heaving chest.

When Eko reaches the group, he stops running. He lays the bag in Mandi's lap and puts her hand over it. Elly says something to Eko, who runs beside her and again nestles in under her arm. He points to the bag and begins chattering and motioning. Elly rests her hand on Eko's cheek.

Mandi slowly unzips the daypack. Crumpled documents fill her backpack. She straightens out one piece of paper. It is the data that Elly stole from the jungle research facility and hid days ago in the tree by the thatch-roofed house. She cannot believe her eyes! Just as Mandi had written off her e-Helper, research notes, and everything else in her daypack, she had also abandoned the idea of ever seeing the precious data again. The last time she saw the pack, it was sinking into brown, murky river water.

"How?" asks Mandi. She looks at Eko.

"Eko, you're amazing," says Mandi. She reaches out her hand. While Eko still clings tightly to Elly, he shyly puts his little brown hand in Mandi's palm.

"Come on," says Marcus. "Let's get back down river and return Dave's seaplane. I don't know how far we can push his 'understanding'!"

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<sup>36</sup> See *Xperts: The Telekinetic*

Even though they are only about a fifty-minute walk from the river, Marcus is anxious to return as quickly as possible. Barry can end his paraprojection and be back at the boat within a fraction of a second. Getting the rest of them back quickly, however, is another story.

"We're going to make two crude stretchers—one for Mandi and another for Elly and Eko," says Marcus. He looks at Maria and paraBarry as he speaks. "Then, while you rest with something cool over your forehead and eyes, we'll get you back to the seaplane. We've got additional support arriving here at any moment. They can help us carry the stretchers."

Marcus speeds up his subjective time to quickly assemble two basic stretchers. Mandi lies down on one stretcher and Maria puts a cool, wet cloth over her eyes. Marcus and paraBarry carry the stretcher until they are out of sight from the others. ParaBarry waits while Marcus uses his pseudohands and increased speed to transport Mandi to the riverbank near the seaplane. He quickly returns and they transport Elly and Eko in a similar manner. Barry ends his paraprojection to return to the seaplane while Marcus goes back to get Maria.

When Barry opens his eyes, he finds himself back in the seaplane. Barry has been in a deep trance while paraBarry was in the jungle. When Barry opens his eyes, he finds that he is sweating profusely. His clothes are completely soaked. Inside the seaplane it has become dangerously hot and stuffy. The seaplane has been sitting on the river in the heat of the day. Thank goodness it was in shade. What would have happened if it had been in direct sunlight?

Barry opens the seaplane's windows and doors to let air in. He is thankful that he ended the paraprojection when he did. What would have happened to him, he wonders, if his real self died of heat exhaustion or asphyxiation *during* a paraprojection? He wonders if Klaus, with his previous work on persons with parabilities, might have some insight into the question...

When Marcus returns for Maria, he asks her, "Where are our Dayak friends? Have they deserted us completely?"

Maria looks in the distance. "No, they haven't left yet, but they look pretty unsure about what to do...Wait, they're looking in this direction...And, they're walking this way!"

Marcus and Maria run quietly away from where the policemen are bound, but they still watch the scene with Maria's paravision.

"Are they back to the policemen yet?" asks Marcus.

"Almost..." says Maria. "They're *running* toward them—no, actually they're running toward their krisses. They're looking at the policemen now, but they haven't put down their krisses..."

"Come on Maria," says Marcus gently. "Let them sort it out. Let's go."

Maria feels herself lifted and supported gently by Marcus's pseudohands. She shuts her eyes and nods. Seeing the trees pass in a quick blur while Marcus carries her with his pseudohands makes her dizzy, so she squeezes her eyes shut. Several seconds pass until Maria feels that she has stopped moving. Again she feels the earth beneath her feet. She opens her eyes to find she is standing near the river's edge. Barry waves from the seaplane.

Maria and Marcus look at the stretchers to see Mandi resting peacefully. Likewise Elly rests with closed eyes. Eko is the only one with wide eyes. Marcus and Maria look at each other. Has Eko watched the whole thing? Will he tell Elly how he flew through the jungle? Will he expose their parabilities? Marcus has the forgetfulness powder with him, but do they dare give it to a child?

They look at Eko again, who gives them a full, broad smile. They have not seen a trace of a smile on Eko's face before, even when he was reunited with Elly. He obviously enjoyed his magic carpet ride!

Maria smiles at Marcus and says, "He'll be fine. If he says anything to Elly, she'll just think it's the active imagination of a young boy."

Once they are aboard the seaplane, Marcus taxis it back down the river to where they left Dave. To say that Dave is furious is a gross understatement! Marcus cannot hear him shouting above the seaplane's engine, but he can see his mouth moving and his right arm gesturing as he approaches the jetty. Maria points to the children peeking out from within the house and from behind a few plants in the cleared space around the house.

"Out! Get out the lot of you!" yells Dave as he carefully maneuvers the planks of the jetty.

Marcus positions the seaplane carefully. He has cut the engine so he can speak with Dave, but he is just out of range for Dave to jump aboard. In his anger, Dave does not notice that although Marcus has cut the engine, the seaplane sits motionless in the river. It does not drift with the current because Marcus uses his pseudohands to keep the seaplane still.

"Dave, be reasonable. We've got three very sick people aboard who we *have* to get to doctors," says Marcus.

Dave leans forward, trying to see into the cramped seaplane. "What the... Where did you pick them up?" asks Dave.

"These are the friends we were looking for," says Marcus. "Maria thought she saw something, but wasn't sure. By the time we motored up the river, they had just meters left to walk before they got to the river. Look at them Dave—we have to get them to a doctor quickly."

Dave thinks. "Well we can go either to Kota Baru or to Palankaraya—right now we're about equal distance from both."

"I say we go to Kota Baru, then decide from there," says Marcus. "Is there any way we can make more room? We're overloaded."

"How many of you are in there? I thought you said you had two friends, not three," says Dave.

"There are six—well, five and a half. We unexpectedly picked up a small child along the way who was with our friends," says Marcus.

Dave shakes his head emphatically. "We can't do it. There are too many of us. I only have four seatbelts, and—"

Elly points to Mandi, and says, "Anda pergi Kota Baru." She points to herself and Eko and says "Kami pulang—Palankaraya." She points at herself and Eko again, then at the thatch-roofed house. "Tunggu di sini. Anda pergi."

Mandi stares at her and Eko, then translates for the others. "Elly says that she and Eko will wait here. We should go to Kota Baru. Then she and Eko will go to Palankaraya—her home."

Mandi says to Elly, "Saya kembali. I'll come back Elly."

Mandi holds up her daypack and pats the zipped area. She says, "We've got work to do deciphering their research data, but then we'll be back with a plan on how to nail these bastards. Just you wait. Saya kembali!"

Marcus corrects Mandi, "Tell her we'll all be back."

## 9. Swings and Roundabouts

*The woman hangs up the phone, relieved to tell her story after so many years of silence. About a decade ago at a conference on electromagnetic smog, she told the story of her two granddaughters who were diagnosed with hypogammaglobulinemia, a rare immune deficiency. Her story generated numerous questions; however, shortly after that Colorado conference the interest died, as did one of her granddaughters.*

*The doctors told them that the children might develop leukemia, lymphoma, stomach or colon cancer—all diseases that have never occurred in their family. They suffered from chronic asthma, chronic sinus and ear infections, and allergies. The doctors did not entertain the possibility of e-smog poisoning, so the family took their own actions. They limited the children's visits to the grandparents' house, which is located less than 300 feet from a high voltage powerline. They also moved the children's beds in their own home away from the wall adjacent to a powerwall, the wall opposite the meter box.*

*Left to her own devices and desperate for answers, the grandmother bought two healthy guinea pigs. She put the pigs' cage next to the powerwall. Pig 1 developed respiratory problems and a severe case of osteomyelitis<sup>37</sup>, which was treated with antibiotics. Both pigs developed hyper-segmented neutrophils<sup>38</sup> and within several weeks Pig 2 died from epicarditis. A third guinea pig had equally distressing results—it died of pneumonia. They put a fourth guinea pig against a different wall, and it remained healthy.*

*The woman questions whether humans are acting as guinea pigs for the power, telecommunications, and electronics companies<sup>39</sup> ...*

**March 14, 2014**

**Perth, Western Australia**

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<sup>37</sup> Osteomyelitis is an inflammation of bone and bone marrow.

<sup>38</sup> Neutrophil is the chief phagocytic leukocyte in the circulating blood. (As a leukocyte, it plays a large role in the body's defense system.)

<sup>39</sup> Numerous case studies of electromagnetic radiation poisoning can be found on the World Wide Web. This particular case study has been modified slightly, but its tragic story remains intact.

Alan suppresses his feelings of unease. He and Mandi have been together for over two years and never once has he invaded her private space. He has never before rifled through Mandi's belongings and he feels uncomfortable doing so now. But, he consoles himself, it is for her own sake.

He looks around her flat. 'Lived in' and 'comfortable' are words that Mandi uses to describe her apartment. 'Cluttered' and 'chaotic' are the words that Alan has always used to describe it.

As Alan looks through her papers, he realizes that Mandi's description of her apartment is more fitting. It may be cluttered with piles of papers and books, but those piles are meticulously organized. The papers that Alan thought were just random stacks are really the results of thorough and well-organized research. "Maybe we're not as different as I thought we were," mutters Alan.

Alan and Mandi have had problems in their relationship since Mandi returned from Indonesia in January. On one level, Alan blames Mandi, who was moody and irritable when she returned. He also says that she has no time for him. She spends more time researching electromagnetic fields than any field of attraction between them.

Singapore was fantastic for them, but then came Great Barrier Island and Indonesia. Alan likes the group of people who work for SR Inc., but there is something about them that is not kosher. Alan cannot figure it out, but there is more there than they are letting on. It seems to him that there is something that they are all in on, but that he and Mandi are excluded from. Anytime he brings up his suspicions with Mandi, she becomes protective of SR Inc. At first she argued with him, then she stopped talking about them with him. That does not mean that Alan has stopped thinking about them, or researching them on his own...

When Mandi returned to Western Australia from Indonesia, Alan helped nurse her back to health. She was severely run down from her trek in the jungle. At first Alan thought Mandi had contracted malaria or Dengue Fever<sup>40</sup> while in Indonesia. She returned sick and thin, and she slept a lot. She started to take vitamins, which helped, but she did not return to her pre-Indonesia health.

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<sup>40</sup> Dengue Fever is an infectious tropical disease transmitted by mosquitoes. Symptoms include rashes, headaches and sore joints.

Alan opens Mandi's top desk drawer and pulls out a worn rolodex of business cards. He starts flipping through them.

If he is honest with himself, Alan knows that the challenges between them are not solely Mandi's fault. Mandi has always spent many hours researching and working. That is not new. Mandi's standards have always been much higher than those of her colleagues. Perhaps that is why her services are so sought after. Her dedication and single mindedness impressed Alan initially, and those characteristics have not changed. What, then, has changed?

Alan knows that *he* has changed since Mandi's return. He has a short fuse and feels caged. He finds that even when he tries, he has little patience for staying home and watching movies, which seems to have become their nightly routine. Mandi wants to spend quiet evenings at home, and Alan wants to go out and explore Perth's nightlife. Mandi wants to talk about her research and his projects. Alan does not want to talk about the day. He wants to talk about what nightclub they plan to explore. Mandi joked with him about having a mid-life crisis. Alan laughed about it at the time, but maybe she is not far off the mark. Nightclubbing was not a usual 'Alan activity' before, but it has become one lately.

If a mid-life crisis includes falling in love with a significantly younger woman, then perhaps he is having one. Alan thinks about Rebecca, a young woman he met while traveling around New Zealand without Mandi. When Mandi left Great Barrier Island, she flew to Indonesia to finish her consultancy. When Alan left Great Barrier Island, he further explored New Zealand and while doing so, discovered Rebecca.

With Rebecca everything was easy. They had fun. They had no worries and no problems. They had light, trivial conversations. And they experienced new 'highs' every day like abseiling and blackwater rafting. Their nights were filled with nightclubs and parties. With Rebecca there was no humdrum or drudgery or routine. With Rebecca there was the possibility of a new, fresh life.

Alan's friends have asked him whether he is in love with Rebecca or the carefree mindset that comes with vacation. Alan shrugged off their comments and invited them to visit him in New Zealand where he planned to return soon in order to be with Rebecca.

Today, however, as he rifles through Mandi's belongings, he wonders about what his friends said. He is scheduled to fly to New

Zealand in just two weeks time. He told Rebecca he had to sort out his life in Australia first before he could join her. Can he change his mind? Would things be different today if Alan had not broken it off with Mandi? Might the added stress have contributed to Mandi's recent miscarriage?

The night that Alan chose to break up with Mandi was the same night that Mandi picked to tell him of her pregnancy. That morning she told him that she had great news and they should celebrate. During the course of the day Alan felt increasingly uncomfortable about breaking up at a nice restaurant, so he cancelled dinner at the last minute. Mandi did not mind the cancellation because she preferred to get a take-out out from their favorite Chinese restaurant anyway. She would pick it up on her way home from work.

Mandi's pregnancy explained a lot—her tiredness and sickness over the past two and a half months. But it did not explain Alan's actions—his fickleness or change of heart toward Mandi.

Alan was so anxious about breaking up with Mandi that he nearly blurted it out as soon as she walked into her apartment. Mandi did not cry as he had expected. Instead, she seemed to shut down. Her withdrawal caught him off guard. It left him in silence and gave him time to think. It was then that he realized that he had not asked her about her good news. He had been so nervous that he forgot that Mandi had her own reasons for meeting him for dinner. It was then that she told him she was pregnant. And it was then that she asked him to leave.

Mandi did not ask anything of Alan after she told him she was pregnant. On the very rare occasion that he saw her out in the evenings with her girlfriends, she would acknowledge him with a subtle nod of her head or a wave of her hand. She was polite on the phone when he called her everyday to see how she was feeling, but she would not take him up on his offers to bring her dinner. She *did* accept his gift of a cleaner once a week because she was feeling very tired.

Alan had yet to return the key to Mandi's apartment, and she had not asked. Had she forgotten, or was she thinking that they might get back together sometime? If Mandi said she wanted him back, would he be able to go back to her without reservation, or would he feel like he was missing out on something in New Zealand? In December, he and Mandi had a great time together in Singapore; their relationship seemed to turn a corner and he had a renewed

interest in Mandi and 'them'. Only three months later he seems to have lost the ability to make any decisions. He despises himself for it and he wonders how long a mid-life crisis lasts...

Alan jumps as he hears someone outside Mandi's door fiddling with the doorknob. He runs through her apartment to the door, then throws it open. No one is there. There is a plastic bag of neighborhood advertising hanging from the door handle.

Alan had hoped that Mandi had returned, back from where ever she had gone for the past several days. If it had been Mandi he would have told her how he feels—how sorry he is she lost the baby.

When Mandi told Alan about her miscarriage, she did so out of a sense of obligation, not because she wanted his sympathy. The child was as much his as hers, and she figured that he had a right to know. She told him about her miscarriage and then implied she knew what caused it. Alan thinks she might have been referring to the jungle facility, and that is why he is in her flat today, rifling through her belongings. He is looking for the SR Inc. number. Maybe she is in New Zealand visiting Marcus and Maria? At least he hopes that she is in New Zealand rather than in Indonesia.

If Alan had simply looked at the listing of the most recently dialed numbers on Mandi's phone, he would have seen that Marcus's number is not just the last one dialed, but the last three.

Finally Alan finds what he is looking for. For a few second he holds Marcus's business card in his hand and just looks at it. He takes a deep breath and dials. "Hello, is Marcus there? This is Alan calling from Australia. Oh—hi Klaus, how are you doing?" Alan listens to his own voice and thinks it sounds strangely calm.

"Good to hear from you Alan," says Klaus. "Hey, when's Mandi getting back? Has she finished her business, and can we look forward to her telephone calls again? Don't get me wrong, her research assistant Kevin is doing a good job in her absence, but, well, you know, there's no comparison with Mandi's dedication and knowledge."

By Klaus's reception and questions, Alan is sure that he does not know about their breakup. He pauses, then says, "Actually, I haven't heard from Mandi in the last couple of days. I've been out of town as well— I wondered if you've spoken with her lately."

"Hang on a minute Alan. Marcus spoke with her recently, but I'm not sure when. Let me just get him—or should he call you back?"

"No, it's OK. I'll hold," says Alan.

Zealand in just two weeks time. He told Rebecca he had to sort out his life in Australia first before he could join her. Can he change his mind? Would things be different today if Alan had not broken it off with Mandi? Might the added stress have contributed to Mandi's recent miscarriage?

The night that Alan chose to break up with Mandi was the same night that Mandi picked to tell him of her pregnancy. That morning she told him that she had great news and they should celebrate. During the course of the day Alan felt increasingly uncomfortable about breaking up at a nice restaurant, so he cancelled dinner at the last minute. Mandi did not mind the cancellation because she preferred to get a take-out out from their favorite Chinese restaurant anyway. She would pick it up on her way home from work.

Mandi's pregnancy explained a lot—her tiredness and sickness over the past two and a half months. But it did not explain Alan's actions—his fickleness or change of heart toward Mandi.

Alan was so anxious about breaking up with Mandi that he nearly blurted it out as soon as she walked into her apartment. Mandi did not cry as he had expected. Instead, she seemed to shut down. Her withdrawal caught him off guard. It left him in silence and gave him time to think. It was then that he realized that he had not asked her about her good news. He had been so nervous that he forgot that Mandi had her own reasons for meeting him for dinner. It was then that she told him she was pregnant. And it was then that she asked him to leave.

Mandi did not ask anything of Alan after she told him she was pregnant. On the very rare occasion that he saw her out in the evenings with her girlfriends, she would acknowledge him with a subtle nod of her head or a wave of her hand. She was polite on the phone when he called her everyday to see how she was feeling, but she would not take him up on his offers to bring her dinner. She *did* accept his gift of a cleaner once a week because she was feeling very tired.

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"No, it's OK. I'll hold," says Alan.

Alan gulps; here it comes. "I don't think she's gone back up to the Northern Territory. Marcus, I'm afraid that Mandi has gone back to the jungle facility in Indonesia. I'm afraid that's what she meant when she mentioned 'unfinished business' to you..."

"What? We were *all* planning on going back at her next university break—and with data in hand to expose them. We plan to leave in just a couple of weeks. What's going on Alan?" Alan can hear that Marcus is genuinely concerned.

"Mandi has had a miscarriage, and I'm sure she blames it on e-smog and the time she spent near those jungle facilities. I'm afraid she's gone back to settle the score," Alan blurts out.

"Oh my god," says Marcus quietly. "Alan, when did she go? We have to get to her before they do."

Mandi's actions are not as rash as Alan and Marcus think. Instead of rushing to Indonesia and going straight to the jungle facility, as Marcus and Alan think she has done, Mandi has flown to New South Wales, Australia.

In New South Wales, Mandi visits Evette, the young woman she met protesting at the Rangler Mine. Mandi and Evette have been in close contact since Mandi returned from Indonesia.

Individuals at SR Inc. are not the only people with high stakes tied into finding out the truth about e-smog. Evette's emotional commitment and costs are high as well. Evette is convinced that she has lost her only brother, Paul, to e-smog. She is now on the verge of losing her mother too.

Evette's mother does not have e-smog poisoning, as Paul did, but she *does* have an aversion to speaking about anything related to e-smog and to Paul. Her stance is so strong that she has threatened to cut off all communication with Evette if she continues her research. Mandi has been Evette's main support through this tense time with her mother.

Since Evette spoke to Mandi about electromagnetic pollution on their trip from Jabiru to Darwin, she has made tremendous progress on her e-smog project. Evette has collected bits of information from over 100 case studies of individuals who claim to have electromagnetic poisoning. Many of these individuals classify themselves as electrosensitives.

Evette's project is more than a compilation. Evette is trying to individually contact each person. Since many of these cases have

been posted to the internet upwards of a decade ago, following them up presents barriers that seem insurmountable. Sometimes when she calls a contact, that contact claims 'client confidentiality'. Evette thinks it is more likely to be a case of 'out of vogue' or 'can't be bothered to help' and Mandi agrees.

The few times that Evette *has* been able to reach the electrosensitive, he or she has been relieved to talk to someone who is genuinely concerned about their symptoms and does not tell them that it is 'all in their heads'.

The individual contacts encourage Evette. She has been able to contact ten individuals thus far, and they have provided valuable links to others. They have also cooperated by providing Evette with exhaustive personal histories, thoroughly answering her long questionnaires and engaging in follow-up telephone conversations. Mandi is overseeing Evette's research project and is impressed with her adherence to the guidelines and protocols that Mandi sent her.

On the last night that Mandi is in Nimbin, she and Evette go to a small Vietnamese restaurant for dinner. They have been working together via e-mail and phone for over two and a half months. Today they finished pouring over data, and Evette feels confident and encouraged about continuing. Mandi has provided Evette with numerous helpful hints for conducting her research and for capturing results into searchable databases.

Mandi proposes a toast: "To your new profession Evette. I think you've a knack for research—you have the right temperament, the right eye for detail and the right passion." They raise their glasses and toast. "On a totally different topic, how is the protesting business going these days? We've been so immersed in data that I've forgotten to ask you about the protests. Did your Jabiru experience change you from an organizer to a front-line protester?"

Evette smiles. "No, I'm still an organizer. I find the organizing challenging and rewarding. Coordinating a local protest is fairly easy and straightforward. Coordinating a global protest, of which I've participated in two thus far, is where it gets the most interesting."

"Tell me about global protesting. How does it work? Do you have an established network of people? I participated in a few Unfair Trade protests years ago, but only at a local level," says Mandi.

"The most difficult—and interesting—part of organizing a global protest is working in a constant state of flux. There are contact names for areas, but those names are never static, partly because of

turnover and partly because of privacy issues. So although a single contact in, say, Chile, may be the same person for a couple of years, the name and contact details for that person keep changing. There's also a high level of burnout, so the actual persons change too. It's completely voluntary, so that adds another dynamic—trying to find individuals who can take time off work for protests, etc. I really enjoy my affiliation—especially at the global level. I feel like I'm making a difference," says Evette.

'Making a difference,' thinks Mandi. She looks at Evette. She is young and idealistic and passionate—all traits that are very attractive. She wonders if Alan's affair in New Zealand was with a young woman like Evette...

Mandi takes a sip of wine and fiddles with her hair. 'Making a difference,' she repeats in her mind. 'That's what I'll be doing as soon as I leave here. Making a difference to people—like Evette's brother Paul, and little Allie-boo—people who have been poisoned by e-smog.' Mandi unconsciously and protectively puts her hand on her stomach. She had affectionately named her unborn child 'Little Allie-boo'.

Evette sees Mandi place her hand on her stomach. It is not the first time that Mandi has done this during the last three days. Evette would have guessed that Mandi was pregnant. However, she also sees a sad look on her face when she does it. "Mandi, are you feeling OK?" asks Evette quietly.

Mandi blushes. "Yes, of course."

"I don't mean to pry, I just—well, if you want to talk, I'll listen. I'm a good listener."

Mandi looks at Evette, whose eyes hold a depth and understanding beyond her years. 'This person,' thinks Mandi, 'has already lost two out of three people in her family: her brother and her father. That statistic alone is staggering.'

"I've recently had a miscarriage," says Mandi. "I think the cause was e-smog."

Evette stares at Mandi. After a few moments, she reaches across the table and takes her hand. "Then," says Evette slowly but surely, "we need to do something about that."

"Yes," responds Mandi. "I plan to get the ball rolling."

"What do you have in mind?" asks Evette. "Whatever I can do to help, count me in. You just tell me."

Mandi smiles and squeezes Evette's hand.

"What do you have Mandi? You can't hold out on me any longer," says Evette. "You've made references the past couple of days to research that you have going on—joint research. Who are you working with? What's going on? If I'm going to start seriously thinking about this research business, there's no better time to start than now."

Even though her exposure to Evette has been relatively short, Mandi feels strongly that Evette has what it takes to become a researcher, save one ingredient—money. Mandi already has plans percolating on how she can help Evette in that area.

Evette can also help Mandi. The preliminary data that Mandi and SR Inc. are getting, both from their own research trials and through the analysis of the jungle facility's data, speaks loudly of the dangers of e-smog. What she has gotten herself into is dangerous. At some stage, she might need strong backing, and a global protest might be just the right pressure...

"Evette, I've been working with a group in New Zealand called SR Inc. We've made incredible progress in the past couple of months with electromagnetic radiation research. We've started a series of trials where research trials fizzled out a decade ago. I should clarify that we're starting where we *thought* research stopped decades ago. I'll get to that in a minute. Remember us talking about the research that tested the impact of individual gadgets, like cell phones, TVs, e-Helpers, etc?" Evette nods. "Well, we're in the process of testing those items to establish baselines. We're also taking the testing one step further; we're in the process of testing electromagnetic pollution in a 'real' environment, the environment that most of us find ourselves in everyday—our home environments.

"You and I talked about 'holistic' testing during our drive from Jabiru to Darwin. You can call the research we're doing 'holistic'. We're looking at a wider or *whole* perspective, rather than a piecemeal perspective. I must admit that the word 'holistic' holds a kind of spiritual connection for me, so I'm not comfortable using it."

She smiles and continues quickly, "That spiritual connection is OK, I'm just not capturing that realm in my experiments. I'm much more comfortable in the tangible, practical realm. Anyway, we're testing the reaction of rats to chronic low levels of e-smog. For example, we're looking at the impact on the rat's brain both physically, at a cellular level, and practically, at an emotional, or activity level."

"You can gauge the emotions of a rat?" asks Evette, both amused and curious.

"Not really," laughs Mandi, "that's why we're trying to get a gauge on their emotions by observing their activity and their reactions. There are much higher levels of aggression being observed at chronic low-level exposure to e-smog. We're also seeing more aggression at sporadic, high exposure levels. Whether or not aggression in rats translates into aggression in people won't be clear until part two of our trials."

"Is aggression the only symptom that you're observing?" asks Evette.

"Absolutely not," responds Mandi. "The symptoms that you're getting from the people you're talking to in your project are the same symptoms that we're finding in our individual and 'holistic' trials. The laundry list of symptoms is extensive, including headaches, nausea, fatigue, tingling sensations in extremities, depression, forgetfulness, and learning difficulties, to name just a few. And those are only the visible symptoms. There are also the 'invisible' symptoms of e-poisoning—the breakdown of cells, the loss of cell functions, and the resulting breakdowns in the body."

"You've gotten all those results from rat trials?" asks Evette.

"No," says Mandi. "We thought research into electromagnetic radiation poisoning stopped years ago, around the time of Dr. Ramu Visra's death, but it didn't. It *appears* to have stopped because funding dried up and because safety levels were communicated. However, research *didn't* stop. We've recently uncovered long-term research results on both individual and combined items emitting electromagnetic radiation. *And* we've got data that we're in the process of analyzing and confirming with independent tests. We can't duplicate their tests exactly, because of their choice of test animal—the near extinct orangutan—but we're trying to test with other test animals."

"Mandi, this is great news—you've partnered with them to bring this data to light! I think this deserves another toast." Evette raises her glass.

"Well, I wouldn't toast just yet," says Mandi. "I've not exactly partnered with the group that has the data..."

Evette looks confused, "But you've partnered with the group in New Zealand." Since her wineglass is raised, she decides to have a swallow or two. She looks at Mandi expectantly.

"It's a long story, but the short of it is...well, yes and no. Yes, I've partnered with SR Inc. in New Zealand. And no, SR Inc. is not the group that generated the data. The group that produced the data, in all honesty, is probably not thrilled that I have their data. But that's a long story."

"We've got plenty of wine and time," says Evette.

During the course of the evening and over two bottles of wine, Mandi tells Evette her story. She tells her how a simple vehicle breakdown in the Indonesian jungle set off an unusual and surreal chain of events. She talks of the pirated e-Helpers, the jungle research facility, and the caged orangutans. She talks about her suspicion of Unfair Trade, which turned into an incredible opportunity for research and friendship with the members of SR Inc. She talks about Elly and Eko, and her strange dreams. And she talks about Singapore, Alan, and her pregnancy and miscarriage.

Mandi finds that once she starts talking, she cannot stop. Mandi has been so busy since her return from Indonesia that she has not given herself time to reflect on her experiences. When she returned she plunged into her joint research partnership with SR Inc. She also started a new university year, which meant new students and new laboratory projects for them. Additionally, she was very tired from her pregnancy.

At times Mandi is overwhelmed by emotion, which causes her to pause. During those moments, they quietly sip their wine until Mandi composes herself and can begin again. Talking as she does to Evette enables Mandi to see her story from another viewpoint. Although Mandi does most of the talking, Evette asks insightful questions that give Mandi a fresh perspective.

When they finish talking Mandi feels an intense mixture of emotions. She feels lighter than she has since her return from Indonesia. Just sharing her burdens seems to have lessened them. She also feels emotionally exhausted. Evette created a safe space in which Mandi can reflect and talk. Maybe she had to fly across the country and meet someone she does not know well before she could talk openly.

As they chat about lighter topics later, Mandi feels an incredible, inconsolable grief over the loss of her unborn child. Mandi knows that tied up with her grief for her child is a different mourning. She mourns the death of her chance to have a family. With the loss of her baby and the breakup with Alan comes the realization that she will

never have a child or a family. She and Alan are no longer together, and she will turn forty-four years this year. These are things that Mandi does not talk about with Evette. Evette is young, and Mandi does not expect her to understand her feelings. Beside, she cannot talk about these things yet—they cut too deeply.

But what Mandi can talk about are her plans. She plans to go to Indonesia under the guise of working on Phase III of the project. Terry will be onsite over the next couple of weeks, so she will meet him at the mine site. She plans to confront Terry with the facts—the illegalities that are going on. He knows the Indonesian system better than she does, so she hopes that he will be able to guide her in the best strategy to get legal results. Regardless of the other illegalities occurring on the mining lease, this particular one has to stop. It is not only illegal, but also lethal. She is living proof of that.

Evette insists on going with Mandi to the jungle facility. She fears for Mandi's safety considering everything that has happened to date. Mandi, however, disagrees. Mandi has a pretense for being at the mine site, namely Phase III research. Once Mandi is awarded Phase III, she can bring in Evette as a research assistant. But until that time, she thinks it best for Evette to stay in Australia.

Evette defers to Mandi on the travel decision. In actuality Evette has more experience than Mandi regarding large international corporations. In the protesting business, Evette has witnessed the ruthlessness and extremes that some large corporations will go to when their assets are at stake. However, even the 'extremes' that Evette has experienced to date are 'mild' compared to what lies ahead for Mandi...

Pursuing another point, Mandi tells Evette that she needs her expertise just where it is, in Australia. She might need Evette's help to organize a global protest. Mandi is not sure whose finances support the jungle production and research facilities, but whoever it is has plenty of money to spend on the latest technology. The computer facilities and satellite telecommunications in the Indonesian jungle are top notch and state-of-the-art. The threat of mass boycotting on a global level might be the only pressure convincing enough to bring the benefactors into negotiation with her and SR Inc.

Just the thought of SR Inc. gives Mandi a stab of guilt. She has unilaterally changed their joint plans. Mandi, Marcus, Maria and Barry agreed to go to Indonesia as a group during Mandi's university

break. Marcus told Mandi that they would have a better chance at securing negotiations if they had data in hand from two independent laboratories. They actually have data from *three* separate laboratories if they count the incriminating data from the jungle facility itself! If they are going to confront an international consortium of corporations—which Marcus predicts—then they need as much data as possible, and Mandi agrees with that approach, theoretically.

But since Mandi's agreement with Marcus, things have happened in her life, like the miscarriage, that caused her to change her mind. Marcus and Maria have children, so why should they put themselves in harm's way? SR Inc. has done search-and-rescue operations, but those have been man against nature—against hurricanes, cyclones and earthquakes. Mandi thinks that man against man is much more dangerous. If only Mandi knew what experiences SR Inc. has had in the area of man against man already, she would not have changed her plans. Instead, she would have aligned herself closely with Marcus and his paracolleagues.

Both Evette and Mandi are quiet on the way to the airport the next morning. Mandi plans to finish unsettled business and Evette plans to begin organizing what will potentially be a global protest. They share more than just a passion for research and justice, they share the burden of loved ones dead from e-smog. They also share a hope—the chance to prevent such deaths from happening to others. What they do not know yet is that they share yet another similarity—they will both soon learn that even the unimaginable is possible...

Although Mandi's head feels 'big' from the wine she and Evette drank the previous night, she also feels a reflective soberness. She looks out of the plane window at the white puffs of cloud. She looks for figures in the clouds and finds a rearing horse, a dragon and a lion's head.

Her mind drifts to the telephone conversation she had with her university research assistant this morning. Kevin is organized and meticulous. Not one piece of data or one observation passes by Kevin unnoted. He is punctual and reliable. However, he lacks something that Mandi could not put her finger on until last night. What he lacks is passion.

Unlike the stoic Kevin, Evette has passion. The other aspects of research—the discipline, thoroughness, observations skills, etc.—also seem to come easily to Evette. To date, however, she has not been

part of a team and an environment that has demanded those skills daily. How will she function as a research assistant in the long-term, especially if asked to focus on research that is not as personal to her as e-smog?

Mandi wonders where teaching stops and being a role model begins. Is there really a difference? She does not doubt that Evette can get a good basic handle on all aspects of research in a fairly short time if given the chance. She's quick on the uptake. But Mandi wonders if she can transmit the passion for research to Kevin. She hopes that she is at least a role model for it, but can she actually teach or elicit it from others?

Perhaps there is another approach that Mandi has overlooked. Mandi can leave it up to Kevin and Evette next term. She can put them together as research assistants. She can be there as their supervisor and mentor, and they can also take classes. But the majority of their learning and interaction will be with each other. Their styles will either strongly complement or clash. Will they learn to appreciate their differences?

Mandi is happy with the research status report that Kevin has given her. They are working on three main research projects at the moment:

The first and largest is their joint venture with SR Inc., which is actually not a single, but a series of multi-pronged projects. Kevin reports that each of them is progressing well. He sends daily e-mail reports to Marcus and Klaus at SR Inc. with copies to Mandi.

The second project is a series of individual research proposals that Kevin and another graduate student are putting together. They have received Mandi's written comments, and they are in the process of reading and incorporating them. Mandi is excited about their proposed research. Following on from some of Mandi's suggestions, the students will test the reactions of several plant species to fluctuating and chronic levels of electromagnetic radiation. Mandi still has to secure funding for the graduate students, but she is confident that with the preliminary data coming from their 'jungle' research, she will be able to easily secure additional funding for related investigations.

The third project is the analysis of the plant parts that she brought back from the Northern Territory. Kevin and the others are progressing on it (albeit slowly). She gathered bark and leaves from the abnormally tall eucalypt trees surrounding the Crocodile Hotel.

Just yesterday they located a grouping of mutant cells. They cannot yet identify why that grouping exists, but they are continuing their analysis. They are also looking for other cell abnormalities.

Mandi's mind wonders back to her discussion with Herb Folsum. She asked him for leave without pay for two weeks. He requested no explanation and insisted that she take leave with pay. Mandi assured him that she would work through weekends to make up for the lost research time. Herb smiled and nodded.

While Mandi relaxes on the flight to Balikpapan, letting her mind drift, Sarif-Senaggin Mine's 'Community Relations Officer'-is pulling his ringing e-Helper from his jean pocket. He looks at the caller ID and the smile leaves his face and his stomach knots. He has only received a personal call from Max once before. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath and answers.

Before he can say 'Hello', he is harangued. "Are you in position? Are you sure you can handle this or should I bring my daughter in for backup?" Sarif's face reddens. Max continues, "Not once, but *twice* you allowed Mandi and Elly to slip through. They even escaped from the middle of the jungle! I still haven't heard a believable story on how you managed that-and don't be pathetic-talking about ghosts. This is your third and final chance. Don't make me have to take care of this myself Sarif."

Before Sarif can respond, Max hangs up the phone. Sarif looks in the distance, breathing deeply, then turns to the men beside him. "Mandi will arrive in Balikpapan. She will stay at the Bahtera Hotel. But she will *not* catch her 9:30am flight to Kota Baru. Yes?"

The men nod their head in agreement, then act out their well-rehearsed plan. One of the men, slightly larger built than the others, steps forward and acts like he is rolling down a car window. He says, "Taxi, Missus? Airport? Yes, I can take you to the airport. Please, get in the back."

With that he nods to a second man, who says, "At first traffic light, I get in the taxi too. This for noise." He shows them his blowgun and darts.

The second man nods to a third man, who says, "I wait at Manggar in a boat and we take a one-way trip."

With this said they resume their laughter, and clink their coffee glasses together to toast the solving of a problem-Mandi..

Sarif is in the crowd that meets the plane from Jakarta, but as they have never met, Mandi does not recognize him. He, on the other hand, knows Mandi. Sarif has thought about nothing other than stopping Mandi for the past several weeks. He watches her now as she emerges from the Balikpapan airport arrival hall. She looks the same except maybe she is a little thinner. He watches as she catches a taxi to the Bahtera Hotel, then he motions to someone to pick him up.

As Mandi drives toward downtown Balikpapan, she thinks of her trip. She cannot believe the ease with which she entered Indonesia this time. She was prepared for a repeat of her first two arrivals here—checking and re-checking of visas and hassles with travel documents. But this time both Jakarta and Balikpapan officials stamped her passport without question.

Her ease of entry into the country has the desired effect: Mandi believes that destiny is opening doors for her. She is *meant* to confront those in charge of the jungle production and research facilities. Everything is going to go smoothly. In reality, Sarif and his extended network of colleagues are opening doors. They are setting Mandi up with a false sense of security in order to get her guard down.

Mandi has confirmed all travel plans with Terry, her contact at the Senaggin Mine. She sent Terry a text message from Australia with her travel itinerary, including her planned arrival at the mine site. Terry confirmed the details and asked her to contact him again before she catches the flight to Kota Baru.

Sarif is pleased. Mandi's arrangements are going to mesh nicely with his plans. If all goes well, once Mandi gets into the taxi the following morning, she will be 'quieted' with a blow dart. Then Sarif will use Mandi's own e-Helper to send Terry a message saying she was unexpectedly forced to cancel her trip because of work obligations, but she will keep him informed of any future trips to Indonesia. That will stop Terry getting suspicious when she doesn't arrive at the Mine, and he won't wonder where she is for at least two or three weeks. By then it will be too late.

What Sarif and others cannot control is Terry's unscheduled trip away from the mine site. The day that Mandi arrives, Terry receives unexpected bad news—his father has had a heart attack. He decides to fly to Australia immediately.

Terry talks briefly with Mandi on her e-Helper before he takes off from the Balikpapan airport, and he flies out shortly after she arrives. She gets his call when she is in the taxi on her way to the Bahtera Hotel. They have just missed each other in the airport, but Terry plans to return within the week. In the meantime, he will contact Asep at the mine site to let him know that she has arrived and will be at the mine site the following day.

Terry's change of plan and his contact with Mandi ruin Sarif's plans. Individuals at the mine site now know that Mandi is in Indonesia. Sarif and the others will have to modify their strategy. Mandi *cannot* 'drop in' on their jungle facilities a third time, nor can she visit the jungle facility to see that it is in the process of being moved. If Mandi had stuck to her original schedule and arrived during the university break, they would have already gotten the facilities completely dismantled and moved before she arrived. She and her colleagues would have found an empty jungle clearing. However, she changed her schedule, and now they are being stretched to move out in time. Sarif and the others gather across the street from the Bahtera Hotel to discuss an alternate plan. If Mandi somehow gets to the jungle facility a third time, Sarif, who is in charge of the location's security, will lose more than his job.

## 10. The Good of the Many

*The Chinese believe that the night is a 'bewitching' time—a time for ghosts. Peter Birch learned of this Chinese belief when he traveled to Beijing on business last year. His financial expertise and 'Oriental' interests targeted him as the person to 'talk business' with high-ranking Chinese officials. He found their markets and pockets to be ripe for the picking.*

*Peter is not surprised at their belief because all things 'Oriental' resonate with him. During his time in China he had more than his normal share of uneasy dreams, which woke him during the bewitching time. He had visions of his son in epileptic fits and recurring waves of impotence. It was easy in China to prove his virility—he only needed to call reception and summon a woman. At home it is harder; he has a sleeping wife and two infants to consider.*

*He has proven himself in the arms of many women, and he has rationalized his behavior with the usual excuses: stress and pressure. He is, after all, the Vice President of Finance for a multinational corporation. Besides, he cannot be seen as weak among his colleagues, the other partners in The Cooperative. It is a Darwinian fact that the weakest animals do not survive. But Darwin's theory is not limited to the animal kingdom. He belongs to a Darwinian consortium of corporations, and he prides himself as being the strongest member.*

**March 17, 2014**  
**Indonesia**

When Mandi checks into the Bahtera Hotel, she paces the small room and repeatedly looks out the window. Her mind races and she feels agitated. She flips through the brochures lying on the end table beside her bed and notes that the hotel has a spa facility, so she decides to check it out.

Mandi is surprised at what she finds. The spa facility is small, but that is not remarkable. What surprises Mandi is that the spa is unisex—both men and women use the same steam bath and cool off pools. Mandi has become accustomed to the genders being separated in Indonesia. With the exception of large festivals, the men attend

the mosques, while the women pray at home. She learned from Terry that it is not uncommon to see an Indonesian man in a bar or tea stall in the evening. However, it is uncommon to see women in the same places.

Since Mandi has not brought a swimming suit, she is relieved to see that no one is in the spa except for the male attendant and another man who mops the floor. She changes into her running shorts and her black running bra, which can pass for a swimsuit top. She sits on a wooden bench in the small steamy room. She inhales the scent of sandalwood and feels the sweat burn the corners of her eyes, roll down her face and drip onto her thighs. She inhales deeply and focuses on relaxing.

After only a few moments Mandi begins to feel claustrophobic so she leaves the spa and heads for the small circular ice-cold pool. She knows she must dunk herself quickly or she will lose her nerve. She climbs in and submerges, then quickly pops up and catches her breath—the cold literally takes it away! She smooths her hair and climbs out.

Mandi looks at the other, warmer bath, which is also a whirlpool. An Indonesian man has just stepped into the pool. Mandi does not know if she is breaking some unwritten protocol about using the same small bath as a man, but she wants to use the whirlpool. Like the cold pool, the warmer pool looks like it can fit about five people. She approaches the bath and quietly greets the man as she gets in. The man watches Mandi get into the bath, then nods and shuts his eyes. Mandi settles into the bath, adjusting her position so as to feel two jet sprays on her back.

Although the warm water is welcoming, there is something that disturbs Mandi. She feels like she is being watched. When Mandi opens her eyes, the man she is sharing the spa with is still resting diagonal to her with his eyes closed. The attendant looks at her, but he has watched her the entire time and that does not bother her. The cleaner is nowhere in sight.

‘I’m being paranoid,’ thinks Mandi. ‘Just relax. I’ve had smooth sailing on this trip from the very beginning. Stop expecting something to go wrong.’

Mandi inhales and exhales. She relaxes a little, but she still feels restless. She decides to leave before too much longer.

After having dinner in the hotel’s dining room and requesting a wake up call for 7:00am, Mandi settles in for the night. In the

morning, she will have more than an hour to shower and eat breakfast before she leaves for her 9:30am Kota Baru flight.

Although it is still early, Mandi soon falls asleep once she lies on the bed to watch TV. She sleeps soundly until just after midnight when a loud *bang* wakes her up. Mandi goes to the window and looks down onto the street. She sees nothing unusual. A green minibus used for local transport has stopped in front of the hotel. People crouch as they climb into and out of the small bus. Cars and motor scooters zip along the street.

Mandi feels more agitated now than before she fell asleep. She opens the book she is reading to where she left off. She reads a paragraph, then re-reads it. It is pointless. She cannot concentrate so she decides to have a nightcap in the hotel bar.

Although it is only 12:30am, the hotel's bar is closed. Mandi goes to the front desk and asks the attendant if he knows of a bar that is open.

The man suppresses a smirk. "There is Borneo Bar madam," says the man. "Very popular. You want escort?"

"No, no escort," says Mandi. "I just want to have a glass of wine."

"Of course," replies the man.

Mandi catches one of the taxis outside the hotel. Marcus, Maria and Barry talked about the Borneo Bar when she saw them on Great Barrier Island. The bar sounds like an 'interesting' place that has its fair share of expats.

To get into the Borneo Bar, Mandi has to go down concrete winding stairs. The entrance to the bar is two small, glass doors through which Mandi can see lights flashing and the blurred outline of many bobbing heads. She looks at the fashionably dressed man and woman sitting to the left of the doors and pays them a large entrance fee before walking into the darkness.

Had Maria not described her initial impression of the Borneo Bar, Mandi would have turned around and left. Maria said she felt uncomfortable walking into the bar, and Mandi agrees. The underground room is small and dark. Lining the entrance walls are glass cabinets containing bottles of hard liquor with small name cards in front of them. Mandi reads several cards: Paul Jacobs, Dave Swenson, Patrick Carney. Apparently regulars have their own bottles and cabinet space!

Mandi turns toward the inside of the room. People are body to body in the tight space. She feels men's bodies against her on all sides and sees faces turn toward her as she squeezes past. She keeps her hand firmly on her purse and inches forward.

Once Mandi has secured herself a spot at the bar, she leans an elbow on it and looks around. Marcus's label of the Borneo Bar as a local hotspot is certainly accurate. Marcus especially liked the live performers and Mandi can see why! There are two lead singers dressed in tight black miniskirts, shimmering black tops and high-heeled, knee-high black boots. The women are petite with thick, straight black hair that falls to their waists and shines in the bright stage lights. Their makeup is very heavy. Although the singers look like they are only teenagers, Mandi knows they are probably in their early twenties. She watches them as they jump around the small stage with incredible energy.

The crowd is mostly a mixture of Indonesian and Caucasian men. Mandi sees a few Indonesian women among the men and notices that she is one of the only Caucasian women.

As Mandi lifts her drink to her lips, she hears a man behind her ask, "Excuse me, but I know you."

Mandi turns toward the man. He is tall, has a medium build, and is about her age. The overhead disco ball lights his face with alternating patches of red, blue, orange and white. Although Mandi thinks that the man is attractive, she does not recognize him. And she certainly does not appreciate the unoriginal pickup line.

Mandi responds curtly, "No, I don't know you." She turns her back on the stranger.

"It's Mandi, isn't it?" asks the man.

Mandi turns again toward the man, this time more fully. "I'm sorry, but I can't remember ever meeting you."

"I'm not surprised," says the man. "When I met you, you weren't with it. You were being transported out of the jungle on my plane. My name is Dave." The man extends his hand awkwardly in the cramped space.

"Dave," repeats Mandi, shaking his hand. "Yes. Marcus told me about how he 'borrowed' your plane. I meant to contact you to say thanks. Please, let me buy you a drink."

Dave smiles. "Thanks, I'll have a Sprite."

Mandi looks at him surprised, "A Sprite?"

"Yes, I'm flying in a few hours, so I'm alternating between coffee and Sprite."

Mandi and Dave talk intermittently for the next hour. The loud music makes it difficult to have anything but short, stilted conversations. As Mandi looks around the bar, she sees that there is very little talking going on. The dance floor in front of the singers is packed with flailing arms and gyrating torsos. Couples are 'communicating' both on the dance floor and off, but talking is not the preferred means! She watches closely, interested in the body language and eye contact among the men, women and ladyboys<sup>41</sup>.

Mandi saw a couple of ladyboys when she first entered the bar and she was surprised at their elegance. Like the performers, the makeup of the ladyboys is noticeable, even heavy, but feminine. They are dressed in expensive, seductive clothes. The telltale signs, which distinguish the ladyboys from the beautiful Indonesian women, are their Adam's apples and their largish hands, both of which they try to creatively hide from view.

Mandi catches a glimpse of herself in the mirrors of the drink cabinets and wrinkles up her nose at the conservative reflection. She thinks that the ladyboys look more of a 'woman' than she does!

After about an hour Mandi has had enough of the loud music, the smoke and the crowd. She turns to say goodbye to Dave, but he says that he is leaving too. They squeeze through the crowd, which seems to have thickened.

The still night air is a welcome relief. Mandi looks upward, but can see very few stars. She can, however, smell the salt in the air from the seawater.

"Are you up for a coffee?" asks Dave. "There's a small shop open along the oceanfront."

"Yes, that'd be nice. I'm not tired"

As they walk and talk, Mandi looks around her. She is amazed at the amount of activity. Street cafes, many of which are small wood shelters with rough wooden benches, are dimly lit with single, exposed bulbs. Men sit in small groups, drinking tea and eating from small bowls. Groups of young men lean against their motor scooters, hanging out, smoking cigarettes and talking on their e-Helpers.

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<sup>41</sup> In this text, the term ladyboy is used to describe men dressed as women.

'I bet those are pirated e-Helpers,' thinks Mandi. 'They are frying their brains little by little.' Her anger rises, and she is more determined than ever to stop the danger and injustice.

"Is there someplace that I can buy an e-Helper?" asks Mandi. She wants to see if this is one of the dumping grounds for the illegally produced products.

"No, the stores are closed now," says Dave. "But you can use my e-Helper if yours isn't working." He pulls his e-Helper from his belt where it has been hanging and offers it to her.

"My e-Helper has been acting up," lies Mandi. She takes Dave's e-Helper and turns it over. It is too dark for her to see clearly, so she waits until they get to a street lamp. Unfortunately she still cannot see if the e-Helper has a small crescent moon on the back. She hands it back to him, smiles and continues walking.

They reach the coffee shop, which is a grouping of three small round tables with chairs perched near the edge of a boardwalk. Dave orders while Mandi watches the white of the waves roll inward and then disappear under the boardwalk.

"I know someone who'd like to see you," says Dave.

Mandi looks at him in surprise. Who could want to see her? She does not know anyone here.

"Elly."

"Elly?" says Mandi. She leans forward and her eyes brighten. "How is Elly—and Eko? How are they? *Where* are they? How do you know them?"

"Slow down," says Dave, laughing. "Elly and Eko are both doing well. Eko was in the hospital for a while with Dengue Fever, but he's recovering. He's small but he's a resilient little guy. And Elly is doing well."

"So, you're friends with them?" asks Mandi.

"They're my neighbors in Palankaraya," responds Dave. "After I took you, Marcus and the others to Kota Baru, I came back and picked up Elly and Eko. They're staying next door with a Dayak friend of mine. It is the first time that Elly has returned home since the death of her son and sister—"

Mandi interrupts Dave. "Her son? She had another son beside Eko?"

"Eko isn't Elly's son," says Dave. "Eko is her sister Harianni's son. Elly's son Alena died a couple of years ago. I only know that because they had a spirit celebration right before I left on this trip."

Mandi is silent for a moment. "Do you know what Alena died from?" she asks.

"Yes and no. Apparently there is a sickness that some people get just at the end of the wet season. Officially, three such deaths have happened in Tanggar, but off-the-record, I'd say the death toll is higher. The locals call the sickness Drum Death. It doesn't have anything to do with drums, per se, but usually just before dying, the individuals complain of a throbbing headache. They usually die clutching their heads in pain. The throbbing is so intense that they describe it as having drums in their head. The symptoms leading up to it are varied, so they can't distinguish between the flu or a cold or an impending Drum Death."

"What are the symptoms?" asks Mandi.

"I've never witnessed an actual case, but I've heard stories," answers Dave. "I've heard of symptoms that range from twitching to rashes to joint aches to coughs to dilated eyes to blue tongues and epileptic-like fits."

"Is it contagious?"

"I know that it is *thought* to be contagious, but whether it is or not, I don't know. I personally doubt it, because if it is, I think it would be more widespread by now. With that said, once an individual is thought to have it, they are cast out from the group. It's kind of a sacrifice-one-to-save-the-group attitude. Elly and Eko are a case in point."

Mandi looks at Dave confused.

"Three years ago, Alena and Harianni—Elly's son and sister—were thought to have Drum Death. It was the end of the wet season, and they had severe headaches. Elly had been tending to them both—her son in her own home and her sister in her sister's home. Elly and Alena were always very close—I knew them as young women. Anyway, Elly was nursing them until they were thought to be on death's door. As soon as it looked like it might be Drum Death, their husbands left them and the people of Tanggar put pressure on them to leave town before they spread the sickness. How they expected them to leave when two of them were at death's door..." Dave shakes his head. "Anyway, Elly built a basic stretcher and she pulled both her sister and her sick son into the jungle. I can't imagine where she got her stamina and determination. She's a small person, and she dragged a stretcher holding two people through the jungle. I also

can't imagine the pain that Alena and Harianni felt with each bump. Eko helped as best he could.

"Harianni died shortly after they got into the jungle. But the amazing part of the story is that Alena recovered for a season. As far as I know, it is the only known case of remission— unless he didn't have Drum Death to begin with. When Alena recovered, he still had the symptoms, but he lived for another year. Rumor has it that Elly saved him by exorcising the Death Spirit. He died the following year right at the end of the wet. All that year and the year before, Elly and Eko lived in the jungle on their own. The town, including Elly's husband, wants nothing to do with them."

"Has anyone performed an autopsy on the victims of this type of illness to determine the cause of death? Is it a common sickness? Has an investigation been started?" asks Mandi.

"No, no and no," says Dave. "There are no autopsies performed in Tanggar as there are no doctors. Bringing them into Palankaraya or Kota Baru for an autopsy—well, it's just not likely to happen. Three of the four victims that I know of have been children, and they don't want the children cut up. The individuals are usually just given a traditional burial. Is it common? It's not common enough to draw attention because it's dispersed, but Tanggar seems to be a hotspot."

"Dispersed?" asks Mandi visibly surprised.

"I'm no doctor," qualifies Dave. "But, I've seen sporadic cases in Kalimantan. I get around to many cities and remote areas because of my flying. If you ask my opinion, there are other unexplained deaths and the victims are usually children or teenagers."

Mandi and Dave talk until the sky begins to lighten. She finds him intelligent with a cutting sense of humor. He is also attractive. His curly hair is black peppered with gray and his eyes are a soft chocolate color. He has a beautiful smile and a wonderfully hearty laugh.

Mandi looks at her watch and looks at Dave embarrassed. "Oh my god, it's 5:00!"

"Perfect timing. Are you going to join me Mandi? You can go to the mine site via Palankaraya."

Mandi nods her head. "I'd love to see Elly. I just need to throw a few things into my backpack."

As Mandi climbs into the seaplane and tightens her seatbelt, Sarif takes his position outside the Bahtera Hotel and his three colleagues position themselves at various locations en route to the airport. He

expects Mandi to leave for the airport in an hour and a half. He gives himself plenty of time in case she leaves early. He buys a glass of sweet black coffee and makes himself comfortable.

Sarif is tired from a busy night. After he and his colleagues developed a 'Mandi Plan B' and he waited around the Bahtera Hotel for a few hours to make sure that Mandi was not going anywhere, Sarif went to a local hotspot. He needed some action and diversion. He has not been in Balikpapan for over eight months, and had hoped that Patris, his favorite kupa kupa malam<sup>42</sup>, would be there. It was his lucky night: not only was Patris there but she was not busy.

It is fortunate for Sarif that he had a lucky night, because he is not going to have a lucky day. As he sips his coffee and watches the entrance to the Bahtera Hotel, Mandi flies westward into Central Kalimantan.

When Mandi gets to Palankaraya, it is as if Elly expected her arrival. Mandi had not given Elly a date when she would return to Indonesia, but Mandi can see that Elly is ready and waiting. Elly insists on returning to the jungle facility. She has family in Palankaraya who can take care of Eko for a short while.

Elly's insistence convinces Mandi that Elly knows *something* about the facility. Mandi remembers her first meeting with Elly and how she persisted in taking Mandi further and further into the jungle. Like Mandi, perhaps Elly has unfinished business.

Mandi wonders whether Elly knows the reason behind her son's death. Might Elly have made a connection between his death and the facility? Might this connection be the reason she is determined to return to the facility? Perhaps Alena and Harianni were electrosensitives. Or maybe they contracted other illnesses because of a weakened immune state caused by e-smog. How often did they go to the jungle facility? Elly certainly knew her way around both the production and research buildings. Did the boys play near the buildings as well? And what is the cause of Eko's symptoms—his twitching and edginess?

Mandi gives Dave her 'official' reason for being in Kalimantan as preliminary research for Phase III of the Senaggin Mine project.

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<sup>42</sup> Kupa kupa malam is an Indonesian term for prostitute, literally translated as 'night butterfly'.

She has not, however, talked with him about the real reason she is in Indonesia.

When Dave returns from his day's flight, he offers to act as a translator for a discussion between Mandi and Elly. At long last they can really communicate! Mandi can express her admiration for Elly, whose life must be very difficult. They have a lot to say to each other, and Dave makes it possible.

When the conversation turns to the upcoming plans to go to the jungle facility, Mandi is quiet. She is unsure of how she feels about Dave knowing what is going on in the jungle. She thinks that he does not know about the facility and she wonders about his allegiance if things get dangerous. The international corporations that she will confront may be willing to pay thousands, if not millions, to gain information and to shut her up. Does Dave have a price that he might sell them out for?

Dave notices that Mandi hesitates, so he says, "Mandi, you can trust me. I know about the jungle facility, if that's what you're wondering. However, if you're not comfortable, I can leave, and you and Elly can continue without me. I can, however, provide more than translation. I can provide transportation."

To give Mandi time to think, Dave leaves the room momentarily to get more water. Mandi looks at Elly who nods her assent.

"OK, agreed," says Mandi without hesitation. "We'll count Dave in on our side. We can use all the help we can get." Mandi feels herself blush.

In the discussion that follows, Dave translates. They agree on everything, with one exception: their strategy for approaching the jungle facility. Elly wants to go into the facility unseen, as they did on the two previous visits. Mandi prefers to go to the facility well seen and well announced. She figures that the more people who know their whereabouts, the safer they will be. After some discussion Elly agrees.

To celebrate their joint venture, they decide on an early dinner. Mandi hopes that she can make it through dinner without falling asleep. It has been a long day for both Mandi and Dave, who did not sleep the night before. They agree to not 'talk shop' over dinner that evening; instead they will meet again the following afternoon to discuss specifics. It is during that meeting that Mandi plans to tell Elly and Dave about her electromagnetic radiation research and her suspicions about the deaths of Alena and Harianni.

Mandi intends to make several phone calls the following morning. She will call Asep to let him know when they will arrive at the mine site and when they will require the induction program. She will also contact Marcus and update him with her plans.

"Great, I'll just need to take a quick shower and change," says Mandi. "Is there a hotel near here?"

"You can stay with me Mandi," says Dave. "My place is right next door. I've got a spare room."

"If it's not a problem..."

"No, not at all. I'd love the company." Dave smiles. "But I must admit I probably won't be much company tonight. I'm tired."

"Me too!" says Mandi, and she laughs.

After Mandi and Dave get ready for dinner, they go next door. Mandi is surprised at how comfortable Eko has become around her—he walks right up to her and looks up. Mandi squats down and looks at him. For several seconds they just look at each other eye to eye. Mandi sees that Eko has calmed down a lot. He still twitches, but it is slighter and less frequent. Where his face was furrowed, now there are only wrinkles.

Elly and Dave have a brief chat, in which Elly tells Dave that she will not be joining them for dinner. Since she will be leaving Eko for a couple of days, she wants to spend time with him. Mandi notices something serious in Elly's eyes when she speaks to Dave. Does she have the same sense of foreboding as Mandi?

Mandi enjoys herself at dinner. She and Dave eat padang<sup>43</sup> in a local warung, the local name for a small shop. As they eat they speak about what brought Dave to Indonesia. He is Dutch, and although he lived in Indonesia as a child, he does not remember it because his family returned to Holland when Dave was four years old. However, his family did—and still does—vacation in Indonesia annually. It was during these family vacations that Dave fell in love with Indonesia—its people, its culture and its lifestyle.

"While you were in my house, you probably saw photos of a woman. That was my wife," says Dave. "She was Indonesian. She died two years ago in childbirth."

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<sup>43</sup> Padang is a meal in which small bowls of a variety of food are placed on the table. Payment is based on what is eaten. Hot white rice is usually served with the meal.

"I'm so sorry," says Mandi.

"I went back to Holland for about six months, but I couldn't stay there. I came back. It feels like home here," explains Dave.

Mandi decides to be open with Dave. She asks him if she can break their pledge to *not* 'talk shop' at dinner. Instead of waiting for tomorrow afternoon to tell Dave about her research, her theories and her visits to the jungle facility, she wants to tell her story now. She talks about her latest theory, namely the possible link between Alena's and Harianni's deaths and e-smog. And they talk about Elly and Mandi's trek through the jungle, which resulted in Dave flying them out of the jungle.

Mandi wants Dave to translate her theories to Elly tomorrow. She thinks that Elly may know exactly what she is talking about. Mandi has the statistical research, while Elly has the practical experience and personal scars.

Mandi reprimands herself, but she cannot help but compare Dave with Alan. Dave is what Alan used to be like before he came back from New Zealand a changed man. Dave actively listens to her, asking her questions and following her eyes and her emotions. Because of his interest, Mandi finds herself sharing more than she expected, including her miscarriage. Before she can make any connection, Dave does. He links her miscarriage to her time spent at the jungle facility. She remembers that Alan was silent when she suggested that connection, a silence that Mandi translated as either disinterest or disbelief.

Back at Dave's house, Mandi gets ready for bed. She is tired, but she also feels happy. For the first time in months, she has enjoyed herself. She is used to losing herself in her work, but over dinner she immersed herself in interesting conversation. She feels refreshed.

When Mandi walks out of the bathroom, she finds Dave standing in the dim light of the hallway. He stretches out his hand to Mandi. She looks at him for a moment and then walks forward, laying her hand gently in his. He walks slowly into his bedroom, where he again faces her. He looks at her for several minutes, stroking her face and her hair. Mandi closes her eyes and leans toward Dave. Their lips touch and they kiss softly.

As Mandi stands there, she feels Dave's hands and lips gently and slowly explore her neck and then her arms. She feels her nightgown buttons being opened and the silk gown slide from her

shoulders. She shudders as she feels his lips travel slowly and deliberately over her breasts and across her stomach. His hands gently caress her thighs.

Mandi opens her eyes and pulls Dave up toward her. She undresses him slowly and kisses him. She then leads him to the bed, where they lay on their sides facing each other, still exploring. The emotional intimacy that they shared over dinner flows now from their hands and lips.

Even though she enjoys exploring Dave's body, she has a sense of *deja vu*. She has never believed in 'previous lives', but she feels that she and Dave have been together before. There is no awkwardness, no ego and no pressure. There is only a familiar sharing. Their lovemaking is beautiful and sensitive.

Dave's alarm clock rings just six hours later, and they both jump at the sound.

"Sorry, Mandi," says Dave. Between kisses, he continues, "I have an early morning flight and I'll be back around mid-afternoon. I'll leave the spare key on the table downstairs. Make yourself at home. See you later and get some more sleep— It's still early."

Mandi nods and rolls over, dozing. She feels relaxed and at home. When she hears Dave shut the front door, she wakes again. She lies in bed and looks around the room. Indonesian artwork covers the walls: colorful batiks and masterfully carved wood figures.

'He has great taste in art,' thinks Mandi.

She decides she wants to go for a walk as early mornings are the best time for walking in Indonesia. The air is cooler and less humid than at any other time of the day. In the mornings, the markets are also in full swing, overflowing with brightly colored fruits and vegetables and local shoppers. She pulls on a t-shirt and sweatpants and locks the door behind her.

Mandi sees no movement in the next house where Elly and Eko are staying, so she walks past. She reaches a corner and decides to head out of town rather than toward the market. Even though she loves the hustle and bustle of the early morning markets, she decides on a quiet walk. She takes a dirt path that leads out toward bright green rice fields and thick groupings of bushes and palm trees.

At a bamboo thicket she hears a loud noise behind her. She jumps and looks over her shoulder. No one is there. When she turns back

around, she freezes and holds her breath. Only three feet in front of her, and blocking her path, is a snake—a cobra—coiled and poised to strike.

Mandi cannot take her eyes from the snake. His head sways slowly as if taking aim. She again hears a loud noise behind her, and she looks quickly over her shoulder. Again she sees nothing, but she feels a sharp pain in her thigh. By the time she turns back toward the snake, it is gone. As she falls to the ground, she sees the world around her spinning.

Dave returns to an empty house about mid-afternoon. Mandi's things are still in the spare room, but she is nowhere to be seen. He goes next door to find Mandi, but she is not with Elly. Elly has not seen her all day and thought she was with Dave.

Dave, Elly and Eko walk outside. They search the neighborhood looking for Mandi, asking everyone they meet if they have seen her. Dave and Elly do not know what Mandi is wearing, but they know that if someone had seen her, they would have noticed her since she is one of the only Caucasians in Palankaraya.

Getting nowhere, Dave drives to the hospital. He feels a fist clenched in his stomach. Two years ago, he drove away from the hospital alone. He shakes his head. This is different. It will be OK.

After an hour, Dave leaves the hospital alone. Mandi is not in the hospital, nor does anyone have any information on her.

When Dave gets home, he finds Elly and Eko waiting in his driveway. They rush to his car door, both talking at once. Eko has found out that a man along Mulawarman Street saw Mandi walk past his house early this morning, but he did not see her return. Elly and Eko jump into Dave's car and they head for Mulawarman Street.

The old man cannot tell him much, except that he saw Mandi walking by dressed in a white t-shirt, knee-length blue pants with a white side stripe, and tennis shoes. She was also wearing a baseball hat. She was heading toward the rice fields.

Dave, Elly and Eko walk down the dirt road past the man's house. Mandi is nowhere to be found, and nothing looks suspicious. After searching for an hour, Dave decides to go back. Perhaps Mandi has returned to the house. Elly goes with Dave, while Eko stays behind to look.

On the way home, Dave tells Elly what Mandi told him the previous night at dinner. He summarizes her research and her

preliminary findings. He watches Elly closely and he can see that she is not surprised. She turns to Dave and smiles. She appears to have already made the connection between e-smog and Drum Death. They may be unraveling the mystery surrounding Drum Death!

Dave goes upstairs to his spare bedroom where Mandi put her things yesterday. He flips open her e-Helper and hits the redial button. He is betting—hoping—that her last call was to Marcus.

"Hi, you've reached the message bank of Marcus Waller. I can't take your call at the moment, so please leave a message and I'll call you back."

"Damn," says Dave under his breath before leaving a message.

As Dave is speaking, Marcus and the others are on a flight an hour from landing in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan. Marcus lost no time in organizing the flight. As soon as he finished talking with Alan, they got the quickest one they could find. He fears that Mandi is in danger.

Marcus's fear is correct. Mandi opens her eyes and looks around her. She is in a small, bare room with bamboo and vine walls and a thatched roof. From her vantage point on the dirt floor, she can only see sky and the tops of jungle trees out the open window. She tries to get up, but falls back to the ground. Her head throbs and she has a pain in her right thigh. She looks at it; it is red and swollen.

"The snake," she says to herself. She rolls over and gets up onto her hands and knees and crawls toward the door. When Mandi opens the door, two men step in her way. The first thing she sees is their black laced, military style boots. When she looks up she can see that they *are* military men, dressed in olive green uniforms and black berets. They both hold rifles. They reach out and close the door.

Mandi pulls herself up on the bamboo wall and stands for a moment. She sees two more men stationed at her window. She recognizes the building across from her. She is in the jungle facility.

'Well, I wanted to get here,' she thinks. 'I just thought I'd get here on my own steam. I doubt anyone knows where I am.'

Mandi sits back down on the floor and tries to think about the series of events that brought her here. She remembers going for a walk. Was it this morning? She turns to look at her watch, but it is gone. She went for a walk, and she remembers enjoying the sun shining on the rice fields, making them more brilliant than emeralds. She remembers a noise. What was that noise? It sounded almost

musical, like a loud drum or cymbal. Mandi remembers the snake and looks again at her bite.

'If that were a snake bite—a cobra bite—I'd be dead,' she thinks. 'I wonder what happened.'

She looks more closely at her bite and says to herself, "Maybe it's not a bite. There are no fang marks. There's only a single entry point. A needle? Could it be a needle, or maybe a blow dart...? Or maybe I've heard too many jungle stories..." Mandi shakes her head. "No, I haven't heard too many stories. Last night Dave said that anything is possible in the jungle, and I believe him. I don't think that I got bit by a snake. I think the snake was a ploy—a distraction."

Mandi leans against the hut's wall and closes her eyes. When she does so, she sees Dave's face above hers. His eyes are closed and he is about to kiss her. Mandi thinks back to the night she spent with Dave. Their physical relationship happened quickly, but she does not regret it. She misses his hearty laugh and quick wit.

With Alan, Mandi had sex, wild and passionate, which was fine, to a point. Together they experienced intense, urgent sensations. But making love with Dave was gentle and caring as well as passionate. With Dave she feels like she is coming home to the arms of a long-time lover. She smiles.

But Mandi's memory is short lived. She grabs her head as pain shoots across her right temple. With the pain, Mandi is reminded of Dave's description of Drum Death. He said that the only similarity among victims is the incredible pounding in their heads shortly before dying. She also remembers Evette's description of her brother Paul. He had shooting pains through his temple. She wonders if she is at death's door. Might she be an electrosensitive? She lies down on her back in the dirt and closes her eyes.

Evette has not heard from Mandi and she is getting worried. Since she last spoke with Mandi, she has uncovered information that Mandi needs not only for her research but also her safety.

"Who is that again...?" she wonders out loud. Evette has telephoned Mandi's university, but they have not heard from her and the only forwarding number they have is her e-Helper, which she is not responding to. Evette scans the notes she took when she met with Mandi.

"New Zealand—the company she is working with is in New Zealand..." says Evette. "She was going to call them when she was

ready—here it is, SR Inc.—Marcus somebody or another—and yes! Here's the lab number. Maybe they've heard from her. Maybe she can't call out. I have a bad feeling about this." Evette picks up her e-Helper and dials the number for SR Inc.

"Hello, Klaus Baumgartner."

"Hello," says Evette. "My name is Evette and I'm a colleague of Dr. Amanda Webber. I'm looking for Marcus."

"Marcus isn't here right now," says Klaus.

"Well, perhaps you can help me. I'm looking for Mandi—I mean Dr. Webber."

"I'm sorry, but we haven't heard from Mandi recently," says Klaus. "Can I take a message for Marcus?"

When Mandi visited Evette, she talked about Klaus, so Evette knows that she can trust him. Besides, what choice does she have? Mandi might be in trouble, especially in light of what Evette has uncovered. Evette tells Klaus that she is working on several research projects with Mandi. Klaus knows vaguely about Evette's projects so they briefly discuss them while talking about Evette's recent meeting with Mandi.

What Evette does not share with Klaus is the price she paid for her research.

Despite Evette's mother's threats to disown her if she continues to research the health implications of e-smog, Evette has chosen to continue. She can understand that Paul's death has traumatized her, but she wants something good to come out of his death. Her desire to *prevent* similar deaths from happening to others propels her forward and gives her purpose.

Evette initially thought that Paul's death silenced her mother, but after speaking with her, she thinks differently. Another 'death' has changed her mother and taken her voice. Evette is convinced that the 'death' that really changed her mother was the death of her father, or more accurately his supposed death. The more Evette digs, the more her mother's story unravels. She does not, for example, find a newspaper article on her father's death, nor does she find an obituary. If he is dead, then where is the proof? And if he is alive, then where is he?

"There are many kinds of death," Evette's mother said. "Physical, spiritual, emotional—the type of death doesn't matter because it's all the same. You're left alone. Please, just drop it."

The figurative death of her father may have been enough for her mother to bury his memory, but it is not enough for Evette. If he is alive, she will find him.

Evette's search for her father is quick and easy. She goes to the website of the large international company that he used to work for, and bingo, he is there—Vice President of Finance, Dr. Peter Birch. Evette has gone back to that website numerous times to just look at her father's name. She still cannot believe that he is alive. Apparently he is now located in Sydney, so she flies there.

In Sydney she locates the company's offices. She waits for almost an hour in a large, air-conditioned room with the receptionist. Her father is "in a meeting" and "Yes, she will wait for him." The receptionist is obviously surprised at Evette's introduction. She calls herself "His daughter."

Evette sits for an hour looking at a vase of meticulously arranged, fresh cut lilies. The outer office is flush with money: large paintings hang on the walls and black leather chairs smell of newness. What will she say to a man—her father—who she has not seen for over fifteen years?

Evette has practiced several eloquent introductions, but when she stands facing him in his office, with his office door closed, she can only manage three simple words: "Where were you?"

"Please, sit down Evette," says this stranger, her father. They both sit down, uncomfortable in each other's presence and unsure of what they should say.

"Paul's dead," she whispers.

"I know," he replies.

Her father looks out the window. His face is pale against his navy Armani suit. His hand shakes as he swallows several gulps of water.

"Why did you go?" she asks.

Her father responds with what she thinks are a series of lame excuses. Finally, she asks again, "Why did you go?"

Her father pauses, then says slowly, "Paul was sick. He was always sick. Through a system of elimination, your mother thought she had narrowed the cause of his illness down to computers, electrical gadgets, electronics—and I couldn't convince her otherwise. She became obsessed with electromagnetic radiation. We got rid of our washer, dryer, blender, toaster, hair dryers, TVs, stereos, anything that was electronic. We moved to Nimbin and changed our

lifestyle. It wasn't my preferred way of living, but I was willing to try it."

He continues, "It started going downhill when she forbid me to bring my laptop or my e-Helper into the house. I was still working in the Gold Coast office, so the drive to work was a long one. I wanted to telecommute three days a week, but how could I do that without a computer or phone? So, I started living in a hotel on the Gold Coast during the week and coming back on weekends. It wasn't long before she started looking at me like *I* was contaminated—like *I* was bringing home e-smog from the office. So I stayed away more and more..." Her father's voice trails off.

Evette feels like she has to leave. She cannot breathe. She stands up and walks toward the door, but her father stops her. They look at each other in silence and then walk out together. They walk aimlessly around Sydney for a couple of hours, talking.

Over dinner Evette asks her father if he will come home with her. He is visibly embarrassed when he says he has remarried. He is happy. He has a beautiful wife and two infants.

Evette reels at this revelation. In just a few hours she has found her father, whom she thought was dead, and now she has lost him again. He has a new life and a new family, which does not include her. Evette struggles to make sense of her new reality.

During the time Evette spends with her Dad, her Mum's words seem to mock her. Maybe she should have let things lie?

Evette asks her Dad if his company has done any research into electromagnetic pollution. He says that they have conducted research according to federal safety requirements. All their products fall within the recommended standards.

When Evette pushes the topic of e-smog research, they start to lose the tenuous bond that is forming between them. She talks about researching the combined effect of electrical appliances and gadgets. She talks about her research and the interviews that she has conducted. If they uncover health implications related to e-smog, then his company's products might not fall within 'recommended standards'. The public health implications will be huge and expensive. Her Dad's face reddens in anger, but just momentarily. Just as quickly, he puts on a public mask. His face loses all emotion.

When they talk e-smog, Evette can see that she is no longer his daughter. She becomes a threat to his business—his livelihood, his lifestyle. She looks at his suit, his expensive Armani suit. She looks

around the restaurant that he has chosen. Tonight he will pay more for their dinner than what she pays for a week's rent. His is a world of privilege, and he will not give it up without a fight.

Once he realizes that she is determined to continue her research, despite his clear and persistent disapproval, she hears a change in his voice. He becomes cold and distant. His disinterest in the impact of e-smog comes through loud and clear: "The good of the many outweighs the needs of the few."

## 11. The Wizard of Oz

*The man, Max, has always known that he was destined for great things. He always comes out on top, whether through his sixth sense for business opportunities or his ability to read people. He can smell a profit a mile away, and he can play people like fiddles simply by stroking their egos.*

*He has built The Cooperative from a pie-in-the-sky idea to a worldwide force that no one dares challenge. He would love to throw his success into the faces of his critics—those who gave him no seed money and worse, those who laughed at him and predicted his failure. But it is not yet time. He will continue to build his empire until the time is right. Every plant has its season, when its fruit is sweetest.*

*As Max adjusts his unusual green wire glasses, he reads the latest report on the charming, but pathetic partnership of two unknowns: SR Inc. and Dr. Amanda Webber. He finds them entertaining, almost interesting. He will study them to identify where their weaknesses and egos lie. He knows that he can bring them onboard like the others. Marcus Waller has a particular attraction because of his 'mysterious' public persona. He can find very little at all on him, yet in Marcus he senses a man much like himself—a self-made man with special skills; a man from the same mold as himself..*

**March 19, 2014**  
**Indonesia**

An annoying buzzing sound awakens Mandi. She swats the mosquito away and rests her arm on her forehead. She opens her eyes to see shadows cast into the room from an oil lantern hanging in the window. She hears the murmur of men talking outside her hut.

Although Mandi feels better than the last time she woke up, she still feels groggy. She is also very thirsty. She gets up slowly and brushes some of the dirt from her clothes. She stands near the window and calls out for water.

There is silence until a man's voice barks an order. Mandi hears someone run and then it is quiet again except for the buzzing of mosquitoes. She sees a small cloud of mosquitoes hovering around

the lantern and feels them on her forehead, arms and shins. A man dressed in military clothes passes Mandi a bottle of water through the window.

Even though the water is lukewarm, Mandi guzzles most of it. Her head clears a little, so she sits down again and gathers a small pile of dirt and puts it into the palm of her left hand. She then carefully adds water, making a thick mud paste. She spreads the paste onto her shins, forearms, and face.

"Next best thing to deet<sup>44</sup> for mosquito protection," she mumbles to herself.

The door of the hut opens and a man walks in. He stands in front of her for a few seconds, looking at the dirt on her arms, legs and face. He wrinkles his forehead in surprise and disgust. He hands her a bowl of rice, then leaves.

"I know him." Mandi shuts her eyes and concentrates. "Where... Bahtera Hotel—that's it. I'm sure he was the man in the hot tub. What's going on? The noises, the snake, the blow dart she thought was a bite, and the man in the hot tub who just *happens* to be here."

Mandi wonders how far they will go to shut her up. She runs her hand over her swollen thigh.

As she eats her plain white rice in the dirt-floored hut, Marcus, Maria and Barry sit at a tea-stained linoleum table in the Senaggin Mine mess. Asep, who they are eating with, looks at them earnestly. He has not seen Mandi recently.

In broken English, Asep tells them that he received a call from Mandi a couple of days ago. When he spoke with her, she said she would call back before she arrived. He has not heard from her since. Although Asep thinks that Mandi is at the jungle facility, he does not talk about it with Marcus and the others. He only talks to them about Mandi's project at the Senaggin Mine.

Asep can tell from the glances shared among Marcus, Maria and Barry that they are worried. He is concerned too, but he has every reason to be; everyone *knows* that the facility is strictly off limits.

Mystery and stories surround the jungle facility. Asep thinks some of the stories are probably made up, but they serve their purpose. They keep people away from it, and they help the locals

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<sup>44</sup> Deet is the common name for N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide (and N, N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide). This is an active ingredient in commonly used insect repellents applied to the skin.

pass the time. Sometimes the evenings are very long at the remote Senaggin Mine.

There are two jungle facility stories that Asep knows are true because he was witness to the events. These are the stories that he tells. There were two people—people like Mandi—who went to the jungle facility and never came back. Asep calls upon Allah to bring Mandi safely back to the Senaggin Mine.

Marcus watches as Maria engages Asep in discussion. Unlike Sarif, whose prime motive was to get them off the Senaggin Mine lease as quickly as possible, Asep's agenda appears to be to help them find Mandi.

"Asep, can you please take us to the jungle facility? I want to go there," says Maria.

Marcus looks sharply at Maria. Why did she ask him about the jungle facility? He may not know about it. Does she want to expose their entire plan before they get the involved companies in a stranglehold position? They can only negotiate with the companies if they catch them red handed. If the companies know that they are coming, they will be able to prepare their 'story' and turn the tables on them. They might even be able to destroy evidence and set up shop elsewhere. Mandi happened upon this facility, but how could SR Inc. find them again if they relocate? And how do they know that there are not other facilities already?

Marcus can see that Maria is ignoring him and looking intently at Asep whose eyes widen at her request.

"No. No... go," stammers Asep. "Danger—we go Tanggar, but no..."

"Can we get our mine inductions this evening?" continues Maria. "We want to make sure that we adhere to *all* mine policy. We don't want to do anything that we shouldn't, but it is important to take us to the jungle facility."

*Later Marcus asks Maria how she guessed that Asep would know about the jungle facility. Maria wrinkles her forehead and shakes her head. She reminds Marcus of the discussion they had with Mandi when she was at Barrier Island.*

"Remember," says Maria, "Mandi said that there are no secrets here. Everyone knows about everything. Actually, it's probably more accurate to say that *most* everyone knows about most everything. Terry is an exception. He doesn't know about the jungle facility

because it doesn't concern him. His world revolves around mine contracts and production data. Asep's world is here, in the jungle. He's worked here for over ten years. How could he *not* know about the jungle facility?"

Marcus looks at his wife and smiles. They make a great team. Their parabilities not only complement each other—on occasion her paravision gives direction to his pseudohands—but also their personalities interlace. She is exceptionally perceptive, while he excels at strategy and research, the latter of which has consumed him lately.

SR Inc., with Marcus at the helm, has leapt ahead in electromagnetic research in the past two and a half months. He remembers the fascination he first held for the research when they tested the e-Helpers for electromagnetic radiation over a decade ago. He originally planned to continue down this line of research, testing everyday household and office items, but 'things' got in the way. With the announcement of their e-Helpers, his life and the SR Inc. research laboratory took on an added level of busyness. And then both Klaus's attention and his own got sidetracked by the research into silatraviate<sup>45</sup>.

However, with Mandi's discovery of pirated e-Helpers, Marcus cannot postpone electromagnetic radiation research any longer. They have physical evidence of a breach in patent law. SR Inc. holds the patent to e-Helpers, and Marcus has two e-Helpers in his possession that SR Inc. did not produce.

*The pirated e-Helpers have many ramifications. Financially SR Inc. is at risk of losing a segment of the telecommunications marketplace to pirated product. Marcus can only hazard a guess at the percentage of sales they must have lost thus far to fake e-Helpers. The Indonesian market alone must be close to a quarter of a billion! How many other countries are knowingly or unknowingly importing pirated e-Helpers?*

However, far worse than the financial fallout are the serious health implications. These pirated e-Helpers differ from the SR Inc. e-Helpers in one critical way: their level of electromagnetic radiation emission. The pirated e-Helpers emit dangerously high levels of e-smog. SR Inc. research shows that the pirated e-Helpers cause a

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<sup>45</sup> See *Xperts: The Paradoppelganger*.

variety of symptoms in laboratory rats and monkeys that are electrosensitives.

Although their trials are still in their early stages, the preliminary findings show that electrosensitives react with a variety of symptoms, ranging from rashes and skin irritations to severe headaches, infertility and epileptic-type fits. However, the majority of their test subjects are not electrosensitives. The risk to these 'non-reacting' animals is reaction without overt symptoms. Marcus considers this invisible impact far more insidious and discomfoting because of the lack of overt symptoms. These 'non-reacting' animals have lower than average fertility levels as well as abnormal cell activity and cell counts. Everything *appears* normal, but many body changes are occurring without overt symptoms. Marcus dreads to think what is happening to people, especially electrosensitives, using the pirated e-Helpers.

For the past two months, Marcus and Klaus have literally lived in the SR Inc. laboratory. The electromagnetic radiation findings that they are getting from the pirated e-Helpers are not 'good' but they are consistent. Additionally their preliminary research shows that the combined effect of the pirated e-Helpers with everyday electrical items is critically high. Mandi has also concentrated her research efforts in this area.

In her research, Mandi reports preliminary results consistent with SR Inc.'s preliminary findings. That means that two independent labs have data that can impact thousands—even millions—of people. Everyday millions of people might be in the midst of a dangerous cocktail of electromagnetic radiation...

As Marcus, Maria and Barry take their mine site induction from Asep, Dave juggles his schedule so that he can fly early the next day to the river near the jungle facility. He cannot risk leaving immediately because it is a moonless night and the river is unlit. He would not be able to know with certainty that he would not land his seaplane on top of a small canoe or boat. Elly told him that there has already been one death on the river—the old man who helped them. Dave wants no more deaths—accidental or otherwise.

Even though he is tired, Dave cannot sleep. The last time he slept in this bed, Mandi lay beside him. She snuggled against his side and casually draped her arm and leg over his body as they chatted lazily after lovemaking. He misses the warmth of her body and the

gentleness of her kiss. He remembers her soft hot breath on his chest after she fell asleep. Even though they weren't asleep long before his alarm went off, he had slept soundly. He woke feeling more refreshed than he had in years.

Dave thinks back to the last two days. They were unforeseen and yet they felt 'right'. It was as if part of him had finally come home. He thinks about Mandi's beautiful blue-green eyes. They sparkled when she told him about her research, and they wept when she spoke of her miscarriage. She has such energy and passion, feelings that have left him since the death of his wife.

Dave did not remain alone for very long after his wife died. There were many Indonesian women who visited him, cooked for him, and offered him their companionship. He declined their offers until eventually—after months of trying—they left him alone.

Dave knows that he lost his zest for life. He used to think that his appetite for love would return in due time, but the more he tried to feel something—anything—the more elusive his feelings became. After six futile months trying to conjure up any emotion, he gave up, figuring that the numbness was there to stay. He got on with his life, flying more than ever. He expanded his business and traveled often. Then Mandi came into his life, supposedly just a lost jungle 'trekker'. In the last thirty-six hours he has felt more than in the previous two years combined. He cannot lose her.

Earlier this evening, Dave asked around about the jungle facility. What he heard made him want to cover his ears and scream. Mandi was right. There are illegally manufactured e-Helpers being produced and shipped out of the jungle facility.

Everyone, including himself, knows of the facility to some degree. He has dropped off clients and supplies to that facility, and he is sure that there is big money invested. His 'big city' clients that come to the jungle facility pay him three times the going rate. In return Dave does not speak to anyone about the trips there.

Dave looks at his e-Helper. He bought it several years ago in Palankaraya. Since it was a pirated e-Helper the chances are that it emits dangerously high levels of e-smog. Dave thinks about what Mandi said. It makes him uneasy to think that abnormal cell activity is going on right there inside his body without him feeling it or having any types of symptoms.

Dave promised Mandi that he would buy a legal, 'safe' e-Helper the next time he goes to Singapore. But he lives in a town full of

illegal e-Helpers, each radiating e-smog. How much good will it be to him if only *his* e-Helper is within 'recommended emission levels'?

Dave knows that Mandi and Marcus hold a key—their data—to improving the health of millions of people. This data is something that Mandi speaks of with reverence. Although she has not said so, Dave knows that the large heavy briefcase she is carrying must be some, if not all, of her data. She calls the content a 'little light reading for the plane', but he knows better. He figures that the data will play a large part in her attack on the jungle facility.

Dave fears that Mandi will pay dearly for her knowledge. His only comfort lies in knowing that Mandi is not alone; SR Inc. shares the knowledge. It is easy to silence a lone voice, but it is more difficult to shoot down accusations from multiple directions.

Still unable to sleep, Dave gets up from his bed. He digs and works in his small vegetable garden in his backyard until almost sunrise. The physical exertion frees his mind and works the tension out of his body.

At daybreak Dave leaves his house. His tired, determined face softens when he sees Elly and Eko waiting patiently for him near his truck. Elly says something to Eko, who looks up at her and nods. They hold hands for a few seconds before Eko steps back from the car. Elly holds up her hand to Dave and shakes her head. In a discussion the previous night, Dave said he would prefer that Elly does not go with him to the jungle facility. She will put herself in danger by going. Elly insisted that she go. Dave knows that he cannot convince Elly otherwise, so they both climb into the truck and drive to the river where his seaplane is parked.

The morning is misty. A thick fog delays their takeoff because Dave cannot see the river traffic. He paces back and forth in his small office. After an hour the visibility improves and they take off in the direction of Tanggar.

That same morning, Asep drives toward Tanggar, much earlier than the time agreed by the group the previous night. At 4:30am, Marcus, Maria and Barry show up at Asep's room and insist on leaving. Although annoyed, Asep can understand their urgency. He slept poorly the entire night, knowing that time may be of the essence to help Mandi.

Within fifteen minutes Asep has showered and said his morning prayers, and they are on the road toward Tanggar. Asep nostalgically remembers the last time he took this trip. It was with Mandi and they practiced Indonesian almost the entire time. Asep likes Mandi. She is different. She wants to understand his Indonesian language, culture and ways.

Dave's river landing near the jungle facility does not go unnoticed. One of Sarif's men calls Sarif and asks what they should do. Sarif smiles at Dave's timely arrival. Sarif and Mandi need a ride. In Dave they have both a seaplane and a pilot. He could not have arranged it better.

"Meet him. Bring him to me," says Sarif.

"Both of them?" answers the man.

"Both?" asks Sarif annoyed.

"Yes, the pilot and the woman?" replies the man.

"Elly..." sighs Sarif. "Yes both."

Although Dave is taller than the Indonesian men who meet him, they are armed and he is outnumbered. The men bind Dave and Elly's arms behind their backs and gag them. Two jeeps, each containing at least half a dozen armed men escort their vehicle through the jungle. En route they meet many vehicles hauling boxes and crates to the river. As Dave prepared to land on the river, he saw more speedboats than usual, and now he knows why. The jungle facility is being moved. When they reach it, it is mostly empty and deserted.

"Just in time," says Sarif to Dave. "We need a ride to Java. Do you have enough fuel?"

Dave shakes his head slowly, hoping to buy time by having to refuel along the way. He looks at Elly, who holds herself defiantly against her captor. He can see that she is carefully surveying the huts. She nods slightly toward a hut to their right.

"Very good Elly," says Sarif. "Mandi is there. You forget nothing about this compound." Elly interrupts him with a hiss through her gag. In a fit of rage, Sarif switches to Indonesian. "Don't interrupt me Elly," he shouts, and slaps her. She falls backward to the ground.

Dave rushes Sarif to hit him in the gut with his head, but as he runs at him, he feels a crack on the back of his skull. He falls to the ground unconscious.

Sarif kicks Elly. "Forget!" he screams at her. "You're no longer my wife. You had a freak son. He was *not* my son. You are a Dayak

freak. I should kill you." Sarif pulls his pistol from his belt and Elly sits up, again defiant. She stares at Sarif, blood trickling from her nose. Sarif lowers his gun, then slowly puts it back into its holster. He turns on his heel and stalks off. Elly is pulled to her feet and roughly pushed toward a hut.

Sarif and several of his men head for Mandi's hut. "We go now," says Sarif to Mandi. Again he looks at her in disgust and asks one man to get some water.

"I'm not going anywhere," says Mandi angrily, standing up. Mandi is tired and hungry. Throughout the night men shouted, and boxes and crates passed by her window. All she has eaten in the last twenty-four hours is a small bowl of rice.

"Who's in charge here? I demand to see who's in charge," says Mandi.

"You demand nothing," snaps Sarif. "I'm in charge. You are in no position to demand. Wash. You disgust me."

"Where are we going?" says Mandi.

Sarif walks out without acknowledging Mandi's question.

She shouts after him, "You're not in charge. Who are you kidding? I saw you at the Bahtera Hotel. You're a nobody. If you were in charge, you wouldn't be doing the grunt work or the dirty work. You're a nobody!"

Insulted by Mandi's words, Sarif turns and lunges at her. He punches her with his clenched fists and she swings at him, hitting him in the nose and eye. He throws another punch, which knocks her off balance. Winded, bleeding and angry, Sarif draws his pistol and stands over her.

"Go ahead, shoot me," Mandi yells. "I have evidence that will put all of you in jail for the rest of your lives. Killing me won't change that. There are others with this information."

Sarif stares at her. "You bluff. If I kill you, it means nothing to me."

Sarif speaks with a confidence that he does not feel. If he kills her, what will the repercussions be? Do his bosses know that she has information? They did not mention information, but they *did* tell him to bring her to them *alive*. This whole situation could be solved with just three bullets, one each for Dave, Elly and Mandi. Why the fuss, unless what Mandi says is true. Is she working with others?

Sarif kicks Mandi in the groin and walks out. They asked him to bring her in alive, not unhurt.

After a few minutes, Mandi gets her breath back. She washes the blood from her face and cleans as best she can with the small bucket of water. The men enter the hut again and tie her arms behind her back. They gag her and put her in a vehicle.

When Mandi arrives at the river, she sees Dave sitting in his seaplane, waiting. Elly also stands, apparently waiting, almost completely obscured from view by the long grass. She cannot believe her eyes! Are they waiting for her with these brutes? Do they work for the jungle facility? Mandi is thunderstruck. She tries to see Dave more clearly, but she cannot as he faces the other way in the seaplane. How could he? Mandi coughs and gags.

Sarif laughs. "Your lover, no good."

As they approach, Dave turns and she can see that he is gagged. She can also see that both Dave and Elly are at gunpoint. She was mistaken. *Of course* she was mistaken! They *are* on her side. She looks at Sarif with hate and disgust. Sarif laughs and shrugs his shoulders.

As Mandi approaches the plane, she and Dave look at each other. She hears Dave catch his breath and watches as his face reddens. Mandi's eyes fill with tears. She wants to apologize for getting him into this. By the way Dave looks at her, she knows that she must look rough. She knows that she is dirty and most likely has blood on her face from her scuffle with Sarif.

Sarif looks at Dave and cautions him. "Do you want another headache Dave? If no, then just fly." He hands Dave a slip of paper, then says, "We go here. When I remove your gag, no speaking. You speak on the radio only. If you speak, I shoot Mandi."

To make his point, Sarif flicks open a switchblade and slices through Mandi's t-shirt. Mandi jumps and shrieks as blood from her arm soaks through her white t-shirt. When Dave and Elly step toward Mandi, Sarif pulls the pistol from his holster. Dave and Elly freeze. "Get in the plane," says Sarif. "I tire of you."

Marcus, Maria and Barry stop walking when they hear a plane overhead. They have been walking for fifteen minutes in the jungle outside of Tanggar, heading toward the jungle facility. Under pressure, Asep has agreed to lead them for part of the trek. But they will have to finish the entire trip on their own. Asep flatly refuses to accompany them all the way.

Maria focuses her gaze in the direction of the plane's sound. With her paravision, she can see through the thick canopy and locate the plane.

"It's Dave's plane!" shouts Maria smiling. Then she gasps. "Oh my god."

"What?" exclaims Marcus.

"I think it's Dave," says Maria. "...And Mandi, Elly and Sarif. It looks like Sarif has a gun, but they're getting too far away for me to see."

Asep looks back and forth between Maria and the canopy. "How can you see the plane?" he asks.

"I think they might be heading south," says Mandi.

"Kota Baru," guesses Asep.

Maria looks at Marcus and shakes her head. The plane is too far away for them to use Marcus's pseudohands to disarm and secure Sarif. They have no choice but to try to follow them.

"Come on," says Marcus. "Let's go!" He nods at Maria, who winks. Before Marcus turns to run toward the haul road, he reaches one of his pseudohands into Asep's jean pockets and takes his keys.

Within seconds, Marcus has run out of sight of the others. He speeds his individual time and dashes through the jungle.

Using Asep's key, Marcus opens the locked truck. He turns on the radio, and flips through the channels. He remembers that Dave used channel 257 when they flew through this vicinity looking for Mandi. He rips the antenna from the truck with a pseudohand and raises it high into the air. He gets static. He lengthens his pseudohand so that it towers above the jungle, and he turns it slightly. Again, he hears nothing but static. Slowly Marcus rotates the 'antenna' and the static stops.

Marcus picks up the radio microphone, clears his throat and says authoritively, "Echo lima bravo seven one one. Repeat destination."

In the seaplane, Dave looks at the radio surprised. That is the name of his seaplane, and someone is asking him to confirm a destination that he has not yet given. He requested to fly over Kota Baru, but that is all he has communicated thus far. He is not yet in range of Balikpapan. Who is requesting this information?

"What's going on," demands Sarif.

"The airspace is busy. Occasionally the tower requests destination information if the airspace is busy," lies Dave. He does

not know who is requesting this information, but the voice is foreign and vaguely familiar...

"Echo lima bravo seven one one. Destination Yogyakarta via Kota Baru and Manggar for refuel. Confirm," replies Dave on the radio.

"Confirm," comes Marcus's stern reply. Dave quickly flips several switches, one of which is the speaker for the radio. He switches the radio from loudspeaker to headphone so that Sarif cannot hear the radio. He does so just in time. "Kota Baru tower. Clear the airspace," comes a curt voice. Dave remains silent.

By the time Marcus has turned the truck around, Maria, Barry and Asep emerge breathless from the jungle, having run the entire way back. Seeing Marcus in his truck, Asep pats his jean pockets for his vehicle keys.

"The keys are just the beginning," says Marcus to Asep. "You're going for the ride of your life, so buckle up. We've got to get to Yogyakarta as fast as we can. Asep where's the nearest plane?"

"I...Dave..." stammers Asep.

"I feared as much. Get in everyone. We've got to get going," says Marcus.

Marcus quietly asks Maria if she has any of the forgetfulness powder with her and she nods. He casts a glance toward Asep, who looks confused as he climbs into the back seat.

Maria and Marcus work together to get them back to the mine's river dock in record time. As they go around corners, Asep braces himself. He knows that they can meet *anything* on this mining haul road—coal trucks, graders, rollers, oxen pulling logs out of the jungle or teenagers and children on small scooters.

Maria uses her paravision to warn Marcus of upcoming obstacles, and Marcus occasionally uses his pseudohands to push away branches. Their jerky trip is a series of accelerations and decelerations as Marcus speeds and slows to avoid accidents.

Marcus gets them to the boat dock in about half the time it usually takes Asep to drive the same route. Asep gets out of the truck and shakes Marcus's hand rigorously, obviously impressed with his driving. Shimmering waves of heat rise from the truck's engine.

Although there is a boat at the dock, it is not scheduled to leave for Kota Baru until the evening. Marcus negotiates with Asep to release the boat early. He will pay for the unscheduled trip, and the boat can return with plenty of time for the regularly scheduled run.

He also apologizes and gives Asep money when he hands him the broken antenna. What he will not take, however, is the forgetfulness powder in any form—tea, coffee, or water.

Marcus looks closely at Asep, who holds his gaze. Asep stretches out his hand again to Marcus, who shakes it firmly. "Find Mandi," says Asep. Marcus nods.

Marcus, Maria and Barry take a boat to Kota Baru and then fly to Yogyakarta via Kota Baru and Balikpapan. They find that bribes, or 'amplop' as Mandi calls it, smooth their trip to Yogyakarta. They negotiate a direct flight to there from Balikpapan on a two-engine charter plane. The plane's size and direct routing is to their benefit. They arrive in Yogyakarta in only four hours, which they figure is at least an hour or two ahead of Dave.

Unfortunately, they lose their lead-time in Yogyakarta trying to find out where Dave is likely to land his seaplane. When they finally understand where Dave will land, they take a taxi to that location. The taxi driver drops them off at the head of a narrow path, which leads down to the river. They find Dave's seaplane already there, and it is empty.

Upon seeing the vacant seaplane, Maria begins to frantically scan the area with her paravision. She cannot see Dave and the others in the immediate vicinity. However, there are so many people living in single-room hovels over the river, that it is difficult to scan all of them quickly.

Barry is disgusted with the pollution he sees in the water and the smell of garbage. While Maria and Marcus run down the path toward the empty seaplane, Barry remains at the trailhead. To escape the worst of the dirt, he walks up onto the main street, away from the river's stilt houses.

As he sits on a bench, a group of children gather around him. Their clothes are faded and their hair disheveled, but their eyes are bright. "Hello mister," they chant. Barry smiles and asks them if they saw a lady like him. The children laugh. He asks them again if they saw a lady like him, and he points to his white skin. Finally an older child at the back steps forward. He points up the road and says, "Mister."

Barry points up the road and asks "Missus? Taxi?"

"No taxi," says the child, continuing to point up the road.

Barry runs to the trailhead and whistles. When Maria and Marcus look up, he motions wildly. At least it is a start. Mandi was right—nothing goes unnoticed in Indonesia!

While Barry waits for Maria and Marcus, he signals a taxi. They drive slowly up the crowded street, which feeds into a main, four-lane road.

Maria quickly scans the vehicles. She sees Sarif, Dave, Mandi and Elly in a car about half a mile ahead of them.

"They're up ahead—to the right. Right," shouts Mandi pointing to the taxi driver.

The driver slowly signals and pulls into the right-hand lane. Frustrated with the driver's speed, Marcus pushes the accelerator slightly with one of his pseudohands. The driver sits upright. He looks from the road to the speedometer and back to the road, gripping the steering wheel. When they are several car lengths behind them, Marcus releases his pressure.

"At first I thought we should catch Sarif and free Mandi immediately," says Marcus. "But, maybe that's not the best strategy. Sarif is taking them to someone. I think we should find out where they're taking Mandi and then decide how to proceed from there. What do you think?"

Maria and Barry nod. They keep tabs on the car with Mandi's paravision. They pass green rice fields sandwiched among faded wood houses. They also pass large, white tiled mosques whose silver domes glint brilliantly in the sun. Suddenly Maria grabs Marcus's bag and rifles through it.

"That crescent moon," says Maria under her breath. "Look."

Maria flips one of the pirated e-Helpers over. "Look! The same crescent shaped moon!" Maria points from the back of the e-Helper to the nearest mosque top. At the pinnacle of each silver-topped mosque dome is a small star and crescent shaped moon. "It's exactly the same!"

At that moment the car they are following turns left off the main road. Marcus shouts and points, but they are in the wrong lane for a left turn. He has to act fast. He increases his individual time and surveys the traffic around them. They have to cut across a lane without getting hit from a speeding cement truck approaching on a secondary road. They are also boxed in, which means they have to first maneuver out of that tight space.

Marcus quickly maneuvers the car into the left lane and slows the cement truck with his pseudohands. The three of them—Marcus, Maria and Barry—are flung around in the back seat. Likewise, the taxi driver, who is not wearing his seatbelt, is pressed heavily into the driver's side door during the left turn. None of them realize that they would have felt the turn even more if Marcus had not cushioned them with his pseudohands!

Marcus controls the car temporarily, allowing the taxi driver to recover.

"Maria, where have they gone?" asks Marcus.

"They've turned into a gated driveway and are driving down a long, paved road. There's a house in the distance—No, there's a *mansion* in the distance. And there are several other gated mansions in this area hidden behind thick jungle bush," says Maria.

"Boy, look at that mansion," Maria continues. "There is more wealth in that single mansion than the whole village of Tanggar combined, and Tanggar is not a poor village. *And*, that mansion has something very un-Indonesian—western style toilets instead of mandis<sup>46</sup>. We're definitely on to something."

Maria, Marcus and Barry check into a hotel near the mansion. Accommodation is prolific because they are in the vicinity of Borobudur, an 8<sup>th</sup> century temple considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Maria and Marcus insist on a third floor room so Maria has a better view of the mansion. Although trees and a large mosque stand between their room and the mansion, Maria has no problems watching the house. With her paravision she can see through the trees and mosque.

When Maria gets tired from using her paravision to keep surveillance on the house, Barry projects an image of himself, paraBarry, outside the mansion to keep watch. He carries his e-Helper with him and promises to call as soon as anyone leaves the house.

An hour passes and still no one has left the house. ParaBarry can't see anything happening from outside the study window, so he stops his projection. Barry decides to enter the house so he projects his image inside. He is surprised to find a large, brick fireplace.

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<sup>46</sup> Mandi is an Indonesian word for toilet/bathroom. An Indonesian style toilet is often a single hole in the floor beside which are two places to situate the feet.

‘Being so close to the equator, Indonesia never gets cold,’ he thinks. ‘So why would they have such a large fireplace, unless they’re creatures of habit? They have one at home, so they have one here?’

On top of the fireplace are lots of photos. A couple are of a family, but most are of a dozen men in various shots: golfing in Balikpapan, diving at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, yachting, camping and hiking. One shot looks almost surreal. The men are standing and leaning in front of what looks like a large, red cone-shaped mound. The caption at the bottom is handwritten ‘Project Australia, Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory’. Another shot shows the twelve men standing in front of a large pyramid-shaped structure. At the bottom of the picture ‘Borobudur, Indonesia’ is stamped in gold capital letters.

ParaBarry scans the room quickly and then walks toward the door. He listens intently, but hears nothing. He opens the door and walks into the hallway and then explores the entire bottom floor, which contains a large, bright kitchen, an entertainment room with billiard and ping-pong tables and a dartboard, and several meeting rooms. The meeting rooms have exquisite wood furniture.

‘Whoever lives here has excellent and expensive taste,’ thinks paraBarry.

He climbs the tall winding staircase to the second floor. There is a master bedroom and three other rooms that look like they have been used recently. There are several other tastefully decorated rooms with adjoining bathrooms.

‘Why would one house need so many bedrooms and meeting rooms?’ wonders paraBarry. ‘Unless, of course, they host travelers—executive business travelers with expensive tastes.’

ParaBarry cannot figure out where Sarif, Mandi and the others are. They have not left the house, yet they are nowhere inside. From one of the rear-facing bedroom windows he can see a second driveway leading to the mansion. Several cars are parked outside.

"Shit!" says paraBarry. "They could be hours away from us by now." He quickly calls Marcus on his e-Helper.

Using his increased subjective time, Marcus runs to the mansion carrying Maria. He dodges the mosque and sprints across the rice paddies. ParaBarry opens the front door of the mansion.

"Did you *hear* anything?" asks Marcus. "You probably would have heard a car leaving from where you were even if it left from the back of the house."

Before Barry can answer, Maria runs toward them flustered. "I don't know why I didn't see it earlier!" she whispers excitedly. "I focused my eyes on the house—the main house, the upper house. Anyway, there's a lower level and what appear to be a series of tunnels! Some of the tunnels are dark so I can't see anything. But I *can* make out people in the distance in the main tunnel. I can't tell if one of them is Mandi, but I do see people!"

It is their best bet, so they take it. Maria follows the tunnel with her paravision. It appears to lead into the study. They run there and Marcus and paraBarry go directly to the fireplace, the most obvious place to hide a trap door.

"No," says Maria. She points to the adjacent corner of the room where there is a large replica of 'The Thinker', a sculpture by Augusta Rodin.

"Behind there," she says. "And it's clear. There's a tunnel with several offshoots. The main tunnel is dimly lit, but it looks empty, and the offshoots are dark so I can't see down them."

After tapping, pushing and pulling, the door finally opens. They walk quietly into a dimly lit tunnel. Marcus feels the rough rock walls with his pseudohands, guiding them down a tunnel. Suddenly a spotlight blinds them.

"We've been waiting for you," says a Voice.

They hear a crash as a cage structure falls around them. ParaBarry screams as his foot is caught under the iron cage. Marcus quickly lifts the cage off the floor with a pseudohand and frees paraBarry's foot. The spotlight intensifies.

"Did you enjoy your exploration of my house?" the Voice continues.

Since they are blinded, Marcus uses his pseudohands to feel their surroundings. He feels six men running toward their cage, with pistols drawn. They run out of the offshoots connecting to the main tunnel. Maria cannot see the men with her paravision because the tunnels are dark.

"We're surrounded by six men," says Marcus under his breath. "They have pistols aimed at us."

They hear six cartridge clicks and Marcus speeds his subjective time. In just five seconds of clock time he has planned a strategy.

With his increased subjective time he has had the equivalent of thirty 'normal' minutes to weigh his options.

"On the count of three, get out of the cage and the spotlight, and move to the right," says Marcus. "One, two, three..."

Using his pseudohands and his increased subjective time, Marcus bends the cage bars and they escape. He uses six of his pseudohands to knock the pistols from the hands of the men and to push the men into the cage. He bends the bars back and joins paraBarry and Maria in a shadowed side tunnel. He completes the whole whirlwind exercise within seconds.

"Fancy footwork," says the Voice, audibly impressed. "I'll have to replay the tape frame by frame to see how you managed it. Because I'm awed, I'll talk with you a while longer. But remember, you're still uninvited guests."

Marcus steps out into the main tunnel. He uses his pseudohands to surround himself with a protective shield. He does not trust the Voice.

"No superman," says the Voice sarcastically. "All of you, or none of you."

Maria and paraBarry join Marcus. They stand close beside him and Marcus enlarges his radius of protection. When the first bullet hits his pseudohands, Marcus yells, "Go!"

Barry ends his paraprotection, only to re-project himself further into the tunnel. Barry repeats these paraprotection cycles until he comes to a side tunnel beside a largish, lit room.

While Barry is leapfrogging his paraprotection further into the underground labyrinth, Marcus grabs Maria and he sprints through the main tunnel.

Maria grabs onto Marcus's neck and closes her eyes. Marcus feels the heat of Maria's parability rush through his body. He can now use her paravision. Somewhere off the main tunnel Marcus sees Dave, Elly, Sarif and his men. Marcus sprints in that direction. He runs down dead end tunnels and backtracks until he reaches a darkened tunnel close to Elly and the others. He can see movement in a darkened tunnel on the other side of the room and he hopes it is paraBarry, but he has not yet found Mandi.

A gunshot shocks them all. Maria opens her eyes and Marcus can no longer see the room. He has lost his ability to use Maria's paravision. Maria can see that Sarif has shot Elly in the arm.

Elly and Sarif have a sharp exchange of words. As Sarif lifts his pistol again, Maria sees paraBarry materialize to the right of Elly. As a paraprojection, ParaBarry can protect Elly because he can survive a bullet—even a fatal shot—by ending his projection and re-projecting another image of himself.

As predicted, confusion sets in. There are a series of bright flashes that add to the mayhem. During the flashes, Sarif points his gun haphazardly, trying to follow the action. In the chaos, Elly thinks that Dave has stepped in front of Sarif's pistol to protect her. In fact, paraBarry has stepped in front of her. In one swift, smooth movement, Elly sidesteps paraBarry and lunges at Sarif, who shoots. Elly falls backward under a rapid succession of flashes, and a pool of blood seeps out from underneath her body. She has been shot in the stomach.

Elly rolls onto her side and looks up at Sarif. She screams a curse at him. Dave sees Sarif and the other men freeze, and he knows they are feeling the weight of her curse. She screams at Sarif again.

Marcus uses the distraction to run from the tunnel and throw Sarif to the ground, kicking his pistol down a dark tunnel. While Marcus is dealing with Sarif, another gunshot echoes in the tunnel and the flashes cease. ParaBarry has been shot by one of Sarif's men. Barry ends his paraprojection, making paraBarry disappear from sight. Using his pseudohands, Marcus knocks the guns out of the men's hands. He grabs Elly and sprints back into the darkened tunnel where Maria waits, watching the entire horrific scene.

"You have to get Elly to a doctor," she whispers urgently. "Go! I'll be here. Go!"

Marcus cannot leave his wife in this tunnel, and yet Elly has to get to a hospital. He uses his pseudohands in an attempt to hold Elly's wound together, but it is too extensive. He can stop the arterial bleeding, but there is too much damage.

Elly looks up at Marcus. "Mandi, Eko—Mandi, Eko," she repeats until she passes out.

"Go!" hisses Maria.

Marcus sprints faster than he has ever run before. He knows that every second counts. He bursts through the entranceway, knocking the Rodin statue across the room. In the street he panics. He does not know where the nearest hospital is. He runs to the street, shouting, but no one comes to his aid.

He sprints to their hotel, where he knows they speak a little English. The receptionist looks at him in horror when she sees Elly in his arms. She runs into the back room and slams the door. He goes out into the street, to another hotel, but the reaction is the same.

At the fifth hotel, Marcus feels Elly stop breathing. He watches her pensively, using his pseudohands to massage her heart, trying to make it resume its beating, but it is no use. Marcus sits on the floor of the hotel and cries.

After several minutes, Marcus gets up, cradling the dead woman in his arms. He carries her back to the hotel room that he shares with Maria. Marcus flips open his e-Helper and dials.

"Evette, this is Marcus Waller. It's time. How fast do you think you can pull the protest together?"

"I was expecting your call, so I've got everyone on short notice," replies Evette.

"Good. Schedule the protest for tonight at 6:00pm GMT in as many cities as you can. You've got the flyers and information I sent you?"

"Yes," replies Evette. "Is everything OK?"

"No," says Marcus. "But it will be soon. I'll call you later, I have some business to take care of."

Marcus hangs up and knocks on Barry's door. When Barry answers the door, Marcus asks, "Are you all right?"

Barry nods. "And you?"

"Let's go," says Marcus.

Barry puts a fresh set of batteries into his e-Helper and tests the strobe flash again. "Perfect," he says, nodding at Marcus. He projects a new paraBarry image into the tunnel while Marcus sprints toward the mansion.

In the darkened tunnel, Maria watches the confusion in the room next to her. She sees Sarif and his men looking around bewildered. She can imagine that they are in a total state of bewilderment. They fired two bullets and shot two persons, but they have no bodies. And where is the third person, the man who threw Sarif to the ground?

In the confusion, Dave grabs one of the pistols and shoots at the controls of a large metal door.

'Mandi must be in there,' thinks Maria.

Before the lock breaks, one of Sarif's men knocks Dave unconscious with a blow dart. The Voice that 'welcomed' Maria and the others echoes through the room.

"Sarif, what the hell is happening down there!" booms the Voice. "Get up here immediately."

Sarif shouts orders at his men who move toward Dave. Sarif stalks off down a darkened side tunnel. Maria follows him with her paravision. When it is safe, she crosses the corridor and follows him from a distance.

Maria cannot help but think of the Wizard of Oz, a 1939 movie in which a 'great wizard' turns out to be a small man sitting in a central control room, powerless without his gadgets.

'Time to visit the wizard,' thinks Maria.

## 12. The E-Smog Iceberg

*The U.S. President re-plays the message a third time. What do they want now? He has already approved The Cooperative's request for additional land. He even called in a favor owed to him from the Central Intelligence Agency, requesting that they overlook a security breach caused by one of The Cooperative's newest members when she entered the U.S.A. With extremely tight Homeland Security, The Cooperative does not realize the strings he had to pull to get the young woman released from questioning. He had been told that the young woman is the daughter of The Cooperative's mastermind. He had no choice but to get her released uncharged.*

*He knows what turmoil a daughter can create. The calls and messages he has received from The Cooperative lately have to do with his daughter Stephanie. Apparently she has gotten herself involved—again—with a group voicing its dissent to electromagnetic smog. The President cannot help but smile at her persistence and conviction. She will go far in life if she can escape the payback that is a trademark of The Cooperative. She barely survived the car 'accident' that took Ramu's life—will she be as lucky this time?*

*The phone rings again, so he unplugs it. He exits the White House through a secret door, pulling his hat low so as not to be recognized on the street. He needs time to think, not as the President, but as a father...He has been thinking a lot recently about his legacy. He is already more than halfway into his second term, yet he has done nothing memorable as a President or as a father. He decides that he will call Stephanie and give her his unconditional support. It is not exactly how he envisioned his legacy, but it is the right legacy. As a father, it is something that he should have done over ten years ago.*

*March 20, 2014*  
*Borobudur, Java, Indonesia*

ParaBarry's image forms in the darkness of the side tunnel. He glances around, expecting to find Maria waiting, but she is gone. He looks around the corner into the lit room. It is empty except for two guards standing in front of the heavy metal door. ParaBarry is not sure what is on the other side, so Barry ends his paraBarry projection and projects another image onto the other side of the heavy door.

When paraBarry materializes he is standing in the middle of a small, but fairly comfortable room containing a round table, two chairs and a bed. Mandi is lying on the bed. He walks up to her and nudges her, whispering her name, but she does not respond. He puts his hand to her nose and mouth. Mandi's breathing is shallow.

"She's alive if that's what you want to know," says the same Voice that spoke to them in the tunnel. "She was agitated and not particularly cooperative, so we gave her something to calm her down."

ParaBarry stiffens. He looks around the room and locates a small monitoring device. It is set flush into the wall. Several magazines are on the table as are several large plastic bottles of water and an unopened box of granola bars. ParaBarry opens a large bottle of water and takes a couple of swallows. He walks up to the monitoring device and roughly pushes the top of the water bottle into the lens. He hopes that he has smashed the lens or at least has obscured their view, but he does not wait around to find out. Barry ends the paraprojection and re-projects himself back into the darkened side tunnel.

As paraBarry waits for Marcus, he hears Dave shouting in the distance. He shifts slightly to try to see around the corner and kicks something small and light. He reaches down and pats the floor with his hand. He finds a silver Indonesian coin. As he straightens up, he feels someone brush up against him. ParaBarry jerks upright and throws a punch. With his pseudohand, Marcus grabs paraBarry's hand and stops the punch.

"Hey, watch it!" whispers Marcus. "What are you doing? Where's Maria?"

"Sorry," says paraBarry. "Mandi is behind the door in the other room, but I don't know where Maria is. I was just picking a coin up off the floor."

Marcus takes the coin from paraBarry and bends down, crawling away from him, patting the floor. He finds another silver coin. Across the corridor he sees a third.

"It's Maria, I'm sure," says Marcus quickly. "She's been saving coins for Stephan—he loves coins from different countries."

Crossing the lit corridor into the opposite dim tunnel might be tricky. The guards have sat down, leaning their backs against the locked door, facing the corridor. Marcus speeds across the corridor, then turns and tries to reach through Mandi's door with his pseudohands, but he cannot. He knocks on the door, which confirms his suspicions and which distracts the guards. ParaBarry runs quietly across the corridor. Marcus knocks on the heavy metal door again.

'Of course! Lead!' thinks Marcus. He cannot pass his pseudohands through the door because it is made from lead, the only substance that Marcus cannot penetrate with his parability. They will have to find another way into the room, but first they must find Maria.

Both Marcus and paraBarry feel exposed running down the dimly lit tunnel, following the coins. They see a flurry of action down a side corridor. They have locked Dave inside a room similar to that which Mandi is locked in. They hear Dave kicking the door.

After a few more steps, the coins stop. Both Marcus and paraBarry stand still, listening. They faintly hear Maria up ahead. Marcus sprints toward her voice and paraBarry runs behind. Marcus sees Maria in a side tunnel, struggling with several men who drag her toward a room.

"No more," says Sarif. He pulls a sturdy, slim bamboo stick from his back pocket. He fiddles with it, then brings it to his lips, aims and shoots. Maria arches backward and falls to the ground in a limp pile. One of the men pulls a dart from her shoulder blade and throws it toward the rock wall.

Before the men can get a good hold on Maria, they are knocked to the ground by Marcus's pseudohands. When paraBarry arrives he grabs the bamboo stick from Sarif and wrestles him to the ground. Using all of his pseudohands, Marcus drags Sarif and the men into the room and slams the heavy door. He then picks up Maria and cradles her in his arms.

Before they can speak, the Voice booms. "What an encore! You really *must* let me in on your secrets. We could make such a formidable team."

"Marcus, there are monitors here," says paraBarry quietly. "They're about the size of a coin, black, and flush with the wall."

Marcus scans the area with his pseudohands, looking for the monitors. There is a lot of surface to cover, but he recognizes them instantly once he finds them. They feel like small marbles. Marcus finds two monitors: one directly to their left and another in the rock over the door to the room. With two pseudohands, he covers the monitor lenses with two coins.

Unfortunately the coins are too small. Marcus forces the coins into the lenses, smashing them. With a pseudohand he follows one set of wiring into the rock face. His pseudohand twists and turns until it reaches an impasse. Marcus rips out wires trying to get past the blockage. The sparks that hit his pseudohand feel like small painful pinpricks. He thinks that there might be a central monitoring area just beyond the impasse, but he cannot penetrate it.

"Well done. I can't see you now, but don't get carried away with your minor victory," says the Voice, chuckling. "I can still pinpoint your location by tracking your body temperature. Even *you* can't destroy that system. It's built into the rock of the tunnel. But I'm feeling generous about our little 'game'. I guess I'll give you a victory point for destroying the monitor system. That means it is SR Inc.-1, The Cooperative-1. Or should I say The Cooperative-3? Mandi and Dave each count as 1 and Mandi's research counts as another 1. It's a shame Mandi's research is being destroyed as we speak. It looks like *such* a lot of work."

"Come on," says Marcus under his breath. "From the wiring, I think the control room is left of where we are now. I don't know which tunnels will get us there, but head left."

Marcus lifts Maria and then speeds up his subjective time. He dashes up and down tunnels, simultaneously aghast and impressed by the maze of tunnels and rooms. He would love to see a map of them. The rocks feel well worn and the air smells old in places. Marcus wonders what the tunnels have been used for historically and what they are being used for now. He also is perplexed by their use of lead doors.

Marcus arrives in front of a series of doors, each of which is secured with different mechanisms.

"So sorry," says the Voice. "You're not on our database. You'll need the right fingerprint and retina pattern to enter this area, unless, of course, I let you in. But I'm not feeling that benevolent. The ball is back in your court."

While the Voice laughs, Marcus looks around. ParaBarry has not yet arrived. Marcus easily pushes a pseudohand through the first and second doors, sidestepping the security. However, his pseudohand is blocked at the third door, which must be made of lead.

'Another lead door—why do they use lead doors?' Marcus asks himself again. Suddenly it dawns on him... 'I bet they're *also* doing electromagnetic radiation testing here. Lead is one of the only substances that electromagnetic radiation can't penetrate. The jungle facility is not the only research and testing facility. I *need* to explore this tunnel system.'

He feels the edges of the door and the surrounding wall with his pseudohand, seeking an opening—no matter how small—through which he might be able to push his pseudohand. As he does so, he thinks about the precautions SR Inc. has taken against electromagnetic radiation. After they designed and tested the e-Helper, he turned his attention to the impact of electromagnetic radiation on computers. That is how he learned about lead's deflective property.

Marcus insisted that the research lab investigate how to protect the SR Inc. computers and lab equipment from the radiation they generated during their e-Helper testing. When they started investigating the electromagnetic radiation emitted by e-Helpers in the research area, they experienced more than the usual number of server crashes in the computer lab. They also had a sharp increase in what Marcus called 'transient power packets' or transitory, mini power surges. These transient power packets were usually not enough to burn out a surge protector, but they could cause momentary glitches and interfere with the storage of research data.

When they tracked the number of transient power packets, they recorded over 12,000 per month. Since he had not tracked the packets before they began the e-smog research, he could not compare it to a baseline. He could, however, compare it with another computer lab in an adjacent building. They found that the other lab experienced 3,000 transient power packets per month. Although there could be other confounding variables that explained the differences in the numbers, Marcus feels confident that the increased

testing with electromagnetic radiation accounted for the brunt of the increase.

As a result of their experiment, Marcus requested that Klaus investigate a shielding strategy. Since the SR Inc. computer lab is a mission critical operation, they fitted it inside a shielding enclosure. A main component of that shielding is lead. Electromagnetic waves cannot penetrate lead.

The shielding strategy Klaus developed was based on Marcus's existing fascination for lead. He has had an interest in lead and lead alloys since he discovered that his pseudohands could not penetrate them. Right after Marcus realized that he had pseudohands, he spent numerous weeks testing the capabilities and boundaries of those pseudohands. At that time Marcus viewed lead as an annoying barrier. He seemed invincible to everything but lead.

Marcus's view toward lead has changed. As a shielding component in the SR Inc. computer lab, the lead performs beautifully. In his laboratory, lead is a saving barrier. However, as he stands locked out of this tunnel's control center, lead again becomes an exasperating obstacle.

ParaBarry lays a hand on Marcus's shoulder.

"I'm past two security doors, but I'm still looking for an opening around the third door," says a frustrated Marcus.

"Well?" asks the Voice impatiently. "Time's up. Game's over."

"No, the game has just begun," contradicts Marcus. "At 1:00am your time tonight—that's less than seven hours from now, there will be a series of protests held worldwide targeting your illegally produced e-Helpers. The news will be front page tomorrow morning. It should make for good reading."

The Voice sighs. "Ah yes, the 'breach of patent' complaint. We call your patent a monopoly, and we adhere to the philosophy of a free and competitive marketplace. We make e-Helpers accessible to billions who can't afford your prices. I think our case will hold up well—helping the less fortunate you know."

"Don't flatter yourself," says Marcus equally sarcastically. "I don't think the half dozen multinational corporations that make up what you call The Cooperative will be viewed as philanthropic with their product or with their philosophy. You're making money hand over fist from the sales of these illegal e-Helpers. You've cut corners. You've cut quality. And what's worse, you're endangering billions with electromagnetic radiation poisoning."

"You have nothing on us," says the Voice. "You have no photos or evidence. Your and Mandi's research is thorough, consistent, and well done, but careless."

"Careless?" says Marcus offended.

"Yes, careless." The Voice laughs. "Your work is good, pedantic even, but you and Mandi are careless. You leave perfectly good data just lying about in your laboratories. Lab accidents *do* happen you know. Testing subjects, like rats, get viruses and die. Data goes missing...Let's see, as we speak Mandi's data should be almost totally destroyed. Your data should not be far behind."

"You will not be able to penetrate the SR Inc. lab," says Marcus confidently. "And regarding 'carelessness', you've overlooked two aspects that will bankrupt all six of your companies within a matter of months. One—the Unfair Trade aspect, and two—endangering public health by disregarding recommended standards for electromagnetic radiation. When we go public, we will list all six companies. We have documented evidence of dangerously high levels of e-smog and we can tie them directly to your product and your companies. You cannot eliminate the proof that will be released for worldwide distribution. When this news breaks, you and the others can close your doors. Your goods will be boycotted worldwide. You'll be lucky if you're not prosecuted personally in the federal court for negligence."

There is silence. \*

Marcus looks at paraBarry and says quietly. "I think he needs 'convincing'. I'll shield Maria and myself with several pseudohands in case he gets cranky, but I'll continue my dialogue with him. I'll also protect you with several pseudohands for as long as I can. How about creating some convincing chaos?"

ParaBarry smiles then disappears. Marcus rests his pseudohands on paraBarry. His pseudohands take the shape of a protective suit of armor. ParaBarry runs through the tunnels as fast as he can. When he appears alternately in front of Mandi and Dave's doors, the Indonesian guards panic. They shoot at him, but they hit Marcus's pseudohands. The bullets fall to the ground, and paraBarry remains standing before them unhurt. The men assume that this man that cannot be killed must be a ghost!

As paraBarry runs, he explores various sections of the tunnels. There are many men, guards and non-guards, walking in the tunnels. Marcus intermittently hears shouts and shots. He can feel each bullet

when it strikes his pseudohands. ParaBarry is getting out of the range that Marcus's hands can reach, and he knows that he cannot sustain the shield indefinitely. He pinches paraBarry to let him know that he must withdraw his pseudohands.

"I don't know who or what he is, but call him off," shouts the Voice. "This is a business, not a three-ringed circus. And call off your protest, or you'll be leaving without your colleagues."

"We need to negotiate," says Marcus.

"NEGOTIATE! HA!" screams the Voice. "You have nothing to negotiate *with!*"

"Nothing except worldwide coverage in seven hours—no, six hours and forty-five minutes," says Marcus calmly.

As he finishes speaking, a round of bullets hit Marcus's pseudohands. He cannot take the barrage much longer. His parabilities are drained from the day's activities.

ParaBarry, who has returned from his troublemaking, watches Marcus from a distance. To better plan an attack, they need to know what is in that control room. Barry ends his paraprojection and re-projects it into the first secured area, the second area and finally into the third area, which is the control room. He materializes in the center of the room, surrounded by computers, monitors and a skeletal group of Indonesian and Caucasian men all facing outward toward their computers. Without moving or making a sound, paraBarry scans the room.

The room is not unlike the temperature-controlled SR Inc. computer lab. Although the tunnels are cool, they are still humid and somewhat stuffy. Inside the control room, it is cool and dry and the air is crisp and clean. Most of the half dozen men wear sweaters and jackets.

The whiteness of the room is almost blinding, especially when compared with the dimness of the tunnels. Everything is white—the walls, the ceiling, the office chairs and the tabletops. Everything is also immaculately clean. The man who appears to be projecting the Voice sits in a high-backed, leather armchair, so paraBarry cannot see him. Several white jumpsuits hang near a door.

There are Indonesian signs hanging above several distinct sections of the computer lab, but paraBarry cannot read them. Underneath one sign is a grouping of monitors that display various sections of the tunnel.

'The red spots that are moving must be people,' thinks paraBarry. 'That must be the heat tracking system that he referred to.' Under another sign are several monitors, which display nothing. There are burn marks where sparks must have blown out the system. 'That must be the monitoring system that Marcus ruined with his pseudohands.'

Several high-powered pocket computers make up a third section. They fit the description that Mandi gave of a similar set up of pocket computers in the jungle facility. Data is slowly but consistently scrolling down the large screens. There are five other clusters of computers, all of which have large backup systems.

ParaBarry has seen enough, so Barry ends his paraprojection and re-projects himself back to where Marcus is standing, still holding Maria in his arms. He wants to interrupt Marcus to tell him what he has seen, but Marcus and the Voice are in the midst of a heated discussion.

"I don't believe you," says the Voice. "Name them."

"It wasn't too hard," continues Marcus. "We pulled apart one of your e-Helpers, analyzed the components and then tracked the individual components back to the companies. As you know, our industry is relatively small. We also have excellent analysis equipment."

When Marcus talks about analysis equipment, he means Maria's paravision. Her ability to use her eyes not only like binoculars but also like a microscope has saved them hours and even days in analysis time. Marcus never speaks about Maria's paravision to anyone outside of SR Inc., but he often wishes he could. She has refined her parability to an art.

Marcus can sense that the Voice is teetering on the edge of agreeing to negotiate. The accusations of Unfair Trade pack a financial blow that no company has survived. Add to that the accusation of endangering public health and the companies will certainly be dealt a deathblow. Proof of the top executives' personal liability will almost certainly follow the collapse of the businesses.

Marcus decides to play his final, trump card. "While you're doing time in federal prison, I'll be cleaning up behind The Cooperative both literally and financially. We have a product nearing the testing stage that people will be able to add to their e-Helpers to drastically reduce the level of emitted electromagnetic radiation. We're in the process of looking for a production partner."

Marcus hopes that the Voice will take the bait. Philosophically, Marcus cannot partner with The Cooperative as it currently exists. The members of The Cooperative are not only endangering lives—possibly contributing to the deaths of electrosensitives and others as they speak—but Marcus also holds the Voice personally responsible for Elly's death.

The Cooperative is an anomaly, a mutant, a destructive offshoot of what are otherwise highly responsible companies. Marcus's research into the large multinationals comprising The Cooperative has revealed that the other products developed by them are environmentally sound. Marcus will feign a business interest to get them hooked, then he will not only clean-up the 'dirty dozen', but he will also make sure that they are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

There is silence in the tunnel. Marcus waits and then says, "Oh, did I forget to mention the *full* financial impact of the e-Helper add-on? It's got potential for not only e-Helpers, but for all electronic devices—basically anything that emits electromagnetic radiation. The financial implications are staggering."

He will give the Voice ten minutes to decide before he leaves. He keeps thinking about the threat the Voice gave regarding the attack on their laboratories. Were the words an empty threat, or was he telling the truth? Marcus is confident that SR Inc. can abort an attempted raid on their laboratory, but he is not confident that Mandi's laboratory will be prepared against such an assault. He needs to contact Klaus at SR Inc. and Kevin in Mandi's laboratory to alert them to the possibility.

Mandi's university laboratory, which is normally bustling with activity, is unusually silent. There are no noises—no sounds of scampering rat feet and no buzzing of computer equipment. Inside the cleanly kept cages are the limp bodies of dozens of white rats once used as subjects for their electromagnetic radiation trials. Kevin, the laboratory assistant, will find their dead bodies in the morning, and he will determine, after much testing, that a strange virus somehow infected the entire test subject contingent.

However, there will be a lot of things that Kevin won't be able to explain. When he comes into the laboratory in the morning, he will find that all their data is corrupted. Panicking, he will call the university's Information Technology (IT) department, which will

respond quickly, but ineffectively. They will be unable to assist Kevin. They will blame the data loss on a virus that somehow got into their system because corporate espionage won't enter their minds. The IT department will also discover that their backups have been misplaced.

During the course of the day Kevin will come to the realization that the laboratory was specifically targeted and ransacked. He will discover that whole sets of files are missing, including their nearly finished grant proposals. He will be at a loss as to what to do, and he will decide to answer Marcus's voice message because Mandi's e-Helper is not responding.

"If you'll excuse me," says Marcus to the Voice. "I need to make a few calls. In thirty minutes the mass production of the protest flyers start. The signs are already being made. They identify the six companies involved in big bold letters."

Marcus nods at paraBarry and quietly asks him to meet him at the tunnel's entrance. Marcus wants to force the Voice into decision. At the entrance the Voice can still track him and Maria on the heat tracking system, so he can still concede to a meeting at that point. But Marcus, Maria and paraBarry will be able to make a quick exit from there if necessary.

The bluff works. Within seconds of reaching the entrance, the Voice speaks, "Let's talk. But you need to call off the protest before we do so."

"No," says Marcus. "The protest stays. I will postpone it, but I need a show of good faith from you. You have to release Mandi and Dave."

The Voice's laugh echoes through the tunnels. Even Maria stirs in Marcus's arms at the sound of the bellowing laughter.

"You can have Dave. He's worth nothing to me, but Mandi has value. She can't speak against us in court if...well, an accident befalls her. No, Mandi stays with us."

"Then Mandi comes to the negotiation," says Marcus. "Along with two men from each of the companies. You know the men—they're in the photos."

"Your negotiation will have to wait for at least twenty-four hours. I need that amount of time to review your product that you speak of, which, of course, you'll deliver to me."

"I'll give you a generic description of the add-on and no more," says Marcus. "Mandi and the twelve men have to attend."

"You can't possibly believe that twelve busy executives will drop everything they are doing for some nobody from New Zealand whose data evidence is being destroyed as we speak. Let's be realistic, shall we?" says the Voice, his arrogance back in full force.

"Your choice. Either I get a confirmation from each of them personally in two hours or the protest goes ahead as planned. Several of the executives can videoconference in, if necessary, but I want a majority to be present."

As Marcus and the Voice continue to negotiate, Dave walks toward them escorted by four armed guards. When the men see paraBarry, they stop dead in their tracks and raise their guns. Marcus can see that their arms are shaking.

"Call them off! How can I trust that you'll do as we agree when you can't even control your own people!" screams Marcus. He is tired and he knows that his parabilities are nearing their limits.

The Voice speaks quickly and loudly in Indonesian. The men lower their guns and take several steps backward.

"Agreed," says Marcus. "We'll see you in exactly twenty-four hours. I will postpone the protest temporarily and you must guarantee Mandi's safety and appearance at the negotiation."

When they leave the mansion and walk toward the hotel, Marcus makes several quick calls. He calls Evette to discuss their situation. She agrees with Marcus's suggestion to keep everyone on standby for 24-32 hours. She warns him that they may lose protesters, but Marcus says that they have to take the risk. Next Marcus calls Klaus.

Klaus has an odd story to tell. Sandra surprised him by coming by the SR Inc. computer laboratory to pick him up for dinner. The day was rainy and cold, and she had decided that they needed a hot meal at one of their favorite restaurants. Sandra was looking provocative in a navy blue dress that she had recently bought, so they did not exactly make it out of the laboratory as quickly as planned.

"In the middle of things," continues Klaus rather embarrassed, "we heard someone trying to get into the lab. They were trying to bypass the security, which I hadn't yet activated. Sandra's parabilities kicked in immediately.

"Sandra read the emotions of the intruders and told me that they were particularly evil. She insisted that I push the high alert button

immediately," says Klaus. "Within seconds, all the laboratory doors and windows locked down and the lights switched on. Sandra and I hid under my desk. Luckily my door locked along with the rest because Sandra feared that the intruders would act rashly if they saw us. They ran around the lab like caged rats trying to escape. Within minutes the police escorted them out. We got a good look at them, but I've never seen them before, and they weren't talking."

"That means he wasn't lying," says Marcus. "Klaus, I have to get Kevin's contact details from you as quickly as possible. If they tried to hit our lab, I'm sure they've tried to get into Mandi's lab."

Marcus gets no answer when he rings Kevin's e-Helper. He sends him an urgent e-mail, but gets no reply. Marcus does not know that Kevin purposely leaves his e-Helper in his car. As a result of all the electromagnetic radiation research that he is doing, he seldom carries his e-Helper anymore, and he checks his e-mail messages only once a day.

The twenty-four hours before the negotiation pass quickly. Maria wakes up with an incredible headache and rests on the couch in the hotel room. Marcus insists that she drink several bottles of water to flush out the poison in her system.

Police arrive at Marcus's hotel room shortly after they get there. Word has spread quickly about Elly's death. Dave talks with the police and goes with them to complete the paperwork, using his connections, fluency in Indonesian and Marcus's amplot to smooth-out the process.

Once Dave and Marcus get back, Dave immediately leaves for Yogyakarta where he will pick up his seaplane and fly Elly's body back to Palankaraya. He insists on returning for the negotiation. He will bring support back with him in the form of Dayaks, whom he knows the Javanese—the local men working for Sarif and the others—fear.

"There are many angles to fight this," says Dave, "and we have to use them all. I want Mandi getting out of this alive."

Marcus wants the negotiation to be held at a neutral public location. However, the mansion is the only place with state-of-the-art virtual teleconferencing facilities. Dave's comment about fighting this battle from all angles available inspires Marcus, and he makes a few calls back to New Zealand.

Marcus, Maria and paraBarry arrive for the negotiation escorted by two embassy cars, and they are not empty handed—they have Marcus's evidence with them. "I'd like to introduce you to representatives from the New Zealand embassy," says Marcus, smiling.

Thanks to Jenny, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Marcus has reinforcements. Jenny has pulled strings in Jakarta to not only get Marcus embassy representatives, but also Indonesian 'bodyguards'. Jenny has also tried to call in a favor owed her from the Australian Prime Minister, but he has not returned her call. She finds this strange, considering the friendly alliance between the two countries, and tells Marcus that she will follow it up until she gets an acceptable answer. In the meantime, she has let her aids know that any call from Marcus should be transferred to her immediately, no matter where she is or what she is doing.

Marcus invites the embassy representatives and bodyguards into the mansion to wait in an adjoining meeting room. A member of The Cooperative who is there to greet them is visibly annoyed at the unexpected guests. He cannot ask the 'guests' to leave because that would appear suspicious. Likewise, nothing untoward can happen during the course of the day. They cannot risk inciting an international incident.

"Welcome to our estate," says the man flatly.

Marcus immediately recognizes the man as the Voice they heard in the tunnel. Marcus is disappointed. He expected the Voice to have a large, stately presence; instead, the Voice, whose name is Max Turner, is small framed and bookish looking. He wears unusual green wire glasses.

After making the guests comfortable for what might be a long day's meeting, Marcus, Maria, paraBarry and Max go to a large conference room. Mandi as well as seven members of The Cooperative are already seated there. Although Mandi looks tired and somewhat bruised, she appears otherwise fine. They call the other four members of The Cooperative and hook them into a videoconference call. While the connections are going through, Marcus sets up a fifth screen and calls Klaus, who is at the SR Inc. laboratory in Auckland. Dave has not yet returned from Palankaraya.

Since they have entered the room, Marcus notices that Mandi is preoccupied. She has been staring at the man sitting at the far corner

of the table. Mandi speaks in an astonished and betrayed tone: "Dr. Schuler? Dr. Lawrence Schuler?"

Marcus does a double take. Dr. Schuler is the researcher who picked up on Dr. Ramu Visra's electromagnetic research after he died. The last time Marcus saw him he had thick glasses, short white hair and was clean-shaven. Now he has long black hair and sports a trim mustache and contacts—but it *is* Dr. Lawrence Schuler!

After a moment of silence, Mandi says, "I should have known. Now that I think about it, the research in the jungle facility—it had all the signs of *your* work, your trademark trial parameters—they were familiar because of the time we worked together, but I just couldn't place them at the time. How can you professionally condone not only the production of pirated e-Helpers, but any other electronic product, when you *know—you have research to prove it*—that their combined impact has serious health implications! I guess I didn't know you like I thought I did..."

It is Marcus's turn to make a second, disturbing connection regarding Dr. Schuler. "And you assisted in the confidential review of SR Inc. e-Helpers because of your position on New Zealand's Committee of Electromagnetic Smog Deterrence. That is how the e-Helper specifications got out—except you did it on the cheap, which explains your outrageous e-smog ratings."

The meeting has opened on a distasteful note. Everyone at the table is introduced, with the exception of Dr. Schuler—he needs no further introduction. The conversation is stilted and stiff. Everyone sits up very straight and any eye contact is fleeting. The distrust in the room is tangible. Since no one from The Cooperative—including Dr. Schuler, who refuses to make eye contact with Marcus or Mandi—is forthcoming with information, Marcus starts the dialogue.

"Let's start off with a snapshot of where we are today. I think our research clearly speaks of the situation and the necessity for change," says Marcus.

Max cuts off Marcus. "Our research?"

"Yes, Mandi's university research and the SR Inc. research," says Marcus.

"I heard through the grapevine," says Max ironically, "that there were some very unfortunate and untimely 'accidents' at the university laboratory recently. Oh, sorry, Mandi—you aren't aware of what happened? Well, in brief, your rats died from some strange virus, and your data has been corrupted. I couldn't believe it when I

heard that your IT department couldn't locate a backup. Very unfortunate indeed."

Mandi feels a nauseating sense of déjà vu. Her mind flashes back to when she walked onstage at an electromagnetic radiation conference in Colorado. She had to tell an audience of academics that their keynote speaker, Dr. Ramu Visra, had been killed in a car accident en route to the conference from the airport. She later learned that Ramu's data was lost in a similar laboratory 'accident'. Might this group, The Cooperative, have masterminded that as well?

"I'm sorry Mandi," says Marcus quietly. "I got a call from Kevin today. What Max says is true. It's all gone—electronic data, backups, hard copy files, everything."

The color drains from Mandi's face. She, Kevin, and everyone in the university laboratory have done so much work the past three months. Their preliminary data is consistent with the SR Inc. preliminary data and they had solid project foundations. Within seconds Mandi's shock turns to anger.

"I took my key data with me," Mandi virtually spits at Max. "You don't have everything."

"Temper, temper," says Max with a smirk. "Unfortunately, 'accidents' do happen all over the world. Perhaps that is why Dave is late. I heard through that same grapevine that Dave had a break-in a couple of nights ago. His place was turned upside down and lots of things were stolen. When you see him, please pass on my condolences to him as well."

Marcus tries to keep the meeting going. Like Mandi, he is appalled at the unscrupulous lengths to which The Cooperative goes to protect its interests. But Marcus knows one thing that Mandi does not. He already has SR Inc. employees piecing together as much of Mandi's research as they can based on the reports and e-mails that she and Kevin have sent them over the past two and a half months. Marcus has already pulled together the stats that Mandi sent him at a summary level, and he has incorporated them into his documentation, which will be released at the protests. It is not complete, but it still paints a horrendous picture.

Marcus gives a summary of the SR Inc. research findings. He also hands out a single double-sided piece of paper that he calls his 'one-two punch'. This document contains a compilation of preliminary data from the labs of SR Inc., Mandi's university, and the jungle facility. The message contained in the simple figures is

clear: the illegal e-Helpers are a public health hazard. The document also clearly states that the e-Helpers are just the tip of the iceberg. A second will be released shortly with the most frightening and damaging data...

"This is the info that will be distributed tonight if we do not reach an agreement," says Marcus. "If my contact does not hear from me at a predetermined time, this info will be in the hands of every major television network around the world and every person that the protesters can reach. Believe me when I say they can reach thousands, if not millions, of people."

This information hits everyone like a bombshell. Marcus looks at Mandi, who smiles at him. He points to a summary of her data, and she gives him the thumbs up sign. She mouths the word 'Evette' to Marcus and he nods discretely. Marcus has spoken with Evette, and he is confident that if anyone can pull off a successful protest, she can. She was extremely passionate about the topic in his first, extended phone conversation with her and she sounds unstoppable.

Marcus can see that not all of the members of The Cooperative have been kept fully informed. Five of them sitting at the table, including Dr. Schuler, are visibly disturbed. Marcus catches Mandi's eye again and she nods at him. They have found a wedge to create dissent inside The Cooperative. They will focus on unraveling the ties that bond them.

Mandi, Marcus and Klaus field questions and attacks. At least three members of The Cooperative are obviously researchers. With pointed questions, they grill Marcus and Klaus on their research methodology. They try desperately to discredit the SR Inc. research.

In the middle of the discussion, Dave enters the room. He carries with him a large briefcase. After scanning the room, he walks over to Mandi and parks the case next to her chair.

"You forgot this in Palankaraya. I thought you might need it." He winks at Mandi.

Mandi gasps, "My research data! Max said your house and my data—"

"You'll be getting an itemized bill for the damages to my house," says Dave to Max before sitting down next to Marcus.

Dave smiles to himself and thinks. 'Who in their right mind would do gardening in the middle of the night, unless they wanted to bury something in the garden?' Dave looks across the table at Mandi, who has emerged from the briefcase with a handful of documents.

With her data in hand, Mandi feels her confidence and energy levels rise. She and Marcus share the discussion and defense of their data, while simultaneously trying to unravel the bond between the members of The Cooperative. Mandi brings her experience with companies accused of Unfair Trade to the discussion. The precedent is unfavorable for The Cooperative and its executive members.

Mandi also brings up her research into items other than e-Helpers—electronic gadgets that Marcus mentioned earlier. This is where she believes the members of The Cooperative will really be hung out to dry. They have knowingly withheld information that has endangered all of society.

When the data discussion slows, Marcus asks Klaus to present their ingenious e-Helper add-on that will block the electromagnetic radiation emitted from the pirated e-Helpers. This add-on is not meant to be a permanent fix. Instead it is a stopgap to buy The Cooperative time to recall its e-Helpers because they are still in breach of patent laws. It also gives SR Inc. time to more fully test the add-ons with *all* products that emit electromagnetic radiation.

“The add-on will be effective,” says Marcus. “But that does not get you off the hook. The Cooperative *must* replace all illegally produced e-Helpers with SR Inc. e-Helpers to be in compliance with patent laws.”

Marcus explains to the group that even if SR Inc. increases their e-Helper production facility to run 24/7, they won't be able to produce the number The Cooperative needs fast enough. In the interim, The Cooperative can partner with SR Inc. to produce the add-on. The Cooperative can assume the production costs as well as distribute the add-ons through already-established channels.

Klaus reemphasizes that the e-Helper add-on is targeted for a much broader market, including products like TVs, washers, dryers, computers, laptops, blenders, coffee makers, and other electrical appliances used by people around the world everyday.

Closing this part of the discussion, Marcus tells the group that the add-on directly addresses the health alarms being raised by their research, namely the harmful, even dangerous, levels of e-smog in the air surrounding everyone. This e-smog impacts the physical and emotional well being of *everyone*, not just electrosensitives. Small levels of e-smog compound, impacting *everyone's* health in often invisible *but very real* ways.

Throughout the discussion Maria takes copious notes. Although Max and the other members think she is taking minutes of the meeting, she is not. Maria uses her paravision to read the notes being written by The Cooperative members. Reading their comments might provide them with a bargaining angle later in the negotiations. It will also help them discern which members of The Cooperative are fully aware of the group's schemes and which are implicated through association only.

About 4:00pm, the group takes a break. Marcus's group walks outside the mansion escorted by the embassy representatives and several of the bodyguards. They have two more hours before Evette sets the protest in motion. At that point, they won't be able to pull out.

"They think they're untouchable," says Maria. "They're relying on their size, and I'm afraid they have a point. The biggest weapon we have is the international protest, but we do have another angle—internal disgust. I've seen from the notes of several members that they have not been told the truth about the e-Helper product. They thought they were a distributor for the SR Inc. product. And those same members are certainly unaware of the health implications and jungle research facility. I'm sure they know nothing of Elly's death. If we can continue to break apart the group's loyalty, we're in. They'll self destruct."

As they re-read Maria's notes, solidifying a strategy to further splinter the group, paraBarry excuses himself to do 'reconnaissance'. He knows that Max has gone into the master bedroom upstairs, so Barry re-projects his image into the bedroom's walk-in closet. ParaBarry hears Max pacing the room. He can see the back of him as he stops occasionally to write on a piece of paper. After a couple of minutes, he picks up his e-Helper and dials.

"Peter? Max here. Sell it all. What do you mean, 'Am I sure?'" Within the hour—I want to be able to access my account and see that it is sold. You know which account to roll the cash into."

Max abruptly hangs up and turns toward the walk-in closet. ParaBarry hears Max approaching, so Barry ends the paraprojection and re-projects paraBarry downstairs with Marcus and the others. ParaBarry relays the news to them. The information can certainly give an extra push to splinter the group. Had paraBarry stayed in the room, he would have heard a second, equally interesting conversation.

"Peter? Yes, Max again. One more thing—I'd like you to deliver the contents of the safety deposit box—the documents for the Australian research facility—to my daughter Samantha. She's probably still on site overseeing the construction. In the deposit box there is a power of attorney that transfers everything to her—it just needs to be dated. Finalize the transfer documents then store them in a different deposit box under her name. The facility is close to completion, which means we'll split that facility off from The Cooperative, like we did with the U.S. facility. Under the law it will then be a separate legal entity, but we need to complete the transfer specifics ASAP. Tell her I'll call her soon"

Another hour of negotiation leads them nowhere. Mandi's mediation skills considerably widen the gap among the members, but their bond has not completely severed. The five members that Marcus and Mandi are targeting still obviously do not know the full extent of the other members' unethical and immoral actions. Marcus nods to Mandi, then gets up.

Marcus surprises the group when he logs into the internet on his e-Helper and projects the image on one of the big screens. He asks Max to share his latest stock transaction for his company with the rest of the group.

The members of The Cooperative look around the table. Max throws Marcus an angry look.

"Max is jumping ship—he's leaving the rest of you to take the financial hit," accuses Marcus.

Max disagrees, but there is enough suspicion that Dr. Schuler insists he display his account if he has nothing to hide. Max's face is composed, but his hand shakes slightly as he takes the e-Helper from Marcus.

Max logs into his account and displays the relevant shares. He sighs in relief when he sees that the transaction has not yet registered in his account. Max asks Marcus smugly if there is anything else he would like to see. Perhaps they would like to display Marcus's personal accounts? As Max harangues Marcus, they all witness the real time sale of Max's shares. His share balance goes to zero. His cash value increases by just over \$1.5 million. It is Marcus's turn to smile.

There is silence in the room.

"And, yes, thank you for asking Max," says Marcus. "There is one other thing I would like to share."

Marcus hands the e-Helper to paraBarry, who accesses an SR Inc. server.

"I've downloaded these images to our server for safekeeping, so please bear with me a moment," says paraBarry. While he fiddles with the device, five colleagues throw daggered looks at Max and two of their colleagues. Their online colleagues offer no comment. "Ah, here it is," says paraBarry, playing a video recording of what looks like a scuffle. "I recorded this when we were in your tunnel system below the house. Please excuse the quality of the recording but I was using my strobe flash to add light to the dark tunnel. There it is, that's what I want—I'll freeze those frames and play them separately. That's Elly being shot and killed, and that's me being shot."

"But you're—" says Dr. Schuler, looking confused.

"Yes, I had a bullet-proof vest on, so I wasn't mortally wounded," lies paraBarry. "Elly, however, died shortly after her gunshot wound."

Mandi tries to stifle a sob, but it escapes her. Her shoulders shake. Max excuses himself and quickly walks toward the door. When he opens it he finds the bodyguards standing side by side, guns drawn. Max closes the door, slowly turns around, then returns to his seat.

Dr. Schuler speaks up. "Please excuse us for a few minutes," he says, dismissing all but The Cooperative members.

When Marcus and the others return to the meeting room, there is silence and pale faces. The men have physically moved to different sides of the room: Max and two colleagues on one side, and Dr. Schuler and four colleagues on the other.

Marcus nods to the bodyguards who enter the room with guns ready. Max stands up quickly, yelling in Indonesian at the men, who lower their guns and look uncertainly from Max to Marcus. Just as quickly Dave gets up and shouts over the top of Max. As Dave speaks, he runs toward a window and pounds on it. The faces of several men—Dayak men—appear at the meeting room windows. Dave paces behind the bodyguards, speaking loudly and pointing at the faces looking in. The bodyguards look at the windows and then look quickly away, aiming their guns at Max and the others. They do not move their eyes. They do not even blink.

"Before we break up the party for good," says Marcus, "I've got one more surprise." He calls Evette and asks her if he can hook her in through a speakerphone.

The static and background noise almost drowns out Evette's excited voice. "We're on—no, ahead of schedule," says Evette. "We didn't hear from you, so we started. There's an incredible momentum here, unlike any I've seen. And, you won't believe who has agreed to be our lead spokesperson on this protest—Stephanie McGrath, the U.S. President's daughter! She has been working in the trenches like I have for years, just waiting for the right moment, and she agrees that the time is ripe. These companies better buckle down for the ride because it'll be all over the press in less than six hours."

Marcus deliberately does not put Evette on a videoconference connection because he wants to protect her identity temporarily from these men. She will be a public figure soon enough. His precautions, however, do not succeed. One man in the room, Peter Birch, a Vice President for Finance for one of the implicated corporations, recognizes the voice of his daughter Evette.

Marcus takes a sweeping look at the grand mansion's expensive furnishing, and then looks at the men who built it. Three members, Max included, are handcuffed and guarded at gunpoint. The other five members—also at gunpoint—are being escorted out. Marcus watches as the remote members on the telescreens are handcuffed and then taken into custody by police. One by one the teleconference screens go black. The verdict is clear. In Indonesia, the land of possibilities, even the impossible can happen.

Only two days have passed since the headlines spread like wildfire around the globe: six large multinational corporations are accused of Unfair Trade and negligence for endangering public health. Protesters and angry groups of health professionals have distributed SR Inc. and Mandi's documented proofs worldwide. It is also readily available to everyone on the protesters international web page.

Additionally, a much-anticipated report, namely a summary of The Cooperative's long-term jungle trials researching the cumulative effects of electromagnetic smog, will be distributed within six months in the *International Medical Association's* prestigious, peer-reviewed monthly journal. This summary will be followed by a longer, exhaustive report on the e-smog findings. The summary and

the longer report are much anticipated because of the length of the trials and because of their sweeping accusations: *e-smog impacts not only electrosensitives, but everyone.*

An international panel led by Mandi has already been formed to investigate the scientific and patent accusations against The Cooperative. Off the record, the lawyer for Dr. Lawrence Schuler, the lead researcher of the jungle facility, has volunteered his client's services to the panel in order to gain a lessened sentence.

The Cooperative members, no longer a coherent group, are each seeking legal counsel. The accusations are many, the *least* of which is patent infringement and Unfair Trade. The allegations of murder of not only Elly, but also a Dayak boatman and Dr. Ramu Visra are severe. If implicated, the men face the death sentence. The men are trying desperately to get their trial venue moved to anywhere but Indonesia, where they fear their cases will not have a chance of getting to trial. They know that the wrath of the Indonesian public will reach them even in their jail cells. The Indonesian public is outraged that The Cooperative used their country as a dumping ground for a product that endangered their lives.

Mandi's research has thrust her into the limelight, and many are calling her the next Dr. Ramu Visra. She is a researcher dedicated to her profession and to humanity. Mandi has received pledges of support from many unexpected sources, including Stephanie McGrath, the President's daughter, who has volunteered to work with Mandi to help her answer the hundreds of phone calls, e-mails and letters that she receives daily. These communications make it clear that the public does not want this important research to be aborted or sidelined as it was a decade ago. The public is better informed and is adamant about investigating e-smog, a silent, but pervasive poison.

SR Inc. remains out of the media spotlight by choice. It is seldom mentioned in connection with e-smog research or The Cooperative. To keep attention away from themselves and their parabilities, Marcus provides Mandi with any necessary data and information, but he leaves the press conferences to her.

On the behalf of SR Inc., Marcus has agreed to partner with Mandi in the upcoming e-smog analysis and trials. Kevin and Evette, Mandi's newest research assistant, will work closely with Klaus, who will not only oversee the trials but also act as their mentor. Additionally Marcus and Klaus plan to finish testing the new add-on

product. The add-on is receiving an inordinate amount of press as it is expected to protect the public from the hazardous, and sometimes deadly, impact of e-smog.

Dave prepares his house for a visit from Mandi who will be arriving in four days. Eko helps him fix up what Max's men have destroyed. The physical work helps Dave think clearly about his new 'family': Eko and Mandi. Elly had talked with Dave before their trip and she had asked him to convey her wishes to Mandi. If anything happened to her, she wanted Mandi to look after Eko. Dave asked Elly to stop talking nonsense—he insisted that nothing would happen to her. But Elly insisted they have the conversation. She told Dave of her premonition of seeing her own son soon. Dave told Mandi about his discussion with Elly, and when he asked if he could be part of the Mandi-Eko family, Mandi cried.

Mandi looks forward to taking a lead role on The Cooperative's investigative panel. The position requires her to spend a significant amount of time in Kalimantan. Since the position is internationally prestigious, the university has agreed to provide her with lecturing and administrative support. Additionally, the grants create many opportunities for research not only inside the laboratory but also outside it. She is confident that she can become fluent in Indonesian within a year, especially with Dave and Eko's help. It is not the family she imagined, but it is a family that she wants to be a part of.

In the upcoming months, the deserted jungle facility in Kalimantan as well as the tunnels near Borobudur in Java will reveal many secrets. Marcus will be able to explore the tunnels and will be amazed at their complexity and uses.

Mandi and her investigative team will uncover a network of money laundering and exploitation within The Cooperative unlike any unveiled before. However, they will unknowingly overlook many 'offshoots' of The Cooperative. Max has been ingenious in structuring The Cooperative, ensuring its life far beyond his own...

While investigating the jungle facility, Eko will lead Mandi and Dave to many special jungle spots. He will show them his favorite hideaway—his secret garden, a towering shelter of trees near the jungle facility.

Through Eko's eyes, Mandi will come to see the Giant Tree shelter as a quiet sanctuary, but she will also see it through her own, researcher's eyes. In her field book, Mandi will take a note of the

unusual height, abnormal rings and distended leaves. She will collect specimens for research.

Looking at the abnormal jungle trees will remind Mandi of the unusually large trees in Jabiru, and the research she did on them that was lost when The Cooperative ransacked her university laboratory. She will make a mental note to further investigate the Jabiru trees, and she will remember that they were located near large satellite dishes and generators...Mandi will shudder with a bone-chilling intuition that the impact of electromagnetic radiation on humans is only the tip of the e-smog iceberg....

## Appendix: A Sampling of Relevant Resources

Since e-Smog (electronmagnetic pollution) is a fairly contentious topic we want to make clear that there are serious scientists who are indeed not just concerned about e-Smog but believe that they evidence that e-Smog can be dangerous. To impress this, and the fact that this novel is very much based on real issues we have collected a few references for your information.

Ann Backhaus and Hermann Maurer, March 2005

Special thanks to Professor Dr. Max Moser (Graz Medical University) and JOANNEUM RESEARCH Graz for assistance in compiling resources.

Adey, WR. "Electromagnetic fields, the modulation of brain tissue functions – A possible paradigm shift in biology." *International Encyclopedia of Neuroscience*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., B Smith and G Adelman Eds.

The author starts with a description of the earth's natural phenomena: the "sea" of natural low-frequency electromagnetic (EM) fields (existing between the earth's surface and the ionosphere) and the earth's larger static geomagnetic field. He then brings in the 'unnatural:' microwaves, electric power (dishwashers, hair dryers, etc). After setting the stage, the author looks at the impact of electromagnetic fields on brain function, bringing into the discussion the emerging area of bioelectromagnetics.

Adey, WR, "Brain interactions with RF/microwave fields generated by mobile phones." *International Encyclopedia of Neuroscience*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., B Smith and G Adelman Eds.

When hand-held and operated close to the head, 40% of radiated phone energy from a typical mobile phone is absorbed into the head and hands of the user. ([Kuster et al., 1997]). The author describes the impact of microwave phone fields on our cognitive performance, as well as the

impact of cerebral blood flow during and after mobile phone use.

*Bioelectromagnetics Newsletter: A Publication of the Bioelectromagnetics Society,*  
[www.bioelectromagnetics.org](http://www.bioelectromagnetics.org).

This newsletter includes interesting articles, editorials/opinions, and relevant IEEE information on bioelectromagnetics. For example, in the March/April 2003 newsletter (No 171), DL Henshaw writes about his mechanistic approach to the magnetic field health issue (Opinion section). He also lists several melatonin suppression references.

Cherry, N. "Evidence that electromagnetic fields from high voltage powerlines and in buildings, are hazardous to human health, especially to young children."  
Environmental Management and Design Division,  
Lincoln University, New Zealand.

The author makes a link between childhood leukemia and electric wiring in homes: "... childhood leukemia is causally related to residential exposures to electromagnetic fields produced by domestic wiring and appliances and significantly elevated by proximity to high voltage powerlines."

Christensen, HC, et al. "Cellular Telephone Use and Risk of Acoustic Neuroma." *American Journal of Epidemiology* 159 (2004):277-283.

In this Danish study, the authors look at the possible link between mobile phone use and acoustic neuroma. They found that long-term users of mobile phones (10+years) did not have increased risk of acoustic neuroma over short-term users. Additionally, tumors were not noted to

occur more frequently on the side of the head on which mobile phones are typically used.

Feychting, M, et al. "Paternal Occupational Exposures and Childhood Cancer." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 109, no. 2 (Feb. 2001):193-196.

The objective of this study was to test the hypothesis that paternal occupational exposure near conception increases the risk of cancer in the father's offspring. The main findings found "an increased risk of nervous system tumors related to paternal occupational exposure to pesticides, solvents, and work as a painter, and an increased risk of leukemia related to paternal occupational exposure to textile dust, wood work, and sales work."

Graham-Rowe, D. "'Conclusive' study of cell phones fuels controversy." *New Scientist*: [www.NewScientist.com](http://www.NewScientist.com) (21 Dec 2004).

This article summarizes a European-funded study aimed at determining whether electromagnetic radiation emitted by mobile phones and power lines can affect human cells even when operating at energy levels thought to be 'harmless.' Project Leader Franz Adlkofer of the Verum Foundation in Munich, Germany, states:

"Electromagnetic radiation of low and high frequencies is able to generate a genotoxic effect on certain but not all types of cells and is also able to change the function of certain genes, activating them and deactivating them."

Hyland, G. "The Physiological and Environmental Effect of Non-Ionising Electromagnetic Radiation." Directorate General for Research-Directorate A. Scientific and Technological Options Assessment. Options Brief and Executive Summary PE nr. 297.574 March 2001.

This document opens with policy options for both the European Parliament and for the European Commission. The Executive Summary states: "A major contemporary threat to the health of Society is man-made 'electrosmog'. This non-ionising electromagnetic pollution of technological origin is particularly insidious, in that it escapes detection by the senses, a circumstance which tends to promote a rather cavalier attitude regarding personal protection. Yet the nature of the pollution is such that there is literally 'nowhere to hide'."

Kundi, M, et al. "Mobile telephones and cancer--a review of epidemiological evidence," *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health: Part B Critical Reviews* 7, no. 5 (Sep./Oct. 2004):351-84.

The authors review the existing literature (nine epidemiological studies) on mobile phone use and brain tumors. They noted that although the studies were deficient in methodology, there was evidence for enhanced cancer risk with increasing latency and duration of mobile phone use.

Lonn, S, et al. "Mobile Phone Use and the Risk of Acoustic Neuroma." *Epidemiology* 15, no. 66:653-659.

In this Swedish study, the authors did not find indication of an increased risk of acoustic neuroma related to short-term mobile phone use (short latency period). However, their data suggests an increased risk of acoustic neuroma associated with mobile phones when used for at least 10 years.

Löscher, W and G Käs. "Conspicuous behavioural abnormalities in a dairy cow herd near a TV and Radio transmitting antenna." *Prakt. Tierarzt* 79:5, 437-444 (1998).

Over two years, milk yield, health problems and behavioural abnormalities are reported in a dairy cow herd located in close proximity to a TV and radio transmitting antenna. Although the authors evaluated other, possible factors that could explain the abnormalities in the livestock, they did not “disclose any factors other than the measurable high-frequency electromagnetic fields” as the possible cause of the abnormalities.

Mild, KH, et al. “Mobile telephones and cancer: Is there really no evidence of an association?” (Review). *International Journal of Molecular Medicine* 12 (2003):67-72.

In this review, the authors refer to several studies from Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the U.S.A. They examine both the studies that claim an association between mobile phone (analogue) use and brain tumors as well as those that dispute that evidence.

“Mobile phones ‘may trigger Alzheimer’s.’” *BBC News World Edition*: [news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk) (5 Feb. 2003).

This article summarizes Swedish research (L Salford), which has found that rats exposed to medium and high levels of radiation had an abundance of dead brain cells. The article states that: “Researchers in Sweden have found that radiation from mobile phone handsets damages areas of the brain associated with learning, memory and movement. “

Peplow, M. “Magnetic field benefits bacteria.” *Nature News*: [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com) (28 Nov. 2004).

This article looks at research led by Peter Hore, a physical chemist at the University of Oxford. He examines the possible link between magnetism and a chemical reaction inside cells. A weak magnetic field can affect production of a certain molecule found in

photosynthetic bacterium. This link is examined in light of the Earth's magnetic field and the ability of some birds to migrate long distances using subtle variations in the Earth's magnetic field.

Salford, LG, et al. "Nerve Cell Damage in Mammalian Brain after Exposure to Microwaves from GSM Mobile Phones." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 111, no. 7 (June 2003):881-883.

Using 12-26-week old rats as subjects, this study looks at the impact on rat brains of mobile phone electromagnetic fields of different strengths. The researchers found "highly significant evidence for neuronal damage in the cortex, hippocampus, and basal ganglia in the brains of exposed rats." (These rats were chosen as subjects because they are comparable to human teenagers with regards to age.)

Schütz, J and Michaelis, J. "Abschlussbericht der EMF II-Studie." Technischer Bericht, Institut für Medizinische Statistik und Dokumentation der Universität Mainz.

*Symposium 2000: Low frequency EMF, Visible Light, Melatonin and Cancer.* University of Cologne, Germany (2000).  
Included:

- Ahlbom, A: "Meta-analyses of EMF-studies: leukemia and brain cancer"
- Anderson, LE: "Problems in replication of experimental studies"
- Bartsch, C: "Melatonin and cancer: experimental and clinical aspects"
- Brainard, GC: "Light effects on melatonin"
- Erren, TC: "Meta-analysis of EMF-studies: breast cancer"

- Erren, TC: "Winter darkness in the Arctic - Cancer in the light of the melatonin hypothesis"
- Feychting, M: "Reduced cancer incidence among the blind in Sweden"
- Funk, RHW: "ELF-MF (B=100 $\mu$ T) affect the microvesicle velocity and expression of adhesion molecule CD44s in rat astrocytes"
- Henshaw, DL: "Electric components - missing link between EMF and cancer?"
- Löscher, W: "Laboratory studies on magnetic fields, melatonin and cancer"
- Reiter, RJ: "Historical account of the research related to EMF, melatonin and cancer"
- Schüz, J: "German case-control study of childhood leukemia and residential magnetic fields"
- Stevens, RG: "The melatonin hypothesis: circadian disruption and breast cancer"
- Verkasalo, PK: "Visual impairment and cancer in Finland"

Wakefield, J. "Toxic Inheritance: Fathers' Job May Mean Cancer for Kids." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 109, no. 2 (Feb. 2001):A84-A85.

This article summarizes Feychting's study on the impact of a father's occupation on his children's health.

### **About the Author**

Ann Backhaus enjoys weaving fact and fantasy to create a 'what-if' world. She starts with personal experiences and individual journeys and moves toward shared human conditions.

Ann currently lives in Indonesia on the island of Borneo, where she teaches at an international school and telecommutes as a web site designer and technical writer. She has lived in Australia, England and America and has travelled extensively in North America, Mexico, Europe and Southeast Asia.

## Information on Books in the XPERTS Collection

All books are available in German from Freya Pub.Co., see [www.freya.at](http://www.freya.at) and can be ordered via all good bookstores, but most easily via [www.iicm.edu/Xperts](http://www.iicm.edu/Xperts). All English versions can be ordered through [www.booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com). However, due to the high shipping costs, international customers outside the US and within the European Union can order "The Paradoppelganger" and "The Paranet" at lower cost through [www.iicm.edu/Xperts](http://www.iicm.edu/Xperts). Within the US, booklocker is the best source. Outside the US readers are encouraged to buy more than one book at the time to reduce per book shipping costs or to buy the e-book versions from [www.booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com): No delay, no postage, lower price, and you just download the file, and print it out locally.

Here is a summary of the books in the Xperts Series currently or soon available. The series is growing rapidly. All books, where no author is mentioned I have written myself. For the others I have written a 'script' and edited the resulting book. If you have any questions, suggestions, or are interested in becoming one of the authors of a book in the Xperts Series, contact me at [hmaurer@iicm.edu](mailto:hmaurer@iicm.edu). If you want to find out more about me than you ever cared to read, consult [www.iicm.edu/maurer](http://www.iicm.edu/maurer). I will answer all emails (nothing worse than being ignored) except if I am really down ☺.

Note that although there is a thread through the books (some persons appear in each book) the novels are completely self-contained and can be read independently of each other in any order. I have arranged the book in more or less chronological order (according when they take place), so this might be an obvious order to read them. But, feel free to start with anyone that tickles you!

"Xperts: The Telekinetic": In a way, this is the first book in the collection. The student of physics, Marcus, discovers that he has telekinetic and time-warping powers, and uses them to seduce girls, to make money, and to help people. He is also very much aware how dangerous this 'parability' can be for him. He is eventually captured by a para-military group of the European Union with dubious motives, and manages to escape only with the help of his girl friend Maria, who will

be his big love for life. They flee to New Zealand to start a new existence. Marcus and Maria (and other persons) are the thread that holds the Xperts Series together....

“Xperts: The Paradoppelganger”: This is another novel involving Marcus and Maria. Their daughter Lena discovers a strange para-gifted person. In the process of trying to make him join the group the reader visits Brazil and Europe, and is drawn into historic mysteries, extending back in history even to the Egyptian pyramids. This novel also gives a glance at what future PCs and the Net might look like... a tribute to the fact that the Editor (and author of this book) is a computer science professor. However, don't get turned off: this is a novel not a scientific book!

“Xperts: The Paracomunicator” (by Jennifer Lennon): A Maori girl Aroha finds half of an ancient device in the hills near Auckland, New Zealand. Its function and the function of the “black balls” cannot be fully understood, yet it is clear that on a dangerous mission in Africa (Namibia) neither Aroha nor her friend Herbert with the other half of the device could survive without the help of the strange tools, and of the group of Marcus...

“Xperts: The Parashield” (by Sam Osborne): The West-Australian Ryan finds out, as he grows up, that he can shield himself and other persons nearby, by creating through mental powers an impenetrable shield of energy. If not for his girlfriend Hannah who has some awesome ‘parabilities’ his enemies would eliminate him before the team of Marcus can intervene. This novel is written with a South-Western Australian background and the suspense and complexity increases as it develops.

“Xperts: E-Smog!” (by Ann Backhaus): While on a consultancy project in Indonesia, Dr. Amanda ‘Mandi’ Webber, an Australian researcher, discovers an illegal production facility for e-Helpers. A patent breach, however, is only the start of her discoveries.... Mandi uncovers data that shows the hazardous, even deadly, impact of electromagnetic radiation (e-smog). With the help of Marcus Waller's group of parapersons, Mandi plans to go public with the findings. A powerful, multinational consortium of corporations, however, has other plans, which includes keeping the findings away from the public at all costs.

“Xperts: Mindwave” (by Jenny Shearer): By accident, an early version of a set of computer programs called Mindwave is released on the WWW by a group of students in Auckland. Little do they know that Mindwave is a spin-off of the well-known Hyperwave system that was purchased by Marcus, head of SR Inc., years ago. Still less do they know that Mindwave has the power to transform the world. As it starts to do so, governments and powerful organisations try to kill Mindwave or modify for their purposes, putting everyone involved in mortal danger. As Mindwave is starting to get global support, some dangerous weaknesses are emerging...

“Xperts: The Parawarriors” : We are in the year 2019. A nuclear war between Pakistan and India seems to be unavoidable. Marcus and his team try to avoid the worst, at horrific costs. All efforts seem to be in vain. Yet, after interludes in India, Bali and La Reunion some form of normality returns, only to be disturbed (or helped?) by super-computers from an ancient civilization millions of years ago, and a strange intelligent animal “The They” that remains a mystery for a long time.

“Xperts: The Param@ils” (by Peter Lechner): This novel gives a different twist to the Xperts Series: the economy is all that matters! A story of intrigues, human emotion and some strange emails capture the attention of the readers, with Marcus’ group again playing a pivotal role in solving a complex scheme. (In preparation)

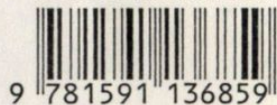
“Xperts: The Paranet” : In 2080 the then existing network of computers breaks down completely, throwing the world into total chaos. This novel shows how dependent we are going to be on computers and computer networks, and how civilization will virtually cease to exist if such a total breakdown ever happens at a stage when mankind is ‘Sufficiently networked’. Billions of people are about to die, is there any hope for them. Yes, by mounting a terrorist attack in the past!

“Xperts: Fighting Big Brother” : Big brother with cameras, flying cameras, intelligent databanks and total security is catching up on us. This is a chilling novel, with a bright line of hope shown on the horizon, if we just decide to act NOW. (In preparation)

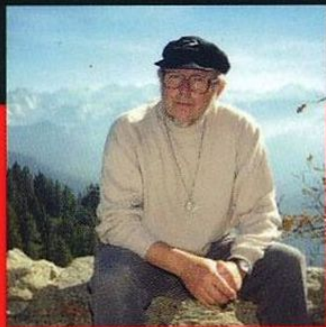
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***Hermann Maurer, Coordinator  
of The XPERTS Collection***

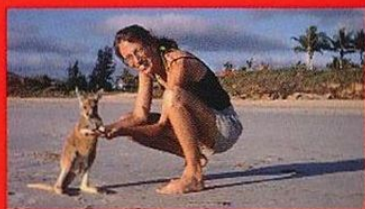
While on a consultancy project in Indonesia, Dr. Amanda 'Mandi' Webber, an Australian researcher, discovers an illegal production facility for e-Helpers. A patent breach, however, is only the start of her discoveries. Mandi uncovers data that shows the hazardous, even deadly, impact of electromagnetic radiation-e-smog!. With the help of Marcus Waller's group of parapersons, Mandi plans to go public with the findings. A powerful, multinational consortium of corporations, however, has other plans, which includes keeping the findings away from the public at all costs.

From Australia to Borneo to New Zealand and round again, Backhaus expertly immerses the reader in a whirlwind adventure encompassing high-tech gadgetry, ecological crisis, and edge-of-the-seat action.  
(Martyn Cox, England)

Once aboard the magical carpet ride - hang on! Soar through outback Australian mining towns, Indonesian kampungs, and Singaporean temples, and buckle in for the turbulence: ego, power and money.

(Jane Milford, Auckland)

***Ann Backhaus,  
with George***



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