

Chapter 1

Enter the alien.

Since mid-1999, Jim Ignatius Wilson, a retired mechanic, all five foot eleven of typical Aussie bravado with hazel eyes, brown hair and Dutch heritage, hadn't given a moment's thought to his first UFO sighting. Until, Thursday, 18th day of early Spring, September 2008. While rubbernecking passing foot traffic at the front of his modestly built, 1944 Queenslander property in Mareeba, 67kms inland from Cairns. Jim also eyeballed Christopher, an eight-year-old Boxer dog, lovingly adopted from a local animal shelter. He casually scrutinized the K9 as it deposited another fecal mine on the lawn executing a quick squat-n-drop maneuver as his slogan-creative, 16-year-old son so whimsically coined the phrase. Waste dispensed, Christopher, now hot on the prowl, followed his usual route around the flowerbed, cocking his leg against Jim's wife's highly prized fuchsias. Stella Marie Wilson, five foot nine of Scandinavian descent, carried typical Icelandic traits: blonde hair, blue eyes, and a head shorter than her husband, fastidiously manicured the flowerbed. Watering it daily because of constant dry savanna winds blowing in from the plains.

"Get out of there!" Jim yelled toward the dog. While noticing a ghostly veil descend rapidly. The blanket of fog reduced streetlight illumination considerably. Catching his attention as he gazed upward, a plane's running lights. One yellow center front, blue left, green right, came silently into view.

Those definitely aren't normal running lights, he considered with an ominous passing thought, his contemplation causing him to panic slightly. It was heading straight towards his house. Jim was familiar with light aircraft overhead, as the local airport was only 20 minutes by car from where he stood.

"Bloody hell," he reflected aloud. Christopher tilted his head in due response. "Where's the noise?" He added, totally and utterly bewildered, because no sound reached his ears. *The engines must have failed*, he thought, now beginning to really panic. Jim quickly estimated by eye that the aircraft's lessening altitude didn't bear down on any homes. When, without warning and totally lacking in sound the strangely lit aircraft changed direction, performing a sharp,

theoretically impossible, 90-degree turn. *No airplane we have can do that*, he considered, shaking his head in utter disbelief. He continued to theorize, as fast as it appeared, it disappeared eliciting questionable hypotheses. Eliciting more questions as it vanished just as quickly into the thickening fog. Jim kept thinking what sprung to mind is how spooky and preordained the entire event played out.

There was no sound, Jim realized. *None*. It seemed incredibly bizarre how deathly silent Mareeba was. No traffic, no pedestrians, no noise pollution whatsoever. In fact, the bizarre event seemed perfectly timed because usually a steady flow of cars and people paraded by unsynchronized at this time of night.

“Hm,” he hummed to himself, shaking off utterly fanciful thoughts. Soon deciding it was time to head back inside, he whistled softly to call Christopher. The dog ran over wagging its stumpy tail, satisfied having taken care of business, all over Stella’s prize fuchsias, and the front lawn, unfortunately.

Walking towards the rear door, he contemplated telling his wife the truth. Yet, after reaching the rear steps, a saner decision prevailed, choosing to keep this remarkable event to himself.

As usual, the events of that extraordinary evening became lost in memory as the mundane hustle and bustle of a busy life dominated Jim’s thoughts. You see, the rest of us wouldn’t forget such an amazing event, but his memory is affected. Hence the forced early retirement, as Fibromyalgia, an insidious illness, still ravaged his ability to concentrate even on the simplest of tasks. Naturally, this caused the entire event to slip even further from his mind. So another year drifted by without a single sighting, and once again it was time to perform evening chores with the dog. Which is taking the Wilson’s beautiful new companion, a year and a half old Harlequin Great Dane and Arab Mastiff cross, named Jess, out for a quick squat-n-drop. They’d lost sweet, old Christopher to cancer a month earlier. Much to the sadness he never responded to treatment.

Out front, while watching cars disrupt the evening’s peace and tranquility. Jess started her usual route around the front yard, and whilst busy, Jim gazed, neck cracking, up at the stars.

“Relaxation develops wonderfully easy this way,” he mentioned to Jess. “Helps me put all my problems into perspective.” Then pondered on the cloudless sky above, thinking. *It’s another beautiful, clear night.* Just as Jess tried desperately to catch a cane toad.

“Leave those damn things alone, will you? They’ll make you sick, you crazy dog.” Jim soon gave up chastising the dog as thankfully she had no hope in catching the elusive, toxic pest. Instead, sought harmony in the stars above. Trying in vain to locate the planet Saturn, only to give up seconds later in disgust. Not knowing what planet was what or where the known constellations were, he didn’t care. To view them has and shall always be a therapeutic benefit regardless of his shortcomings.

Wanting to give his neck a break, Jim peered down at Jess, soon realizing she hadn’t finished emptying her bowels, so gazed up wondering. *I wonder. Can that object still be up there?* Reminiscing about his fortuitous UFO sighting in Tasmania, he soon worked out its relevant position to where he witnessed the phenomenal event years ago. Remembering, without a shadow of doubt, he was facing south, southwest, and recalled the night. Surprising himself he even managed this feat in his current condition.

It was close to the end of July 1999. On a clear, crisp, chilly night, while stargazing on the balcony of his home, which faced the beautiful, Tamar River. The 1960s house offered generous views of the Batman Bridge and its surrounding river frontage. Recalling, with no effort it was around 9 o’clock in the evening with an obsidian moonless sky above, which gave the stars a sharper contrast against the blackness of space. Then remembered at the time he was considering one of the best advantages of living in the countryside as he looked north toward the town center and its well-lit thoroughfare. That no street lights disrupted your view while living on a dead-end road in Kayena. Also, on the odd occasion, if he were lucky, Jim would catch a glimpse of an asteroid’s last moments. Watching in awe as it fell towards Earth in a white-hot death roll. Then, just before the crucial sighting, cleaned his spectacles on the corner of a flannelette shirt.

There's nothing worse than gazing through dirty glasses, he thought. Repeating the useful life-hack once again, as it never ceased to amaze him how much junk floated around in orbit, including multistage rockets of old and decommissioned satellites. Jim slid on his clean glasses and switched focus back to 1999, recalling in awe when he picked out a bright object from countless stars, a satellite moving east to west.

Wow! Isn't that amazing! Jim could even see its anti-clockwise rotation. Once again thinking, *How clear the air is here.* When, what happened next defied everything you ever hear from governmental authorities regarding UFOs. 'Officially they don't exist.' And as Jim followed the path of the satellite, a strange object swerved out of its way. In doing so, dazzling sunlight reflected off what he considered the underside of the anomaly, exposing its unearthly textured details. It was enormous, guessing how small the satellite appeared beside it. Equaling without doubt a mansion-sized object, the supposed side he could see. *Heaven knows how tall it was,* he thought.

The pitted side facing Earth had a rough texture like orange skin. In a strange way, it looked organic. Only when the UFO changed course did it come into view. Which made Jim suspect it had advanced stealth capabilities, because after dodging the satellite it vanished from sight in the blink of an eye.

Jim found south in relation to where the sun rises in Mareeba and gazed upward south, southwest, searching in that area. Given the vastness of space, it wasn't long before rediscovering the anomaly.

Just there in stationary orbit, right where it'd been nine years ago. What the bloody hell could it be doing? Was there a creature in it? Or is it an automated probe? Strange how it's colored darker than the night sky. If it's got a cloaking device, then it's not working too well, he continued to think, but little did he know only a select few with a lazy left eye causing mild double vision can see the UFO under its space projection camouflage.

"I can see it," he said to Jess, who stood beside him, waiting for an invitation inside. Jim speculated why more people haven't spotted it. Or maybe they have, but they're keeping it a secret too. I guess, in fear of incarceration as a nutcase. Jim knew he hadn't bragged or

confessed to any alien conspiracies online. Guessing people can sit on secrets for ages these days and laughed at himself because he kept one too.

“Come on, Jess. Let's go. Stella's going to think we've been abducted.” He laughed loudly as she twisted her head, responding, and then it happened.

Like a bolt of lightning, Jim's body doubled-up from the shock of subspace teleportation, his human-form leaving our earthly plane in an instant. Catching his breath, he opened one eye slowly. Taking a moment to recall what had just happened, with both eyes open, surveyed his surroundings. Cold and shivering, he stood up on what resembled a large dinner-plate three meters wide. Eyes now adjusted to the dimly lit compartment, Jim stepped off the platform falling awkwardly. Unknown to him, on the floor of this strange environment lay a jellylike, gelatinous ooze. Wiping it off his face with the back of his hand, he finally caught a whiff of the vessel's delightful aroma, immediately dry reaching from its decaying stench. After tremendous effort, he struggled to rise and look around.

Have I shrunk somehow, and Jess licked me up, he considered? “No, don't be stupid,” he whispered, gagging again on the foul smell in his nostrils. Remembering he still had a mobile-phone in his top pocket, Jim wiped his hands clean as best he could before unfolding the cover. Waking the phone from slumber it revealed three reception bars, and Jim promptly tapped Stella's contact details. While waiting for a connection, he shivered again. *Ureka, she's answered*, he thought.

“Hello.”

“Stella, it's me, Jim.”

Of course she knew who called as caller I.D. shone brightly on her screen. “What the devil are you calling me for? Has Jess finished her business?”

“I don't know. In fact, I don't know where I am,” He stated, voice higher in pitch, nerves on a razor edge.

Brow furrowed, sighing deeply as she shook her head, Stella made for the back door. *What's that crazy fool gone and done now*, she

thought, standing on the lower step. Jess came trotting over, wagging her tail.

“Where’s Jim?” Hearing his name the dog dropped her head and followed his scent out front to where the trail ended on damp lawn. Fresh dew from a clear night, spreading water droplets over unprotected areas. Footprints ending middle of the grass. She looked around for her husband, Stella put the phone to her ear, “Where the devil are you?” She inquired again, hopeful he wasn’t pulling her leg with some elaborate prank.

“I don’t know.” Jim walked on carefully, his shoes slipping on the wet floor. Close to one wall, he noticed it resembled raw meat, a myriad of veins carrying multi-colored fluids heaven knows where.

“I’m scared, Stella.” Jim held the phone tightly against his ear, a lifeline he daren’t lose.

“Look, I’ve just about had it with your crap. Now, where are you?” She said, not seeing the funny side of his prank, losing patience entirely.

While walking further through what resembled ‘The Little Shop of Horrors,’ Jim came across a transparent membrane stretched between thick exposed bones, in utter shock he tried to register the vista only a rare few have ever witnessed, Earth in all its majestic glory rotated below.

“Holy shit!” He said, coming to a rapid conclusion, “I know exactly where I am.”

“Where are you then?” Stella asked, frustration building.

“Remember when I told you about that UFO in Tasmania, all those years ago?”

“Yeah, sort of.” The tone in her voice deepened as it slowed.

“Well, that’s where I am.” Looking down, he could make out the east coast of Africa passing by under light cloud cover.

“Oh, pull the other one. Now, where are you?” Stella asked abruptly.

“Really, I’m telling you the truth.”

“Look, when you’ve finished playing your little joke, come inside. I’ll be going to work soon.” She tapped the mobile heavily, creating

a solid thumping sound, called Jess to follow, then made her way back inside.

“Stella, are you still there?” Jim held the phone out and could see she’d clearly hung-up. “That’s just marvelous,” he groaned. Shaking his head in disbelief at the sight below, Jim turned and whispered to himself, “Oh well, fortune favors the brave.” Deciding to continue, he walked on, sensing a gentle incline as he slipped and slid. Marveling at the grossly sickening assault on the senses. Knowing he’d suffer many a sleepless night if ever he made it home, Jim put one foot in front of the other best he could and ventured on. Eventually rounding a corner, entered what was clearly and to laypeople, a control room. Several gadgets mounted on the walls popped and whistled when he came close. Filled with overwhelming desire, he reached up and touched a lever begging to be tweaked.

Do not touch that. Jim nearly jumped out of his skin at the powerful demand rattling around in his head.

“Who... who... who’s there?” He asked attentively, looking around, not seeing anyone.

‘Tis I, the Master of this vessel. Again, Jim cringed at the strength of its reply. Looking about, he considered the inhabitants might be invisible but dismissed this conclusion immediately when a wall not far, shivered like Jell-O on a platter. An opening appeared, and what stepped forth caused him to scream like a little girl.

I’ve got to show more courage than this, he decided, backing against a far wall, hands out behind him. Jim only stopped when he felt something similar to fresh meat in his palms.

Yes, gather yourself, Jim, time is against us, and we must act now. He heard as the weirdest-looking beast stepped forth from the rapidly expanding aperture. Tall, bulky, reptilian-like with dark blue leathery skin, it waddled over toward a control panel, tail swishing behind as it went, and with consummate ease made an outline of a human male appear on the floor. Thinking his life was in mortal danger. Jim panicked and tried escaping, slipping, and sliding as a cat would on a linoleum floor. Only after exhausting himself did he give up, surrendering to fate. Huffing and puffing out of breath, Jim raised his hands and surrendered.

“Okay, I give up.”

You cannot, we are just getting started. Now, lie down on the highlighted area. The beast demanded. It was then Jim noticed its mouth didn't move when communicating.

That's strange, he thought. An obvious question came to mind. “What are you?” He asked in a high-pitched voice.

Forgive my crass entry. The beast bowed deeply. *My name is Rogand, and I am from the planet Stommarli. We use telepathy to relay our thoughts.* Jim couldn't help but look over the dark blue alien creature. The more he scrutinized the beast, the more he believed it resembled a dragon. Yet, its head had a more dog-like quality to it.

I never thought of myself as having K9 qualities, Jim. Rogand flipped another lever on his control panel, and the wall beside the Stommarli stretched to reveal a perfect reflection. Moving his stumpy legs slowly, the reptilian gazed at himself and huffed indignantly.

Dog-like, indeed. Now lie down. The big-fella asked again. Then, when Jim started lowering himself to the floor, Rogand shot forcefully into his mind.

Oh, for goodness sake, take your coverings off. Jim stood still for a moment, flashing a beet-red face, embarrassed about removing clothes in front of a total stranger.

As the alien shook its head, Jim heard a weird comparison rattle in his skull. *Never have I seen such an odd species. I have no coverings, and you do not see me blushing, do you?* Looking at Rogand, noticing he wore no clothing whatsoever. Decided to ignore caution and undressed. He was cold the moment he arrived but now froze as his underwear dropped onto the bile-covered floor. Obeying the Stommarlian's command he lay in the chilly ooze, gagging again at its pungent aroma. Moving to match the illuminated shape best he could. Shivering violently, Jim's testicles retracted to where they were when first born.

Curious as to the beast's objective, he needed to question, “Just what are you going to do?”

I want to blend you with a species I saved. They have lived in stasis these past thousand years.

“What!” He replied loudly, almost losing his voice.

Do not worry, you and they are compatible. The poor humanoid I removed them from was near death when I found him.

“Oh, thanks, that makes me feel so much better,” Jim said mockingly as another obvious query popped into his now bewildered, tattered thoughts. “So, what are these things supposed to do?”

Do you remember when I dodged that satellite, revealing myself?

“Yes, how could I forget? Stella said I was losing my marbles when I told her about your ship.”

Well, I scanned your body extensively and concluded you suffer from a common abnormality on your world.

“Yeah, so what, you got a cure or something?”

In fact, I have. The symbiotic life-forms will restore every cell in your body. Once my process is complete, of course. At the prospect of a pain-free life, Jim lifted his head off the ooze-covered floor, willingly granting permission, “Well...what the devil are you waiting for, let’s get on with it.”

Without further ado, Rogand pulled on the largest lever on his control panel, causing immediate pain the like Jim had never felt before. So intense, endless, excruciating was the pain, so violent, so overwhelming, he broke a back tooth during the blending process as symbiotes flooded throughout his body from the ship’s organic hull. And not remembering much during the procedure as he lost consciousness, thankfully.

After waking, Jim found he lay face up on the driveway at home, fully dressed, Jess above gazing down, tail wagging excitedly.

“Must have been a bad dream,” he said to the dog, ruffling her ears.

It was no dream, echoed a voice inside his head. *The sun rises on your position, rest while the blending continues.* Rogand’s advice rattled around inside Jim’s noggin. He huffed when standing, knowing one thing for sure, that it’ll take a long time for him to get used to telepathy.

“When will the little critters fix me?”

Symbiotes, Rogand corrected. *They will communicate when the time is right,* came his last directive.

“How will they let me know when they’re done?” Jim asked, but the dark-blue-skinned alien fell silent, he could no longer hear him.

Jim struggled to head toward the back door, feeling like he'd just returned from the biggest arse-kicking party ever held.

Oh well. Tonight was a night of firsts. I was the first human to travel via subspace teleportation. I met Rogand, my first alien. First to be blended with symbiotes. Not too sure about that yet. The big-fella said they'd make me feel better. Not too sure about that either, he thought, a severe pulsating headache applying aggravating pressure to his temples.

"They don't appear to be working," he said to the dog, *I still feel like crap!* He fed Jess and then went to shower, going straight to bed afterwards. Head hitting the pillow, he fell straight to sleep.

Stella noisily opening the front gates woke him. Tapping at the digital clock on the bedside drawers flashed 7.32am. Stretching and throwing off the bedcovers it amazed the new human hybrid at how well he felt after only just one and a half hours of sleep.

Getting dressed, he noticed how easily he moved. Using his tongue to feel for the damaged tooth that broke last night, shrugging and gave up when unable to find it, he continued dressing. After putting on his watch, Jim reached for his spectacles. Sliding them on, he met with a pleasant surprise this morning. Getting a vastly unique response to the norm. Instead of clearing his vision, the glasses made everything blurry. So, he lowered them from his eyes, vision perfect and clear again, raised them, blurry, lowered them, clear. Jim did the blurry, clear, blurry, clear routine for a minute or two, then gave up and left them on the dresser.

Lessening pain, perfect vision, and no broken teeth, he realized. "Well, blow me down! Rogand wasn't lying after all," Jim whispered to himself walking from the bedroom. To finally greet Stella at the back door, watching fascinated as she removed the prison-issued footwear, or head-kicking-boots as their son Timothy likes to call them.

"How was work last night?" Jim asked, curious to know what had happened during the graveyard shift. But got the evil eye instead, especially after last night's phone call. Knowing what the question written all over her face entailed, responded hesitantly. "Oh, that," he said.

“Yes, that!”

Not sure if he should fess up and divulge the evenings frivolities. Jim gave his response considerable consideration. “Um... I’m really sorry, sweetheart. I won’t do it again.” As poor as the apology was, Stella, never one to hold a grudge, forgave the love of her life.

“How was work? Jim asked again.

“Not too bad, thanks, but the night shift is just babysitting, they’re all locked down. We spend most of our time counting heads, making sure we don’t lose any over the fence. How was your night?” She asked in return.

Once again, Jim had to put his mind into gear before opening his mouth. If he told her everything, he’s sure Stella would call Dr. Benjamin Wright and arrange for another visit. Stella and Jim are very much in love, regardless of everything that’s happened since Tasmania. Yet, considering the torrid backlash from Stella, Jim chose instead to err on the side of caution.

“Fantastic, thanks, Jess and I had a ball. Would you like an omelet for breakfast?” He asked, knowing she had had an immensely better evening than he did.

“Sounds great.” She placed her boots in the rack. Heading to the bathroom to undress. While Stella showered, Jim made her favorite chicken, cheese, and tomato omelet. Whilst cooking on the stove, waiting to flip the omelet, he heard what sounded like a distant crowd approaching. Hundreds, if not thousands of voices echoed inside his skull, then, ridiculously, total silence. Next, there was a single voice, loud inside his head, shouting repeatedly.

WE ARE HERE, WE ARE HERE, WE ARE HERE, it bellowed in Jim’s mind.

“Who’s there,” he shouted back. Only, it was Stella who replied. “What’s that, Jim?” She yelled through the sound of running water.

“Oh, nothing, just burned my finger on the frying pan is all.” Jim tried to cover up his slip of the tongue. He heard the shower turn off.

We are here, we are here, we are here, came the voice inside his head again. Thankfully, this time they weren’t shouting, it was less exuberant this time, so he whispered back.

“Who’s there?” He said, nerves balancing on a razor’s edge.

We are now you, for you we care, so don't despair, we and you are now the same, so please choose a name and then we can refrain from shouting again, the unknown individual stated. Yet, Jim didn't have adequate time to reply. Stella walked out from the bathroom in a dressing gown, combing wet hair.

"Sit down, please, Kiddo. Breakfast is ready." The omelet slid from the hot frying pan onto the plate, and he placed it in front of her. Stella remarked on how good it looked.

"Would you like a cup of tea with that?" Jim asked, hopelessly dreading that the voice in his head would return.

"Yes, thanks."

He turned to walk back into the kitchen, when... *WE ARE HERE, WE ARE HERE, WE ARE HERE*, it echoed in his skull so damn loud this time, that Jim clutched his head, stumbling for a moment and losing balance at its sheer resonating volume and overwhelming power.

"Are you all right, Jim?" Stella asked through a mouth full of food.

"Yeah, I'm just getting a terrible headache." He massaged his temples to no avail, the repetitive voice went on and on. "I'll get you that tea first, then head to the lounge and kick back in the recliner for a while," he said, teeth clenched.

"Okay, do what's best and take care of yourself. Once I've finished breakfast, I'm off to bed, so I'll be fresh for tonight," Stella said, taking the steaming mug from Jim's trembling hand.

Struggling, he made it to the lounge room with a little more effort than he would've liked. Sitting in the recliner he asked the voice inside his head the same question as before, softly, gently, almost in a silent whisper.

"Who's there?" He waited with bated breath, hoping to get an answer.

We are here, we are h...

"All right," Jim said a little louder this time, "That's enough, I heard you the first time."

Yes, yes, yes, a name, a name, so we can refrain,

"Yes, I know, from shouting again,"

Please choose. Please choose so you can snooze,

Jim was becoming frustrated and thought, *It's not every day you argue with yourself.* He rolled his eyes and sighed deeply. "What name would you like?"

You must choose. You must choose, to follow and serve, is what we do, you must choose, the odd-sounding creatures asked.

"Okay, I get the picture," Jim whispered through gritted teeth. *I'd better come up with a name before you shout in my head again.* "Think, damn it, think," as if by video replay the events of meeting Rogand unfolded in his mind.

"The first ever human to receive symbiotes. Let me think, hm." He began sounding out names. "Jason, Owen, Harvey, Neil. No, those don't sound good at all. How about Herman? No, that sounds stupid." *I know,* he thought, a revelation popping into his, it went off like a firecracker. Casting his memory way back when he was young. "I used to have a budgerigar named Simon when I was 12 years old. I loved that bird. How does Simon sound?" He paused a moment concentrating, considering a better name. "No, wait! Sy-man, that's it... Syman, in honor of the first symbiote and human blending," Jim said.

We like, we like, our name we like, Syman's reply echoed within Jim's head, along with an overwhelming wave of euphoria.

"Well then, it's a pleasure to meet you, Syman, call me Jim,"

Jim, it is, Syman we are, for together we'll be, from here too far, sang the voice inside his head.

"What do you mean, from here to far?" He asked, wanting to know if it related to distance in any shape or form.

We repair cells, from now till then, so live-forever, we both together.

"Holy cow!" Jim was utterly flabbergasted to hear his life was now limitless, infinite, without end. "Just what other wonders are you capable of?" Jim was eager to learn, now that Fibromyalgia seemed a distant memory he never wished to relive.

We have in us the knowledge of all. Until Traibill's fall. History, science, enhancements for speed, strength and more. Just ask and we can help get answers to all. And Just for fun, because Jim was feeling elated with his new pain-free body, like a giddy schoolboy, recalled

an idea he had constantly fantasized over as a child, throwing caution to the wind, he asked awkwardly.

“Can you make my car fly?” He expected the answer to be resounding. *No*. But his heart skipped a beat as Syman answered.

We can, we can. The knowledge is here. With gravity in play the choice is clear. Ten cells we make with guidance for flight. Then, your car will elevate in the air and take flight. Up, up, up, into the night, they sang again in his head.

“Okay, Syman, show me how,” Jim said. *What have I got to lose,* he thought.

Nothing to lose, lots to gain, if you have a relevant question, simply ask us again, the symbiotes prattled on inside his head.

“Syman, I want you to show me what you have in mind.” If you want to know why Stella hasn’t inquired why he’s speaking aloud. Well, Jim’s always talked to himself, it’s a part of his unusual character, and she’s learned when to listen and when to not.

No need to vocalize, just ask from within, close your eyes and let us begin, Syman informed him.

Now they tell me, he thought. His face turned beet red. *I wish they had told me to voice my questions internally, before.* Jim kicked back in the recliner, closing eyes as the vision of a beautiful alien city formed in his mind’s eye. A sprawling metropolis filled with pale, green-tinted glass high-rise buildings pierced low clouds and flying through wide open corridors were immaculately built machines, all finished in high-gloss paint in varying colors. Jim’s vision zoomed in on one occupant inside the flying vehicle.

Rogand was right. They do look a lot like us, except for skin tone, which was light gray. In addition, from what he could see in Syman’s recall is the lack of facial hair, bald with no eyebrows, eyelashes, or ears either. Focusing, Jim noticed a small oval opening where their ears would be. Then, cinematically, his vision changed to only what could only be a component factory of sorts. Where a Traibillian worker put together several peculiar-looking components and, once completed, it resembled a squat jam tin, slowly the vision faded, Jim opened his eyes.

Was that the cell you were speaking of, Syman? He directed the question to his symbiotes internally this time.

Yes, 'tis the cell when completed, and a low charge repeated, shall push you away when seated. Away from here, to pull you there. To build it fast, a list of wares, we must prepare. Then, we will assemble them in sequence to complete each affair, and when affixed to your car it will elevate, up, up, up, into the air. Six from under, two out front and two fixed on the rear, guidance on board so we can steer, sang Syman inside their host's head. Jim sent a thought of appreciation to his new internal companions.

This vessel is empty, our energy low, proteins needed to go, go, go, please feed us, Jim, so we can grow, Syman asked, adding the sensation of hunger to their request.

Sorry, but I completely forgot to eat breakfast, he realized, slightly embarrassed at now having a consciousness of sorts to remind him of such essential behaviors. Jim took a quick peek at Stella when heading to the kitchen, she slept soundly. The frying pan lay on the sink's edge. He wiped it clean and got started on adding ingredients. Cracking two eggs into a mixing bowl he then felt and heard his stomach rumble. *Damn, I'm hungry.* Grabbing two more eggs, Jim added them to the bowl.

How does a chicken, cheese, and tomato omelet sound, remembering to think his ideas rather than speak?

Sounds great, we can hardly wait to consume what appears on the plate, they sang again. Pouring eggs into the frying pan, Jim articulated himself using telepathy.

It won't be long till breakfast. Within moments he sat at the dining table, and in front of Jim and Syman, steam rising, sat the perfect omelet. They ate in silence. While finishing the last tasty morsel, the symbiotes informed Jim of how unwell he'd truly been.

Time for rest, we must confess, your cells really are in quite a mess. Rest, repair, it's what's needed. In their telepathic communication they said. *You will awaken completed.* Therefore, Jim returned to the recliner in the lounge room. Lying in bed would've been better, but he didn't want to disturb Stella. He kicked back in the recliner, and as

he got comfortable, yawned and reflected, *I'm really glad Rogand chose me*. But it wasn't long before sleep silenced all thought.