



The Sploor Imperative

There is always a need to learn. If we can learn we can invent new solutions to old problems. We can find new ways to move humanity forward. We can identify what works and what doesn't! The same applies to the Sploor who created our universe and the Groolooos who created the Sploor's universe. They both made mistakes. The Groolooos gave the Sploor no night sky to study and marvel at. The Sploor gave humanity too much to study and marvel at. Humanity is not working as it was expected to. That problem might put an end all three species. The Sploor want to save humanity; the Groolooos want to restart us over again.

The Sploor created a human-hybrid-proxy, able to sort it all out. The question is: - Can he do it in time?

A sci-fi novel by Bob Burden

THE SPLOOR IMPERATIVE

V 2.0 (Shortened to produce 4 books out of 3 very long ones)

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Prologue: - A briefing takes place

The following meeting took place long before I had ever heard of Wilfred, the Mayor of the City of Heaven, or any other members of his government team that were responsible for so many aspects of my life. It still makes me shudder to think how naive and gullible I had always been, even as a child prodigy. These narratives are based upon my own memories and data I managed to obtain from other sources and the knowledge I extracted from other people's minds throughout my life. I would like to say that all such knowledge was given freely according to the privacy rules telepaths are taught to obey from birth. Most were, some were not. I leave it to the reader to decide which was the right path for a telepath to follow for themselves.

The number of invited attendees for that day's briefing was just under one million beings so the venue had been set up in the conference hall on the huge mezzanine level of the Mayor's Office complex. This building was also the headquarters building of The City of Heaven, an industrial town whose main focus was on the filtration and perfection of Liffergy.

Everyone attending that briefing would be a manifestation from a pure-energy-being or PEB, in the lingua franca of those attending it. There were two PEBs involved in this meeting: The Sploor PEB and the Grooloos PEB. This meant that the million attendees could be compressed quite a bit so the whole volume of the hall rather than just the floor of the hall could be used. Every attendee would hear and see everything because the meeting would be entirely telepathic. The hall itself was shielded for thought security so nobody passing by outside could possibly get a hint of the meeting's subject.

Today that subject was rather an important one: Should all the Universe versions (No 480 and No 481) used in the multiverse created by the Sploor be erased and re-seeded. Meaning in simple terms: All biological life would be erased and replaced after all the planets had been re-set back to their original standard of construction.

The proposal had originated with the Grooloos who had themselves created the Sploor and were occasionally regretting that decision. The Sploor opposed this rather harsh solution to a problem they had worked hard to conceal.

For those reading this particular account of this famous meeting let me state categorically that you would be one of those to be treated harshly should the Grooloos proposal be passed as it stood.

The City of Heaven ran on a 24-hour clock system not unlike that of Earth and all the countless other human inhabited planets in or near the huge Filtration System which was the main purpose of the city's existence. None of those attending this meeting could afford for the filtration system to falter.

As the time approached 08:00 the hall was about as full as practicable and one annex was opened up to accommodate any late arrivals. The annex, like the main hall, was thought-proof and telepaths would all get the same reception no matter what part of the volume they occupied.

Slowly the hubbub died down as the Mayor, manifesting himself in a new human identity: Wilfred Hyde-White, appeared from a door behind the side curtain to the stage. He was followed by his deputy who was also manifesting himself in a new human identity: Stanley Holloway.

As the hubbub of background telepathic 'noise' died away completely, the two presenters made their way to the main presentation dais. Stanley took up position to Wilfred's right and sat down so all of the attendees attention could focus on Wilfred alone.

Wilfred set down his data-pad on the lectern's angled top and scanned the crowd with his mind in an effort to judge their mood.

"Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us here today to discuss further my proposal, made at the last gathering of those here, to investigate and report on humanities current state of deviance from our masters great plan."

"As you all know, our sole purpose is to create an environment in which the latest iteration of humanity can gain the knowledge required to convert themselves to PEBs as all those gathered here

today managed to do in their turn. The human version known to us all as the Groolooos has successfully created the newer human version known to us as the Sploor. The Sploor, in their turn have created a multiverse in which the next human version should be evolving. If they evolve properly, they should, in their turn, convert to Pure-energy-beings like us to become known as Earthlings.”

“The time has now passed for this conversion to happen. In fact, it has now passed the longest period ever needed to reach the point at which conversion is possible. Our job, as the Judicial Assembly of past PEB’s, is to decide if this situation should be allowed more time to complete its task or whether it should be cut short and re-started. The need for examining this proposal was approved at our last gathering three months ago. Today’s meeting will determine if the next step should be to accede to the Groolooos request for termination or accept the Sploor proposal for more time to adjust certain parameters that should bring this whole incident to a satisfactory conclusion.”

Wilfred scanned the attendees again. The mood had not changed. There was a determination to conclude this matter but no particular predetermination as to which choice to make. There was still hope for the Sploor if they could present a good case that their proposed changes would solve the problem. If they managed to screw that up then the Groolooos proposal would be accepted and in less than 100 years all life in the entire Sploor multiverse would be eradicated: To be replaced as soon as practicable!

Just so you, the reader, understand: The Sploor have problems. Mostly thanks to the Groolooos unique design for the Sploor universe used throughout the Groolooos multiverse of 500 Sploor Parallel Universes. When the Sploor converted to a PEB, they, in their turn, created a multiverse of 500 Parallel Universes of their own design. Each universe designed to contain Earthlings. They designed humanity using a standard template of proven value plus a few modifications of their own. BUT: It had taken the Sploor from Version 1 to version 480 to launch one that worked to their satisfaction. AND THEN they had a failure to launch properly in Universe 265.

To re-launch they had to correct their error (No gravity switched on at launch) and have the alteration re-designated as Version 481. The unique version. The one we all live in. Nobody knows what happened to all the star dust launched in this failed effort. It never formed suns, planets, dust clouds etc. They never recovered most of that dust which was the cause of the delay and re-designation. As far as they know that remaining dust is still hurtling through our universe causing unknown problems everywhere it goes.

The Groolooos mock the Sploor for their tardiness and simple mistakes. The Sploor have many counter arguments and the ongoing verbal conflict is best avoided if at all possible.

For now, Wilfred wanted to initiate a comprehensive survey of the billions of human worlds throughout the Sploor multiverse and see just how bad the problems are. That survey would take place during today’s meeting. Their combined report would be presented to the Sploor and Groolooos Supreme Councils immediately after their return and short discussion producing their conclusion. This would be presented to the Supreme Council meeting later that evening for approval and signature.

There was no conflict of interest here. No telepath can lie to another telepath without them knowing it. Truth was rife and all reports were honest. Wilfred was already pretty sure that the results of the survey would be negative and knew that was the answer the two supreme councils were expecting.

Even though it might take a few days of examination on each human world to find examples of the problem let alone identify it’s cause. Wilfred had the power to compress one whole week of time into one hour of each day here in the City of Heaven. This limitation desperately curtailed the time available to really look over each world properly enough to determine its fate fairly, but that was the rule.

Of course; as we all know, rules are meant to be broken, are they not?

Wilfred could have broken this very old rule today, but he would not simply because he had other fish to fry and wanted his own clique of 25 special agents finding out things the other PEBs present need not know about.

For their own good. Naturally!

Over the interceding period between the last meeting, three months before, and this one today every PEB attending had been given a comprehensive task list to divide up amongst the millions of beings each could manifest at any one time. In this way at least 10% of all the human occupied planets could get reviewed.

Wilfred knew each PEB was ready and anxious to get started so he set them on their way. Once the hall was empty Wilfred returned to his office on the top floor and went into the largest of three meeting rooms therein. In it he found all the beings he had invited there, especially for an extra, unscheduled, and very secret meeting, of his own.

Present were 25 PEBs who were all dedicated and highly trained telepaths taken from amongst the very best of the Grooloos and the Sploor races over a period of 50 years or more. These agents were Wilfred and Stanley's most secret possessions. Agents that only answered to Wilfred or Stanley in Wilfred's absence.

They had been selected from almost 1 million agents who had each been recruited to watch over certain carefully selected humans living on the planet Earth in Universe 265 version 481 of the Sploor multiverse. These humans had been given mild telepathic powers while still in their mother's womb.

Over the ensuing decades all of these newborn human telepaths will go on to be outstanding human beings and members of a very exclusive club called "The Sploors". The Sploors club was a reward for all those who were accepted for the final accolade of being upgraded to higher rank. To get into the club you had to be a telepath, born on Earth, and selected for fast-tracking to a senior rank during the main selection process.

These 25 agents in Wilfred's office had been selected as the very best of the best. They were selected for a special task which was to guard, guide, and mentor one young human male, aged 18 at the time of this meeting in 1994 AD (by the Earth calendar he lived by). He was way out in front of his peers. He was born a child prodigy, an English born boy, called Jason Robert Barstone.

Most of Wilfred's secret briefing concerned Jason and his future. What he could be told and what must be kept from him at all costs. How he was to be protected, who he was to be protected from, and why. The 25 agents there would form 5 teams of 5 people each. Each team would have one member who always manifested themselves as the same human each time they were around Jason. This meant Jason would have 5 constant companions available to him no matter what time it was or place he was in. Some of the agents had multiple manifestations available to them, but the basic idea was that Jason should always be surrounded by people he knew and could trust.

Once Wilfred had gone over the plan several times and checked all of the agents for a complete understanding of their duties and responsibilities, he closed the meeting and sent them off to play their parts in the Survey of the planet Earth. These 25 alone would survey and report on Earth.

Earth was very special to Wilfred and his boss.

One of the agents manifested himself as Alastair Sim and headed for a small town in California which had been randomly picked from a list of potentially relevant places on Earth during the 30-year period between the Earth years 1988 and 2018. It is his survey we will examine in full since it will be the shortest and quickest to complete.

This list had also been compiled since the last meeting three months before. All the places on the list had certain suspicious activities going on with regard to their local educational institutions. Each agent was responsible for planning his own way to determine more details, if there were any to be found, and report back. He could pick what day, and what time, he would arrive there, and who he would talk to, and about what subject that talk would encompass.

Alastair had done his homework well. He was due to take over as mentor for Jason this August 6th in 1994 when Jason turned 18. He wanted to check on the affect the detected failures were having on the honesty and integrity of those who were not learning as much as they should, that would include

any affect they had on Jason himself. He picked August of the last year on the list, 2018 because it was in August Jason had been born and it would be his 42nd year. Alastair wanted to see how Jason turned out so he picked a day late in August 2018 as his survey date. After leaving the meeting he both shot forward 24 years in time and travelled through the cosmos to a small town in California on the US West Coast on the planet Earth many, many, miles from the meetings venue. He did both using the power of thought alone.

His entire traveling time was only measurable in nanoseconds and for this short direct hop it was only 0.084 nanoseconds door to door. He arrived as awake and refreshed as he had left, without a single wrinkle on his clothing or need to wait for the usual pesky authorities to approve his trip.

Alastair had been studying the Earth for several years and was very familiar with its usual clunky travel systems. He was particularly amused by their insistence that travel at the speed of light was impossible.

It wasn't. It was just too slow to bother about. He travelled at the speed of thought which could whisk him through both space and time so he could arrive anywhere he desired at any time we wished in almost no time at all.

His survey would involve seeing what damage had been done during that 30-year period of humanity's downward spiral. He had already accepted that it was an established fact that humanity was lagging behind. Now he wanted to see what the result of that variance looked like in reality.

This could be fun.

1/ Alastair's corruption survey

It was a warm sunny morning in the small town of Jespersen, California, that Monday in June 2018. As usual, nothing odd appeared to be going on. The only sounds to be heard came from the town's road sweeping truck that was slowly winding its way around the town square. Currently it was sweeping and spraying the car parking spaces reserved for city employees. With his usual blind optimism, the sweeper driver expected all eighteen city and federal employees would arrive for work that morning. He knew it would have to happen one day.

At 08:00 precisely, there came along the street a tall imposing figure. Unbeknownst to all the people around Jespersen that morning this odd-looking figure was in fact an extremely powerful alien. The kind of alien the horror movies from Hollywood would immediately show decimating whole cities simply to demonstrate their unimaginable power. This alien did not do that sort of thing, he was far too powerful to ever feel the need to demonstrate his power in such a crass way. He much preferred the concept expressed in the old human adage about talking softly and carrying a big stick. He was, after all, in disguise precisely so he wouldn't scare the locals.

Instead of fear he manifested the appearance of a vaguely familiar, immaculately dressed, older, English gentleman with possible humorous associations. He wore a light-brown tweed suit, with highly polished brogue shoes over dark-brown Marino wool socks adorning his feet. A plain red silk tie was held in place with a diamond tie-pin to a well pressed, cream-coloured cotton-shirt. In his hand he brandished a tightly furled black umbrella and, on his head, there sat an immaculate, bowler hat at a slightly jaunty angle.

He looked totally out of place for any Californian town at any time of the year. But not alien.

His odd appearance didn't seem to bother him one bit. He strode along purposefully, his umbrella tip clicking regularly on the pavement in perfect pace with his step. Careful to avoid making eye contact with the sweeper driver; who had just spotted the odd spectacle and nudged into a fire hydrant, the stranger, continued his precise faultless stride. Without hesitation he turned into the main entrance of the Jespersen Police Department when he came to the exact centerline of the ornate doorway.

Inside the entryway he removed his bowler hat and followed the signs to the police department's enquiry desk. There he found a large indolent looking police officer with three stripes on his sleeves. He had an official looking expression on his face even as he read the morning newspaper's cartoons page.

"Good morning sergeant, may I please talk to a senior detective? I wish to report a major crime that is already in progress."

The sergeant didn't even notice the English accent or glance up from his paper to ask: "What kind of crime, domestic, robbery, homicide . . .?" he trailed off as he glanced up between cartoon strips and beheld the unexpected view of an English gentleman patiently expecting a response with an inquiring grin on his face.

"Election fraud: Specifically involving the illegal rigging of the 2020 Presidential Election."

The sergeant sighed it was 2018 and he was quite sure that no crime being committed in 2020 was therefore reportable. He slowly, reluctantly, folded his paper and stood up to lean menacingly across the countertop.

The immaculate gentleman stood his ground and kept his inane grin firmly in place. After losing the staring contest the sergeant sighed yet again. With obvious resignation he resumed in the same unenthusiastic tone: "Sure: Come with me."

The gentleman, whose name for that day was Alastair Sploor meekly followed the sergeant down the hallway to a room marked informatively as: 'Interview 1'. The sergeant pushed the door open and allowed Alastair to enter the room before he followed him in, carefully closing the door behind him.

"Please sit down": The sergeant indicated the seat on the far side of a large solid looking table, both of which were firmly bolted to the floor. After taking the umbrella and bowler he continued politely: "Now you won't mind if I just secure you here to the table will you. We get so many weird looking people wandering in off the street making complaints we like to keep a hold of them. It can get very embarrassing when we don't get all the details properly recorded before they leave one way or another."

Alastair seemed shocked at the thought: "Weird looking?" He glanced down at his attire in bewilderment. Seeing that the sergeant was studiously ignoring him he changed tack.

"What happens if you do not handcuff them?" he asked politely.

The sergeant finished with handcuffing the first hand and walked around the table to do the other hand. As he passed by, he put Alastair's bowler and umbrella on a seat under the one-way window between 'Interview 1' and the 'viewing room'.

"Some people suddenly change their minds and just walk out again." The sergeant smiled at Alastair: "It annoys the detectives no-end when people do that and then they come and annoy me."

As he spoke the sergeant gently, but firmly, handcuffed Alastair's second hand so the handcuff chain passed through a large metal eye in the top of the table put there for just that purpose.

Alastair sat there calmly with a wide grin on his face and simply said: "OK. This does seem to be an odd way to treat people, but this is America I suppose. Will it take Captain Finston long to get here?"

Captain Finston was the chief of detectives and was already in his office beginning his busy day with at least two coffees and several donuts. The sergeant; who was quite sure Alastair wasn't a local, was somewhat taken aback by the fact that the stranger knew the captain's name and had asked for him in person.

Darn it. That meant he would have to do something besides leave the stranger handcuffed to a table for a few hours to cool off. This was the usual way to deal with the off-the-street, nut-jobs, before they made the decision that they would prefer to leave of their own accord rather than stay.

The sergeant sighed and headed for the door: "I'll tell the captain you're here, I'm sure he will be keen to see you as soon as he can, OK"

Alastair smiled and nodded. The sergeant left, carefully locking the door behind him. He left Alastair sitting comfortably blissfully contemplating the prospect of leaving whenever he wished. He knew for a fact that here was absolutely nothing in this universe of ours that could have stopped him.

The sergeant returned to his front desk and put in a call to Captain Finston informing him that he had an 'out-of-town' visitor in Interview 1. A visitor who wanted to report a case of election fraud which was to occur in the 2020 elections. When asked what else he knew he replied: "The visitor looks remarkably like that old English actor who played scrooge in that famous Christmas film: You know the one; they play it every year I remember; it's called: A Christmas Carol"

Captain Finston's eyebrows rose high above his spectacle frames: "Alastair Sim? But he's dead."
"That's what I thought." replied the sergeant as he hung up.

That morning Captain Finston had several unwanted, messy legal chores to clear away from his otherwise empty desktop. They were messy because cooking oil, crumbs and icing from his donut had turned them into a semi-transparent, sticky, mess. These were the kind of unpleasant chores, long past their 'case closed' date which should have been quietly discarded months ago. They probably would have been discarded by now if they hadn't been so useful as coasters for the captain's desk.

Oh: And they also made it look as if he was busy.

All five were court documents relating to a range of offences committed by assorted family members of the city establishment's elite.

One was a parking ticket for his own wife?

One by one each document found its way into the captain's desk-side wastepaper basket. The captain soon breathed a contented sigh of relief after the strain of completing his days' work: Finishing his donut he, sighed and stood up before hitching his trousers up over his ample frontage in preparation for meeting a well-known ghost.

Now he would see his visitor, just maybe there was a real crime he could investigate?

Impersonating a dead actor? Public insanity? There had to be something like that?

Election fraud might prove interesting but he doubted it was true or that he'd do much about it if it was. During the Trump presidency there were many anti-Trump crimes that were not to be investigated thanks to the mayor's orders. Apparently, anti-Trump crimes could not possibly happen in a true-blue, democratic, state. At least not since the shock of Trump's election in 2016.

Finston finished his usual day's business by carefully sweeping the remaining donut crumbs onto the floor with his hand. He mused that he had been looking for a stress-free activity to occupy him, almost anything would have done. Suddenly, out of nowhere, an unknown, out-of-town, caller in Interview 1, took top priority. On his way to Interview 1 the captain passed the front desk. After a short chat about the parking habits of wives he asked the sergeant to accompany him. The sergeant once again, reluctantly, folded his paper and walked with the captain to Interview 1, there he opened the door for the captain and followed him inside.

The captain sat down in awed silence, staring directly across at Alastair, and continued to stare at him until the sergeant was ready to witness events. The sergeant locked the door behind himself and joined the captain by sitting on the fourth chair in the room, the one closest to the door. Then he too sat and starred at Alastair. There was not the slightest hint of sweat on Alastair's brow. His shirt armpits were dry and neatly pressed.

The temperature in 'Interview 1' was a hot 107.6 degrees Fahrenheit with around 80% humidity. All of California around Jespersen was in a drought situation and 'Interview 1' had no air conditioning whatsoever; not even an opening window. That's why the sergeant had left the nut-job in there.

Alastair stood up and reaching across the table to shake hands simply said, "Captain Finston I presume?"

It was then that the sergeant noted that the stranger was no longer handcuffed to the table. The handcuffs were still in position and locked in their closed position to the eyebolt. Before the sergeant could say anything, the captain spoke to the overly polite stranger. He did not stand up or hold out a hand, he was too busy moping his forehead with a handkerchief. "Good morning, I understand you wish to report a crime?"

Alastair smiled and sat before leaning forward in a conspiratorial fashion. He rested his crossed arms on the tabletop. "As a matter of fact, yes, I do. I wish to report that the mayor of Jespersen together with several other of the town's officials are working together with the State Governor's office to selectively defraud the people of the State of California of their legitimate voting rights in the coming 2020 presidential elections."

The captain looked mildly surprised. This wasn't the sort of thing that usually ended up on his desk early on a sunny Monday morning in June or any other day of the year. These things usually ended up in the FBI offices on the fifth floor of the federal building across the square. Maybe Freddy wasn't coming in today. Freddy was the current FBI special agent unlucky enough to get assigned to Jespersen to serve his 6-month tour of duty. To date they had met once and usually they would not meet again until Freddy left Jespersen never to be seen again.

"May I ask your name sir and why have you brought this to me, wouldn't the FBI be of more help to you?"

"My Name Is Alastair Sploor, please call me Alastair. I have not taken this to the FBI because they are involved, or at least someone high up in the FBI is involved and at least one agent here in town must be presumed to be involved as a go-between. Since I know not which agent has been corrupted, I thought it best to see you first. In any case, the FBI office was shut due to the lack of crime according to the sign on the door."

The Captain and sergeant exchanged embarrassed looks. To the best of their knowledge Freddy had been fishing since his first uneventful month had produced no work at all. "Would you mind explaining how you know anything about this fraud you wish to report?"

Alastair didn't mind at all. For the next two hours he outlined in detail how he had heard about and subsequently investigated a plot to 'fix' the 2020 presidential elections and every other election in the state of California from 2020 onwards. He named names, dates, places, meetings held, equipment purchased, people paid off and many other things that had been done. His information was detailed and included dates, times, telephone numbers etc.

No date that Alastair mentioned had been earlier than 2019. There were many things Alastair failed to mention to the two confused police officers at that meeting. He didn't mention that only a few seconds before walking into the police station he had been at a meeting in Heaven in the year 2012 either. Since then, following the instructions given to him at that meeting, he had used advanced telepathy and time travel to gather all the data he had just presented. He didn't want to confuse these humans any more than his appearance already could. He also omitted to mention that his investigation was ongoing and quite current, even as they all sat there in 'Interview 1'.

Neither Alastair or the Sploor race he represented cared one jot about the upcoming election fraud. What they wanted to understand was why the local high school's examination results had fallen through the floor that year? Captain Finston's brain was a mine of information on the subject. Basically, there had been a change of school principal brought about by a bit too much honesty and integrity. The new replacement was more amenable to helping those that helped him. There was more but this was enough for Alastair to know who else among the local hierarchy needed their brains read for more information.

Captain Finston's and the sergeant's only thoughts ran along the lines of 'could this be a ghost?', 'was he dreaming', 'could Alastair Sim have come back from the dead to report a crime from the future before it happened?'

The captain and sergeant stared at Alastair again. Alastair merely smiled back benignly. These two simpletons were easy to confuse and keep wrong-footed. Just telling them the truth seemed to work.

His testimony had been precise and meticulous in its detail, laying out a complex trail of criminal activity that extended from the opposition's presidential candidate's office through the Democratic Party National Offices to the State Governors Office to the Federal Court system and down through every county in the state. It was a comprehensive disclosure regarding a serious crime that would be the biggest case the captain had ever dealt with. It might even end up as the biggest case anyone ever dealt with.

In fact, Captain Finston thought it was far too big for him to investigate on his own. He'd need help. He had only been promoted to captain the previous year upon solving his biggest case to date.

There had been a case of arson at the local high school, a whole gymnasium had burned to the ground that could cost the town many hundreds of thousands of dollars for a replacement. It turned out that it had been a cabal of seniors upset that they were not getting sports scholarships to a college. They blamed the coach for poor recommendations and hence attacked the gymnasium.

The coach blamed fast food, bad parenting, and poor grades, the kids were simply too fat for college football and far too indolent to survive any kind of training camp. That aside they were also far too dumb to get into any college no matter how many 'New Library buildings' their parents funded.

That's just the way it was and there was nothing the school's principal or the coach could do about it. There simply wasn't enough money in the pot to 'ease' their passage through any college that wanted to stay in business and retain whatever shred of intellectual integrity it could still cling onto.

The three ringleaders turned out to be the mayor's son, the judge's son, and the district attorney's son, accompanied by the chief of police's triplets who were a year behind but had hoped for the same sporting chance in a year's time. In the end Lieutenant Finston was faced with becoming the most denigrated cop in town or doing a deal.

He opted for the easy path and did a deal. All the boys found themselves at a tough military college on full board until they were at least 20 *and* graduated as lieutenants ready for military service. The actual military service just might get waived if the parents thought their 'dear little angels' had actually learned something from the experience. Only the three devoted mothers held out any hope of a reprieve along those terms. All the male parents were mildly hoping for a short and bloody war somewhere their boys might find out what the term 'cannon fodder' meant.

Too many nights spent bailing their 'little angels' out of jail or worse had passed for any of the fathers to hope things might change with age. Captain Finston's nephew who just happened to be the school principal was persuaded to take a much better job at a school in Texas and take the coach along with him. Honesty and integrity were much more appreciated in Texas.

Soon after the change in school management the whole matter was dropped by the local newspaper. The gym was rebuilt with money supplied by the parents which the lieutenant had thought was very decent of them since they were all city employees and nobody got paid that much in Jespersen. How could the town pay them that much? It was a small town with only one major employer, a high quality, government approved printing company that only printed government forms and documents. Things like voting forms and other election documents in fact.

It never occurred to the captain that any number of varieties of voting slip might be described as a form or document. He had also never read about the public's concerns over mail-in voter fraud or the kind of vote counting machines that could be programmed to do certain things that could be construed as illegal tampering when applied to state elections.

In fact, it would be true to say that few things ever occurred to Captain Finston's keen and agile brain that couldn't be put there by any number of the towns elected officials. That was why he was such an asset to the town; the town's main employer loved him dearly.

As a final cherry on the cake, he had been promoted to be the Captain of detectives which paid much better than he would ever have thought possible. Especially since it meant he was still in charge of a department with only two detectives in it, himself, and Andy White, who was due to retire within the month and had been the only detective sergeant under him when he had been a police lieutenant - detective branch, for six years?

Alastair's disclosure was too big, too detailed, too risky and two years from happening. The captain didn't believe a word of it. Federal agents, judges, state officials ranging from weekly paid workers in the state bureau of statistics to senior officials of the FBI and CIA in Washington DC as well as senators and congressmen were involved. He didn't believe there could be that many corrupt officials in the whole country let alone in the state of California.

Not only didn't the captain believe it, he didn't want to believe it, he was way too scared to even consider the possibility that it might be true. Who could he take it to if it was, how could he get any action taken? In the end he decided to hold Alastair until he had the time to check a few things out, talk to his brother the Chief of Police and his brother-in-law the Mayor and so forth. He explained the same things to the sergeant and Alastair.

Alastair smiled as the sergeant replaced the handcuffs around his wrists before leaving with the captain. As the captain passed through the door, held open by the sergeant Alastair spoke: "Would there be any chance of a coffee and a sandwich? Unfortunately, I missed breakfast this morning."

The door closed behind the sergeant with a slam.

Alastair relaxed and went back over all the data he had related to the captain. It was all true, he knew it was true, he had personally travelled forward in time to 2019 and collected it all himself. His memory was eidetic and worked very well indeed. The data on school management gave him what he wanted and all he had to do now was leave, preferably under circumstances nobody would want to remember.

Once he had finished with his reminiscence Alastair relaxed even more and interlaced his fingers behind his head in order to stare at the ceiling and think about Earth's epic range of beverages.

Soon after that a young police woman was surprised to see a paper cup floating in mid-air by the coffee machine being filled from the coffee jug which was equally unsupported. Once full, the jug moved back onto the hotplate in the coffee machine, while a cheese and pickle sandwich from a basket full of 'pickles-with-something' sandwiches floated up into the air next to the coffee cup.

Slowly the two items moved off down the corridor followed by the policewoman and a growing number of bemused officers she had attracted to the odd display before her. Having arrived at the 'Interview 1' door the procession paused as the door opened allowing the two items to pass through only to have the door close firmly behind them cutting off the view.

One officer went off to find the captain of detectives, the rest entered the viewing room between 'Interview 1' & '2' from which they could see through the one-way glass what was going on in 'Interview 1'. All there was to see there was an un-handcuffed man, at his ease, with his feet up on the table eating and drinking his coffee and sandwich.

When the captain arrived, they explained what they had seen and the captain entered 'Interview 1' with great trepidation, his pistol drawn, but hanging in his hand down by his side. Alastair smiled and looked up at the captain: "Back so soon? This coffee is excellent and the sandwich must have been made fresh this morning, what lovely homemade pickles, it was all so delightful."

The sergeant just stood there with his mouth open.

Suddenly the captain realised that his pistol was no longer in his hand and looked around on the floor for it. Alastair held it up and said: "Are you looking for this primitive old thing?"

Alastair raised the gun and pointed it at his temple from about two inches away and pulled the trigger before anyone could react. There was the incredibly loud sound of .40 S&W gunshot that echoed around the small room. By the time their ears had recovered and the smoke had dissipated the captain

saw his pistol, field stripped, on the table next to an empty magazine and a row of neatly arranged cartridges. Alastair looked around the floor and seeing something that interested him, bent down to pick up the spent bullet.

It was squashed short and as flat as it would be had it been fired at the frontal armour of a military tank. "Not really very effective, is it?" was all Alastair said until seeing no response whatever he uttered: "May I assume you have nothing new to tell me?"

Then he stood up and walked right through the solid table to the outside wall and then passed through it to stand outside and wave back at everyone through the window. They were on the second floor and this should not be possible even using magician's tricks.

Everyone was wondering how an ethereal being who could walk through walls could stop a bullet fired from very close range into their temple?

Upon his return to the room Alastair stood before the gaping captain: "I have told you everything you need to know. You could now gather all the information together in order to present a major case and arrest many important people for election tampering and fraud. Are you going to do anything about it or not?"

The captain took several seconds to stop his lower lip trembling and gather his wits about him before he said: "What can I do, who could I take the evidence to? If everything you say is true there is nobody, I dare trust; nobody I can take this kind of accusation to."

Alastair nodded, he casually retrieved his umbrella and bowler hat from the chair: "I see, I thought this would be the case. Thank you for your time captain, Toodle-oo!"

With that Alastair walked through the wall again and simply disappeared.

By lunch time the whole station was blaming their vision on bad pickles in the sandwiches that week. Nobody even mentioned that Alastair Sploor had looked very much like a, now dead, English actor called Alastair Sim. No report was ever made and nobody ever spoke of the whole, unusual, thing ever again. Who would ever believe a story like that: A visit from Scrooge no less?

None of them even considered the possibility that a powerful telepath may have toned down their concerns, obfuscated their memories, and generally reminded them about the amount of alcohol each had consumed at the previous night's party.

That had been an unofficial 'pre-party rehearsal' for the party celebrating Andy White's 65th Birthday.

Immediately after leaving Jespersen, Alastair travelled back to the meeting room he had started at traveling in both time to 1994, and distance to attend a second meeting with his fellow agents in Wilfred's office. His trip once again took less than one nanosecond proving, if proof were needed, that the speed of thought is far faster than light.

Alastair had not been the only agent manifesting the appearance of the human actor Alastair Sim that week. Many Sploor and Grooloos agents had been travelling through the multiverse busy sampling humanities will to overcome the evil that was swallowing it whole, bit by bit, day by day.

The Sploor, had designed and created humanity, and the multiverse in which humanity lived. It had first been noticed that things had started to go wrong in the multiverse when U265 had not passed a regular survey of its performance. U 265 was the ONLY version 481 universe in the entire multiverse.

It was the universe Alastair had helped get going after the initial failure to launch properly. It had been Alastair who had ensured that the humanity created in U 265 would be identical to the humanity seeded in the other 499 universes in this multiverse.

He wanted to make sure he had not made any errors and was now sure he had not.

That morning, after the main meeting, there were about one million of Wilfred's special agents testing planets throughout the multiverse. In fact, there were so few suitable human actors and actresses' names and images that had been broadcast to the collection point in space since the 1936

Olympics that there had been over 1,400 Alastair Sim lookalikes out and about on that day alone. And that was just for Earth.

There were billions of planets in our universe inhabited by humanity. There were 500 identical, parallel, universes, each one with an Earth equivalent and billions of other planets inhabited by humanity. That was the scale of operation the Sploor had been trained to design and create. They had been trained by the Groolooos who were supposedly, an even older and wiser race of aliens.

Alastair, was a Sploor and worked under Wilfred with Groolooos agents as well as other Sploor agents. He was to become my personal mentor when I reached the age of 18 in 1994. It had been Alastair who told me about the Sploor and Groolooos history.

On each Sploor planet some 600 million highly Intelligent beings had evolved to eventually combine and convert to pure energy life forms. This would have occurred many eons before they would have learned how to design, create, and produce a multiverse of parallel universes of their own. A multiverse in which Earthlings were expected to evolve in their turn.

Alastair had actually designed several aspects of the Sploor universe model and various features of the 'seed' that had eventually resulted in the formation of the human race. This entire collection of identical, parallel universes, and all the beings contained within its multiverse was contained in a void called an iteration.

The Sploor iteration was adjacent to and abutted the previous iteration that had contained the Groolooos multiverse. The iteration created for humanity was also alongside and abutting the Sploor iteration on the opposite side to the Groolooos iteration. This iteration sandwich with the Sploor in the middle was just a part of the Fibonacci spiral of iterations that would eventually exist.

Unfortunately, this Sploor iteration wasn't working as designed and Alastair was personally very worried why that was. For a long time now the Sploor had been covering up certain 'challenges' they had encountered with their human protégés. The sort of faults their own mentors; the Groolooos, would love to know about.

Unfortunately, both the Groolooos who had trained and then supervised the Sploor and the Sploor themselves were now faced with a huge problem. George G. Loos and David G. Loos were the senior Groolooos representatives at the meeting. They sat with Alastair who they had often worked with. The Groolooos were also pure energy beings, but far older and wiser than the Sploor who were hosting them.

Most Groolooos wanted to destroy our entire multiverse and start over. Time was short and the Groolooos Supreme Council considered this would be a quicker path to a suitable solution than faffing about trying to get humanity back on track.

To both the Sploor and Groolooos races this decision should have been a simple discussion over a production problem. It meant little more to them than when two earth scientists find a dirty petri dish left after an overnight growth period only to express the thought: "Nothing to worry about, let's sterilise these dishes and try again."

Having said that there were many Groolooos who wanted to see Earthlings flourish and were prepared to help the Sploor succeed in their endeavours. Two such Groolooos were George and David; both were hand-picked members of Wilfred's 25 special agents. It was Alastair, the first to return, who, waited for the last agent to return from Earth and report before asking the meeting a Question: "Well that is the last report to come in. Today we have examined the development efforts of the human planet Earth in Sploor Universe Version 481. The 265th such Universe in this group of 500 Parallel Universe Numbers in Sploor's one single Multiverse. The *ONLY* version 481 out there, the others all being version 480's!"

At the end of the debate down in the main hall between the Survey team members a vote was taken and their final report was sent to the Sploor and Groolooos Supreme Councils for ratification and signature. That debate happened in the evening of the same day as Wilfred's meeting. A final vote was

taken, stamps and signatures were applied to a pre-prepared document and an announcement was made.

87% voted to start the Sploor multiverse from the beginning once again; all 500 universes. No exceptions. They voted to start with new universes and a completely re-designed seeding process using a re-designed seed. The old materials would be 100% re-cycled, a process which would totally remove every particle and cell of old material with a new, but slightly different, particle or cell.

Following the vote, the verdict from the meeting was transmitted to Wilfred's office. It was Alastair who glumly reported to the 24 other special agents waiting in Wilfred's office: -

"Sploor UVs: 480 and 481 in PUNs 0 to 500 in the Sploor Multiverse were to be terminated."

It was agreed that this entire process should be ready for implementation in approximately 80 Earth years or less.

Hi: I'm Jason R. Barstone. The child prodigy Wilfred has chosen for some task or other. It would be a long time before I knew exactly what that was, he kept it a secret from all of us. In the meantime, I will do my best to let you know what happened from the day I was born to the day all of humanity is finally stored in a stasis void to await further developments. Believe it or not that is the good news.

Did I fail? Frankly I don't know. You be the judge of that.

However: Before you can decide we have a long way to go and several volumes to work through.

Some of these historic descriptions can be complicated, they confused me until I took the QUBE qualification which is what both the Groolooos and Sploor had taken when they became Pure-Energy-Beings or PEBs. The QUBE or Qualification in Universe Building and Engineering was the first step up the ladder when it came to creating a universe and designing an intelligent species to inhabit it. There was an even higher qualification, think of it as a PhD in the subject, which was called OVUS training. More about that when we come to it.

I will explain Alastair's 'returning from his survey in California' description to the meeting in the same, simple, terms Alastair used when he told me about these events. This would have been in 1994 when I became 18 and it was time for him to try and persuade me to help the Sploor solve the problems they faced.

And yes, in August 1994 Alastair was describing to me events that had not yet happened. They would happen, but not until June 2018. It was considered vital to a whole lot of people, I would not meet for a very long time, that I should help them.

Before I could help, I needed to understand the first of many plans conceived by Wilfred for the Groolooos and Sploor agents described here. It had been cooked up before I had been born in 1976. This plan was to thwart an unfortunate decision to be made in 2018 at a meeting in Wilfred's office. An office I could not possibly have ever conceived of: The office of the Mayor of the City of Heaven.

Don't get confused, there are no gods here or anywhere else in this saga. If gods exist, they must be a great deal higher up the ladder of advancement than I ever get.

You'll have to make your own minds up about that.

Did I mention that the Sploor had known for some time that their multiverse wasn't working as expected? There were a lot of errors made but at this time in my story they were pretty much convinced that it was to do with their error with the first launch of our particular universe. They were wrong, but it took a long time for us to discover the truth.

Alastair's first explanation to me was made when he was trying to recruit me into the service of the Sploor in 1994: "Jason: Imagine you have a customer that wants you to create a new line of soup. Let's call it Vegetable soup. They want 500 tins of this new concoction that must be based on a tomato stock and include peas, carrots, French beans, rice, and corn. Because they are a very 'picky' client, it takes you 480 attempts to perfect an acceptable recipe. Let us call this the batch Number. You now load

500 lidless tins on your production line and make up a vat with 500 servings of the tomato stock. You also load all the individual vegetables into hoppers able to dispense precise numbers of each vegetable into each tin as it passes beneath each hopper.”

“You start your machine and a specific volume of stock is injected into each tin as it moves along the conveyor. So are 50 peas, 60 cubes of carrot and so forth for each vegetable in turn. At the end of the machine all the tins have their lids put on top before being roll-swaged permanently in place.”

“Upon final inspection it is found that in tin No. 265 of the 500 loaded there had been a lid placement malfunction and that one tin had to be discarded and replaced. This involves a new tin and a new loading of newly sourced vegetables and stock. Because the recipe is exactly the same BUT there could be variations in the supplied vegetables even though they meet every measurable standard of comparison a new batch number must be used. This batch is 481 and its manufacturing date is later than batch 480's date.”

“The whole shipment of 500 cans we call a multiverse. The factory we produced them all in we would call a Dimension. Each of the nominally identical cans we call a parallel universe. The entire contents of each can we call a universe with virtually identical designs or recipes known as U-480 or U-481 all of which should be almost the same except for Tin 265 which will be out of step time wise.”

That simplistic explanation of our universe's identification: SUV: 481 in PUN 265, is how Alastair had designated his report on our Earth.

While all 500 parallel universes had been created together and in numerical order, ours, being the odd one out, had been left to last. Fortunately, the results of our examination did not seem unexpectedly out of the ordinary when compared to the other 499. We were not special but like 58% of the 500 universes examined we were not working as expected. None of the 500 was perfect, none were over performing. All 500 were under par, some by a single percentage point but, most including 265 were off track by more than the allowable margin.

A decision had to be made in the general meeting down in the great hall.

“Do we carry on and try to correct things or flush all 500 away?”

Apparently, this debate had gone on for an hour, which, at the speed of thought, was a very long debate indeed. There would be only one unanimous finding which nothing could be done to alter. That was why they had been keeping an eye on the future so they could initiate their recovery plan back before I was born.

In general, or so the report read: Humans are filthy creatures, the state of almost all of their planets is disgusting. They had all polluted the space around the outside of their atmosphere, the atmosphere itself, and anything that atmosphere touched. The seas were so polluted sea creatures were dying by the million. Their cities were disgusting and laden with garbage, garbage was in their homes, in bins and in gutters everywhere. Their waste dumps were overflowing and little research on recycling or using renewable materials had ever taken place. Nuclear contamination was widespread no effort had been made to nullify radiation and many thought this alone may have altered human genetic material enough to actually be the problem.

Humans seemed more interested in making new weapons with which to destroy themselves than investigating new discoveries that would make nuclear energy safe to use. The humans knew how to demagnetise and magnetise a permanent magnet but not how to control gravity or radiation. All simple controls over natural forces.

There was a generally accepted sense that humanity had sunk so low that corruption and deceit had taken over from honest leadership and democratic control. This was supposed to be impossible. The basic seedling template used by all races had safeguards incorporated in the physical design matrix.

Then there was the massive overpopulation problem. How that could have happened nobody knew. The overwhelming number of humans all desperate for their share of everything available whether they deserved it or not had been a shock. Humans had never been designed so that living cheek by

jowl with one another like animals could become a possibility. It was a well understood problem that overcrowding caused friction, friction turned to distrust and pretty soon there were conflicts of all kinds everywhere. NOT a good design feature at all.

In fairness: All the aliens at that meeting knew the Sploor had tried something new with the full consent of the Groolooos. They had tried to make their human seeding process more adaptable. Usually, many seeds fell on marginally suitable planets and failed. The Sploor had developed a seed that was very slightly more adaptable to its environment and hopes had been high that more planets would be populated.

What none of them had anticipated was that the seeding process would adapt to many different environments on a single planet. Hence Earth's multitude of races, religions, and population concentrations. There was supposed to be only one *type* of human on each planet. That type would have been the one most capable of surviving and developing on all parts of each suitable planet. Humans from different planets may have variations but not when they came from the same planet.

This excellent Sploor effort had produced a complete mess.

No wonder there was so little drinking water available. Food was becoming scarcer the fish were poisoned with plastics and more and more land was being used for habitation rather than forests or food production. Several Groolooos experts declared that human existence on Earth was no longer sustainable or supportable in its present form.

Each human occupied planet's automatic systems had failed completely. These automated systems were incorporated into each planet that was seeded in the same way that every living form of biological existence from an amoeba through a seed of grass to a Great Blue whale and human being was imbued with life. It had some Life Force Energy (Liffergy) injected into it.

Every inhabited planet was alive to a very small and limited extent. It was designed to react to certain events. Over population and an unsustainable drain of planetary resources were the two biggest and most violent reactions that could be triggered.

The overcrowding should have been solved by the droughts, pestilences, pandemics, hurricanes, tsunamis, mud-slides, earthquakes, volcanos, flooding, ice-ages, desertification, sea-rises, global warming, global climate-change and so on. Why had none of them worked?

The human psyche was not supposed to be so soft that it wanted to save everyone no matter the cost or consequences; so why had they?

Fortunately, these extremely advanced alien species thought in terms of decades rather than minutes to get an important decision moving. So: When they collectively decided: "OK: Lets flush this entire collection of universes now, and start from scratch, anew." this was actually a very fortunate decision for humanity.

It meant we humans had about 80 or so years to put things right for them. That gave us until 2092 if only we had enough determination to do so. *Would you trust humanity, spread across billions of worlds in each of 500 universes, to get themselves back on track or even know what back on track meant? No! Of course, you wouldn't, neither did the Sploor OR Groolooos, fortunately there were some who planned to give us some help. In fact, Wilfred and they had been planning to do so for some time now.*

These selected million or so meeting in Wilfred's office had already formulated and initiated a plan that should solve the problem in less than 80 years (Starting from around 1970 Earth time when the complaint had first been reported to both the Groolooos and Sploor Supreme Councils). That help came in millions of varieties, one of which was me: Jason R Barstone. A human born, Sploor upgraded and, eventually, a Groolooos upgraded hybrid. I began as a Sploor proxy, evolved, trained, developed, and perfected to work on Earth without causing humanity to regard my help as part of an alien invasion.

If everything worked according to plan, they would have solved the problem by 2050 giving them plenty of time to get the eradication order rescinded.

I can tell you now: Very little went according to plan.

I have already begun explaining how the Sploor and Groolooos are involved with humanity. We are the next iteration in an ongoing process. I had better explain why the 'ongoing' reference could really screw up the Sploor plan, which would screw up the Groolooos plan if it does not keep on going.

It would almost certainly mean there would be no more future for the Groolooos, the Sploor and all of humanity at all.

As you may have already guessed this is all, BIG stuff: Space the Universe and everything that exists, kind of stuff.

For example: Having read this far you may not have already asked yourself, how had humanity screwed up the futures of itself and two vastly more advanced alien life forms who were already pure energy beings and virtually omnipotent?

The answer is simple and highly complex all at the same time.

Put simply, the purpose of existence for all the Human, Sploor, Groolooos and all those species that had gone before the Groolooos was this:

"To learn everything there is to learn about everything there is to learn anything about."

This may sound simplistic until you learn just how much humanity does not know. Just a few simple examples of this ignorance might include: Scale is a perfectly valid consideration in any construct known to mankind: - Mathematics, geometry, physical length in 3D, speed, time, gravity, mass, density, sound, energy, etc.

An atom can be thought of as infinitely small to infinitely large. The speed of light could easily be reached once the concept of scale can be mastered. As mass increases the energy required increases unless the scale of the mass is reduced as progress is made.

Human science measures the speed of a photon of light energy to determine the speed of light parameters. A photon has no appreciable mass. Something useful such as a space capsule carrying humans has never been accelerated to a speed anywhere near as fast as light (186,282 miles per second). Even Alastair knew that the fastest thing humanity would produce before it was ended would be the Parker Solar probe launched by NASA in 2018. It would achieve a speed of over 364,000 miles per hour. That is nowhere near 1% of the speed of light which is about 7 million miles per hour.

How could humanity possibly know if there was any size reduction due to scale as the speed approached that of light? Any measuring instrument carried by the object being measured would shrink with it. What datum length could be used to compare the scale of the object with?

Once a species becomes a Pure-Energy-Being, like the Sploor now existed as, then, and only then, can time travel be examined. Time is rigidly linear for all corporeal beings. Linear, but scalable, for pure-energy-beings such as the Sploor and totally open to manipulation for the older, wiser Groolooos. And so on: But only when the scale concept can be fully mastered.

Mastering scale enables basic time travel. It becomes possible to pass a billion of years by scaling down the time line. This is the same as faster than light travel can be achieved by scaling down the mass as speed increases. Universe creation and many other concepts become possible when scaled down to a manageable size.

After mastering the laws of scale, things change. For example: Take the creation of a universe as humanity understands one. Creating a universe involves waiting a billion or more years so that the planets and suns form and life might begin evolving.

But what if a creation event could occur in the average kitchen inside a large spherical bottle?

All of these things are simple once you understand how to do them, something which requires the accumulation of massive amounts of knowledge and data. No artificial intelligence could be constructed that large and that complex. It would need to be larger than our known universe and where, exactly, would the lights dim when it was switched on?

No corporeal entity could ever grow a brain that big unless it is prepared to drag it around on an ever-growing trolley for ever thereafter. That leads to the need for Liffergy or Life Force Energy which explains why there must be Life after Death. Liffergy is the energy a living entity releases when it dies. An accumulation of Liffergy can enable a Pure-Energy-Being to grow very large indeed. Big enough, in fact, so that it can:

“Learn everything there is to learn about everything there is to learn anything about.”

And even when that stage of knowledge is attained it only serves to open whole new vistas of new things to be learned. The ultimate subject that can be learned is unknown as yet, but for the highly advanced Grooloos species: - Their current understanding of the ultimate question has recently begun to evolve around the origin of the very first thought. Where had that come from?

Simple things like, where does all the matter in our universe come from? Are known long before ultimate knowledge can be gained. Matter can be created by the thought from a being able to do such things as think something into existence. Humanity has a long way to go before it gets to learn that kind of knowledge let alone the power of the minds it can lead to. Then there comes the discovery that infinity is not the end of anything other than the current extent of a being's ability to imagine it.

Right now, young humans need to learn what intelligent life in the universe had already learned to be true and carry on from there rather than regress into the belief of politically convenient inanities. The lies that encase and hamper modern science need to be removed and the human mind needs to be developed. Telepathy is probably the very first and easiest stepping stone along that path.

Sheer brain power is the ONLY thing any advanced species could ever need.

Telepathy alone could change the world simply because it is impossible to lie to a telepath. It is equally impossible for a telepath to lie to another telepath. If everyone was telepathic, lies, deceit, crime, and corruption would completely stop within a single generation.

That is why so many governments do not want it known that they already know this. That's why they want to dumb humanity down. That is why the schools are failing to educate children properly and examination standards are being lowered. It's no fun being corrupt when everyone knows what you are doing.

AND: That is EXACTLY the problem humanity is causing for the Sploor and Grooloos.

The Sploor and Grooloos do not care about the corruption. They care about the reduction in educational standards. Improve the education, get humanity back on track and the corruption will go away, one way or another. Either intelligent humans will investigate and prosecute the corrupt among them or they will become telepaths and detect the corrupt and deal with them another way.

Humanity is not learning the things it was designed and created to learn.

That must change.

2/ A Sploor-human-hybrid-proxy is born

I, Jason Robert Barstone, came screaming onto the scene at 7:15-AM, Friday, August 6th 1976. It was a home-birth in the apartment over my parents jewellery shop on Richmond Road, East Twickenham in the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames. This would be my mother's third and final effort to produce a child, the previous two efforts having been still-born.

I came into the world weighing 11 lb 4 oz; nearly 6 weeks later than expected, having sailed past my father's birthday and then his sister's birthday only to arrive on my parent's 10th Anniversary and the 31st Anniversary of the first nuclear weapon to be used in anger by the Americans on Hiroshima. As far as my family was concerned, especially by my mother, it was a day to be remembered.

Officiating at the birth had been our family doctor and his partner in the practice, a surgeon. My father was also present, he was getting quite used to such sights and, of course, my somewhat trepidatious mother.

Fortunately, all went well and I was welcomed into the world by one and all present. Plus, one other: Called Alex.

From the very beginning there was a voice in my head that introduced itself as Alex. Even before my voice box was adequately trained so I could utter 'momma' out loud Alex had taught me a lot more. I had learned to count to 100 forward and backwards, do the times tables up to and down from 12 x 12 and the alphabet from A-Z and Z-A.

At no time in my early childhood did it ever occur to me that not all children were born with a built-in friend. By the time I came to learn such things I had also learned to keep my mouth shut and be grateful that I was one of the luckier kids. Neither my mother or father ever knew about Alex although I'm sure they became aware that I was not entirely average as far as small boys went.

The fact that none of my baby clothes were big enough for me was probably her first clue. My life continued in that vein. I was a nerd's nerd who was big enough to scare the average bully and strong enough and capable enough, to pound them into the ground if they wanted to push things too far.

Before I could even talk, I was quite familiar with homework. Fortunately for Alex my father had thoughtfully crafted and placed all the teaching aids Alex could possibly require around and across my crib. One manifestation was in the form of a large array of square tiles that could be slid, one at a time, either vertically or horizontally until all were in their correct places forming a picture. On the footboard end there was an abacus comprising beads set on rods and above my head as I lay down, he placed a set of revolving multi-faceted disks. Each facet of these cleverly indexing disks contained a letter of the alphabet one per facet. 26 facets per disk and 48 disks.

These learning aids also taught me mental dexterity and terrified my father who could not understand how I could manipulate their parts so easily in the almost dark room every night. Bear in mind that at that age I could not possibly touch these tiles while lying flat on my back with little stubby arms.

He never caught them move of their own free will into the correct display and then back to a random display. This would have repeated for several hours each night which would have explained why I slept so soundly all day.

How many times Alex taught me how to create simple sentences, do basic math and create a picture I never knew. How many times I also did the exercises by hand before learning to do them with my mind I never knew.

Eventually, when I could stand and reach the tiles with father watching, he was very impressed. I eventually learned that the toys had been 'suggested' to my father in his sleep. They also allowed me to learn two other important lessons. The telepathic control over small objects in my local surroundings and increasing my personal security by identifying the intentions of others before they could harm me. Moving small light things with my mind became second nature to me as did keeping the ability to do so to myself.

Alex was quite right when he said: "Mummy and daddy wouldn't understand."

I had already developed sufficient telepathic ability to determine that dad had been totally shocked to find the letters A, B, C . . . to . . . X, Y, Z arranged properly one morning. He blamed mother, she thought he was fooling around to annoy her.

Why would my father do that to her?

Could it be because she was so proud of my progress, she didn't care how it happened?

Alex inserted the suggestion that ghosts were at work and almost got away with it.

Until their dying days neither of them knew what powers I had possessed at any point in my life. They may have had suspicions though, especially when a large package of legal documents arrived addressed to 'Master J.R. Barstone' from a prestigious firm of London Solicitors. In it were details of The Last Will and Testament of my Great Aunt Alexis Sploorine; Late of Perth, Western Australia.

According to her last will and testament I had been left the entire contents of her London bank account and all the documents contained in her safety deposit boxes at the same address. I was to receive all expenses required for my education and any activities I pursued while being educated. All my education related bills should be sent to the solicitors in London for immediate payment.

I could collect the remaining bulk of these bounties when I was either 21 or enrolled in a university, whichever came first. When the time came, I could personally collect all the documents and keys appertaining to this bequest from the solicitors in London but it had to be ME, IN PERSON, and alone. I had to take along with me two forms of photographic ID and an original, certified copy, of my birth certificate.

Mum and dad broke out into a frenzy of guesswork that lasted several weeks and involved trips to both Southend on Sea to see my grandparents on dad's side and Goring-by-Sea near Worthing to see my grandparents on my mother's side.

They never did identify Great Aunt Sploorine as a member of my family tree. Finally, they gave up and thought she had probably been a relative of my mother's side. My mother's cousin, who rumour had it, had been married to or been related to a Lord of the Realm.

There was a definite 'hint' of a never-to-be-talked-about incident that had resulted in a move to Australia in that part of the family. But there was little known about that part of the family tree subsequently.

All efforts to extract information from the solicitors in London hit a very polite, but resolute, stone wall. All my parents ever got was a photocopy of the original will certified by a law firm in Perth Australia who proved to be equally uninformative when approached.

By the time I went to primary school on September 8th, 1981 at the age of five I was already something of a prodigy. I was nearly the tallest in the whole school which took kids up to eleven years old. I could already read, write, and do math up to the 11+ Standard. By the end of the first year the school had persuaded the local education authority to let me take the final examinations and leave. Something I did, and passed, with flying colours.

About the only thing I learned at that school was that it was I who was responsible for the bullying I had received because nobody liked someone smarter than they were. The fact that I had always managed to outwit or outfight the bullies had not gone down too well with my peers, the teachers, or the other parents. I had been causing both classmate and assorted parental jealousies which resulted in bad tempered teachers and ultimately a surly head mistress.

All I knew about any of this at the time was there seemed to be a lot of classmates who didn't like me no matter how nice I tried to be. Since everyone but me knew exactly what was going on I was never in any trouble for defending myself, I was, after all, only 5. If there was any trouble it was probably because I was too good at looking after myself. Everyone else knew I was never the instigator of events because Alex always made sure there were honest witnesses present at every incident.

The biggest snag with being too smart was that no Grammar School wanted to enroll a very big six-year-old. Having said that at least one school headmaster wanted to meet with me and my parents. It turned out he already had another six-year-old with a similar level of ability trying to gain entry at the same time. That boy's name was Brian Cuthbertson and his father was Sir Ernest Cuthbertson who was apparently a very influential figure in the higher circles of the UK government establishment. He also happened to be one of the school's largest benefactors.

After the interview the headmaster offered me a position but there would be public-school fees to pay up front. I and my parents knew I could only collect from Aunt Sploorine's will in arrears which made things awkward. For some unknown reason the headmaster suggested that my parents should talk to Sir Ernest and he gave them his Whitehall telephone number.

To cut to the chase, dad called Sir Ernest and then went up to see him in town. When he returned, he told me and my mother that Sir Ernest's son Brian also had a mysterious Aunt in Australia

who had left Brian a similar bequest. Neither of my parents ever queried anything about my abilities or good fortune again.

The terms of that will were remarkably like the terms of the will in which I was an heir. Sir Ernest would guarantee my school fees until I could repay him from my educational inheritance, something he expected his own son Brian to do in his own good time.

Brian and I started Grammar school the following September 14th, 1982 a Tuesday. Brian and I became the very best of friends and still would be but for an event that quite literally took Brian from me. But more about that in due time.

Brian was destined to become a great Jurist and the Chief Justice of my Sploor funded empire but that was yet to come. I tended to focus on the subjects I already enjoyed and showed promise in. The physical sciences, mathematics, mechanical engineering, and business management. When studying these subjects and keeping fit through my sporting activities left me with any spare time at all, I also liked to study, history and geography with special attention paid to the cartography and surveying involved in the mapmaking of the time when doing things outside was impracticable due to natural events.

Sorry, I just couldn't help it, I was a card-carrying nerd. Part of this dedication to learning was because I was an only child and spent a lot of time alone and away from my somewhat over enthusiastic parents. They were just trying to be inclusive rather than leaving me to play alone. The snag was that when I was apparently alone, I wasn't. I was actually with Alex who never intruded but was a font of knowledge that I thoroughly enjoyed.

In those rare periods of 'spare-time' when I could get out the house or off the boat when I was at university I did a lot of swimming, sailing, canoeing, rowing, tennis, judo, and boxing. My parents complained that they never saw much of me at all after the age of nine and hardly ever when I finally left home for university.

By the age of 13 Brian and I each had 9 'O' levels and 5 'A' Level passes all with A or A+ grades. Now our problem was going to be getting into universities! Brian didn't have to worry about this because his father had gone to Cambridge University and had already arranged a place for him there to study law. He offered to do the same for me in the subject of my choice but I wasn't sure Cambridge would suit me. To start with it was a long way from the sea.

The reason I wanted to be near the sea was simple, I was now the owner of a fine ship. I say ship because at 133-ft long, 32-ft 9-inch beam and draft of 12-ft weighing some 380 tons it was hard to think of the M.V. Ex-Sploorer as a mere motor boat or yacht.

This was a small part of my inheritance from my very dear Great Aunt Alexis. My father, upon opening my final examination results had promptly called the solicitors in London and asked them what exactly they would require for proof of my education status. He discovered that Sir Ernest had been asking the same questions and they gave my father the same answers. Bring or send me up to town with the required ID and examination results with the university acceptance letter and they would deal with everything as soon as possible.

My dad was dying to take me up there and find out what was going on but he knew I could easily go alone. I was now 13 years old, over 6 ft tall with a big physique and could box quite well, so he hadn't really worried about my personal safety for a long time. In the end I went up alone, I was quite used to travelling around London by train, underground, bus, and taxi so he made me an appointment for the following Monday morning at 10 AM.

This was in the summer holiday period for the city of London and the journey wasn't even crowded. Clutching my doughty A to Z of London map I arrived at the solicitor's offices in plenty of time and was admitted very soon after arrival. I met with a Mr. George G. Loos who closely resembled a famous British actor: George Sanders. One of my favorites, who had died a few years before I was born,

he usually played parts in which he was a bit of a cad but with an upper crust accent that used his silky-smooth bass voice to bend women to his evil ways.

At the age of thirteen I had never felt any great need to bend a woman to my evil ways, whatever that meant, but thought it might be a useful talent to acquire before I was very much older. Having never had any siblings my small-talk was very limited and the longest conversation I had ever had with a girl was: "After you" (The response never being more than a polite "Thank you.")

This George G. Loos sounded exactly like the actor; I liked him immediately, he was very roguish. This was just as well since I would have a lot of dealings with George over the years. He informed me that my Great Aunt had left me £220 Million pounds in her will which had now grown due to some incredibly inciteful investing over the last few years to £403.6 Million. At that age I had no idea what "Insider Trading" meant nor how good telepaths might be at doing it.

I also owned a great many mining, shipping, technology, and industrial stocks which were all doing equally well. They were currently worth about £18 Billion pounds and I was advised to keep them for now. There were also a lot of domestic properties around the world including houses in Malibu California, The Hamptons New York State, Cannes France (With moorage), Genoa Italy (With moorage), Port D'Andratx Mallorca (With moorage), Perth and Brisbane in Australia (With moorage) PLUS: A Motor Yacht.

Probably because I had never wanted for anything and Alex had always insisted, I be frugal and not showy, this great wealth meant nothing to me as such. Of course, the one thing that had caught my eye was the yacht, I had a great desire to live abroad and at the age of 13 bound for university the yacht may prove to be a good choice. In some odd way it called to me: "Here be adventure."

There was however one snag. Before I could even move the yacht, I would need to get a suitable captain and crew OR my own Masters Ticket and a Chief Engineers Certificate for up to 500 Gross Tons. No pressure there except the experience requirement, that involved many hours of supervised sea time on watch.

Fortunately, a small voice in my head had a suggestion. "There are a lot of other, older, telepaths like you with the relevant qualifications who will be only too glad to help you out. Worldwide there are now some 12.5 million telepaths and amongst them there are at least 100 with master's tickets or chief engineer's tickets. Just let me know when you want to move the yacht, I'll find you crew."

Little did I know at that time that Alex had an ulterior motive for his offer of aid on this occasion. My expressed desire to learn how to "bend a woman to my evil ways" like George Sanders could in films had sent shock waves through a whole alien species, possibly two species.

Before I had even learned that Alex was an alien, I had apparently discomfited two alien races. One race had created humanity and the 500 identical human universes it contained. The second alien race I had shocked had created the Sploor, the first alien race I had met.

Both alien races were involved in a squabble over the design and subsequent failures of humanity. Each race blamed the other for small errors that had caused this potential catastrophe and here they were making yet another error. Both races were Pure-Energy-Beings which is a status I will explain in due time. Unfortunately, it meant that both species had long ago forgotten what sex was. They were pure energy, they had no sex drive, suitable equipment appertaining to that urge, nor the desire to use those organs had they had any.

But I did. I was corpuscular, a solid lump as opposed to an ethereal energy being. I was made up of human male bits and pieces. I did have urges, desires, wants, itches to scratch etc. How could they possibly have forgotten that? They had designed me along with all the trillions of other humans existing at that time upon billions of planets spread across 500 universes.

Oops! Didn't quite cover it.

Alex's solution was simple. In the next few years, I was to get all the sex education any male could ever hope for; like it or not. What better closed environment for some hot-blooded bonding could there be besides a yacht?

I had enrolled in Aberdeen University to study Natural Philosophy so by the start of term, September 1989 I had everything prepared. Unfortunately, by the time I attended that university I had missed my all-time hero: Professor R.V. Jones, who had been head of Natural Philosophy until his retirement when I was still a toddler. But it was still a great program to be involved with.

Professor Jones had been the head of intelligence at the Air Ministry from 1939 to 1945 and was responsible for solving many of the challenges the RAF encountered when tackling the German Luftwaffe. He had been 27 in 1939. His books had intrigued me greatly when I had read them at primary school. They showed clear thinking, a sound knowledge of the subject and the physics involved was better than all the bluster on earth when tackling life or death struggles. I was very sorry I would never meet him unless I could master time. Saying that might sound a bit pretentious, but the one thing I had learned from Alex was that there was nothing that couldn't be achieved once you had learned how to do it.

To make life interesting I had asked Alex to provide a crew so I could move Ex-Sploorer into a dockside berth in Aberdeen's busy harbour. The intention was to live aboard the yacht and commute to college some 3 miles distant.

Alex did an outstandingly superb job.

He provided me with an almost 66% female crew. For a single male child who had never had much to do with the opposite sex at all I was a bit like a dog in a forest full of squirrels. I didn't know which way to turn and look.

I now had a newly qualified skipper keen for more experience and looking for new digs who also happened to be a great housekeeper and chef. Fiona N. Scottsdale was a 27 years old Londoner who'd started her working life as an air hostess. After an accident damaged the vision in her left eye, she had swapped to boat crew because her eyesight was now at a level that barred her from ever becoming a pilot. She was also a keen golfer and where better to practice golf than Scotland.

Together with my friend Brian, who was also 13 years old, and very nearly 6ft tall like me, there was David G. Loos another friend of Alex with a Chief Engineers ticket and Fiona's best friend Charlotte who was a good allrounder when it came to boating. That was enough. We now had the people and deck crew to move Ex-Sploorer from its previous permanent storage site in Pizza Italy to Aberdeen, a journey of some 2,600 nautical miles via Gibraltar.

I found it a bit odd that one of Alex's friends shared the same surname 'Loos' with my generous aunt's solicitor in London and asked him about it. He replied that Loos was a very common name in some places he'd spent time and that it was nothing to worry about.

And: Yes, David also looked familiar. He didn't just look a bit like the actor David Niven, he looked and sounded *Exactly* like the actor who had died in 1983. So, what.

I was starting to get used to Alex's coincidences.

Over time I learned why all the aliens I met looked so familiar. They had manifested themselves based upon a TV broadcast which had reached out into space. In David's case he had seen 'The Way Ahead' originally screened in July 1944. He had emulated the voice and physical mannerisms of Lt. Jim Perry perfectly. In that same film there had also appeared Stanley Holloway who had played a very street-wise Private Ted Brewer. Eventually when I finally met Wilfred the mayor of Heaven, his chief assistant who must also have watched this film at some point manifested himself as Stanley Holloway playing Brewer.

It's really a small universe, isn't it? I also learned that they would all have manifested themselves in different guises had the selected winner of Wilfred's quest been, let's say an American, or a German,

or a Canadian. One day David admitted to me that he would have been William Shatner playing Captain Kirk from the TV series Star Trek, had Wilfred selected a Canadian candidate instead of me.

I had no problem with David Niven, but Captain Kirk playing Scotty on my boat just wouldn't have seemed right.

Unfortunately, I never met Alex as a manifestation. He was always a voice in my head right up until he was replaced by Alastair when I turned 18. I have often wondered who Alex would have manifested himself as had he ever appeared to me as a human being.

It was a glorious summer in Europe that year and we had 6 whole weeks to complete a journey that we could have done in 260 hours at an average speed of 10 Knots. It was also a great learning experience for Brian and myself. Among other things we discovered many young ladies liked to sunbathe in the nude as soon as we were out of sight of land. Brian and I were a bit young to understand the reasons for this attraction, we also discovered it took a long time for the grin off David's face to vanish when we arrived in Aberdeen.

Alex had arranged a berth for Ex-Sploorer in the main harbour at the quietest spot available and it was there that I stayed during term time until I was just over 18 years old and had graduated with one PhD, one Master's Degree (MBA) and a second Master's Degree (Meng.) so I could become a CEng (Chartered Engineer).

For all the time I lived in Aberdeen I lived on the boat. Sometimes there was also an assortment of students who needed a place to stay. The Ex-Sploorer, with its 12-ft draft had two decks beneath the main deck. The accommodation deck, immediately below the main deck had portholes along both sides while the lower deck was completely enclosed and sat on top of all the tanks for fuel, oil, water, and waste products.

Only the engine room stretched vertically from the keel frames to the underside of the main deck and spanned the entire width of the vessel.

The Ex-Sploorer had an owner's suite on two decks which was huge for a teenager. It was virtually 32-ft square on the accommodation deck and averaged about 30-ft wide but only 12-ft long with full standing headroom on the lower deck (I was between 6ft 4in tall and continued up to my ultimate height of 6ft 8in tall while I lived aboard). It was situated in the stern between the engine room and the transom; and was exclusively mine. There were also four large double VIP cabins with en-suite bathrooms immediately forward of the main fuel tank. The Chief Engineer's cabin was aft of the engine room and under my main floor area with its own stair access up to the main deck.

The rest of the crew's quarters were up forward and quite spacious. In practice, university students, seemed to be smaller and more tolerant than most and with the use of assorted couches, seating, and open floor spaces I once had 27 'crew' living onboard for almost one month.

Fiona threatened to either leave or do unpleasant things to my digestion if that situation was ever allowed to happen again. I was always having arguments regarding the epic mess that often existed in my cabin until I pointed out it was usually neater than her captain's cabin was. This had pretty much become her main residence. She occasionally took odd sea going posts when she could get them. Usually on the North Sea, oil-rig-support vessels based in Aberdeen Harbour. so, she could build up her watchkeeping hours and gain experience for her next examination on the way to Master Mariner.

Mostly she just ran Ex-Sploorer like a hotel with a sex education course thrown in.

Fiona had two saving graces, the first was she was a wonderful cook and seemed to love cooking all the things I liked to eat. The second was that she was a telepath who, when she ever monitored my mind, was good enough that I never knew she was doing it.

Oh, I forgot; and she liked to sunbathe either topless or naked on the wheelhouse roof's flying bridge behind the windbreaker that encircled it. I had first discovered this feature of her character one day when I had arrived there first and was sunbathing while I studied something boring. She simply spread out her towel next to mine and said: "Hi Jason you don't mind if I join you, do you?"

I hadn't even looked up or I would have noticed she was braless and only wearing a tight T-shirt. She sat on her towel and simply took her T-shirt top off. Then she picked up a bottle of tanning lotion with a high SPF, held it out for me to take and said: "Would you mind doing my back for me?" Of course, I took the bottle and as she lay down on her front did as she had asked. I did a good robust application and found it a thoroughly enjoyable job that took ages and went from hairline to both heels and approximately half way down both sides.

When I finished, she said in a soft and seductive voice, probably not intended for me specifically; "Thank you. Don't go anywhere, I'll need you to do the front in about 30 minutes."

I was, if I remember correctly, about 15 and a half years old. I wasn't sure whether to be terrified or excited, in the end I studied an upside-down text book for thirty minutes in a heightened state of anticipation and dread. At thirty-five minutes I wondered if she needed a reminder and peered at her face only to hear a gentle snore. I waited until I couldn't stand the stress and left after 70 minutes which I think showed a lot of patience for one so young.

I didn't see Fiona again until the next day when she appeared with the breakfast tray wearing a skimpy little bikini. When she had walked in, she looked fine but as she left, I could see she was lobster red down her entire back and legs. The skimpy little bikini avoided all the red areas but one and seeing that one made me feel really guilty.

The neck strap on the top part was digging into her red neck quite deeply at the back under the not inconsiderable load of her ample bust. We were the only two onboard that weekend so she was doing everything herself and had to go out for the coffee and tea tray whereupon she sat across from me. She started off the conversation softly. "I know I am something of a bossy woman Jason and I'm sorry about that. But don't ever worry about waking your skipper up when she doesn't seem to be doing something right or as she has indicated she would. Next time I fall asleep like that you just wake me up and make sure I turn over, OK?"

I nodded sheepishly. I really was sorry from the delicate way she had sat down; I could tell she was in considerable discomfort. Timidly I asked her if it would help to remove the neck strap. She smiled hugely at that and promptly removed the whole bra. Over the years we spent together after that I frequently served as her personal oil and lube applicator, doing both sides with great care and diligence and she was never quite so bossy to me again.

David, our itinerant engineer, was a marvel we hardly ever saw him, heard him, or even knew he was onboard. According to Fiona he must either eat ashore or cook for himself. The only time she had ever seen a lot of him was when we were on a long passage at sea. He was certainly a good engineer, nothing ever seemed to go wrong or need work, spares, or servicing ashore.

Occasionally Fiona invited Charlotte, or any number of eleven other air stewardesses on leave that she knew well enough to ask to stay with her. They got the upper pullman berth in the captain's cabin which held one double, lower berth, and one single upper, pullman berth, in it to cater for owner operators who wanted to stay in the wheelhouse during voyages. Charlotte was younger at 22 and still worked as an air stewardess. The other eleven were of a variety of ages from 21 to 35, all had great personalities and were great fun to have on board. One way or another I learned an awful lot about conversing with the opposite sex from them. They treated me like a needy younger distant cousin who required all the help he could get if he was ever to attract a mate.

In general, it would be true to say that as one inexperienced young man alone on a boat with any number of young women I learned a lot about all manner of feminine attributes ranging from how they could be moody to how to make them laugh and generally talk to them without getting bashful. At least 8 times per year we would go away on a cruise lasting from 3 to 8 nights away from Aberdeen. Somehow or other we always seemed to have a full complement of attractive female company onboard who were all willing to be nice and very, very, friendly to me.

By the time I was 18 I think it would be safe to say I knew more than just the basics of starting a relationship with a young lady. One good example would be in the provision of massage services.

Apparently, word got around among Fiona's friends that I had 'magical-hands' when it came to the application of Sun-block. I cannot imagine why it was a simple matter of carefully spreading out and rubbing in a lotion over the exposed parts of the human body. Or maybe, it was the professional course in massage therapy she had talked me into.

Fiona liked to sun bathe in the nude and always needed lubrication copiously applied but that shouldn't make my hands special, should it.

Being an only child, I had no sisters or brothers to help me learn how to make friends or even talk to other people so I was pretty much out of the social swirl of university life. My grammar school had been boys only and with my age making me so junior to the girls at university. I wasn't old enough to drive or drink alcohol and I had no experience with girls my own age let alone those several years older than I other than the young women on the boat of course. Those I didn't have to 'pick up' since they were introduced to me and encouraged to be nice to me.

On top of that I was almost always top in all the courses I took so I was not exactly a sought-after companion by anyone less able than myself. Fortunately, very few people tried to bully me at all, mostly because I was now 6-ft 4-in tall at the time and still growing, well built, very fit, a good boxer and a 'Nidan' or second-degree black belt at Judo.

I was also still growing which meant I seemed to either spend a lot on clothes or look peculiar. My boating lady friends preferred me well dressed and groomed so that's how I went through university. Sticking out like a sore thumb in almost every possible way.

The only instance of bullying of any note was after one internal examination result was announced. I had the top mark and the next one was so far behind me it looked suspiciously like I must have cheated. I had not, but proving the negative is always problematical. One member of my year decided to take me to task about this discrepancy.

He was a big Scottish lad some 6 ft 2 in tall and very heavily built. He was the captain of the college rugby team and figured he had a right to raise the subject with me in as unpleasant a manner as he could manage as soon as he was drunk enough to try.

His effort started with an accusation of cheating. I simply denied his charge and walked away. That set him off and he chased after me to spin me around and stick his nose in my face very aggressively while grasping my lapels. Now you must remember that at that time I was completely human, no upgrades, armour, or anything else to enhance my physique but wits and training.

I head butted him as hard as I possibly could. It was a manoeuvre I had practiced endlessly while trying to increase my neck strength and confidence in this very effective self-defence move. That broke his nose and the following right hook broke several front teeth and sent him sprawling onto his back. A swift and well-aimed kick to his testicles ended his contribution to the discussion.

Everyone else took a few steps backwards as I left to make a report of the incident giving a list of witnesses and affirming that I would press charges. I knew there were more than enough witnesses for the truth to come out.

In particular, there just happened to be nearly all of the students who regularly sought my help when they got stuck in almost any subject. I never saw that bully ever again. Whether or not he was thrown out of the university I never discovered, it was not my concern and frankly I didn't care.

In many ways the loneliness I felt between Fiona's friends visits benefitted me because it made me focus on learning, which was after all, what I was there to do. I seldom visited the Students 'Old Brewery' beer hall unless I was meeting someone there and managed to spend most of my time studying or exercising.

For outside activities I started diver training with the British Sub-Aqua Club and took flying lessons so that I would be able to take my PPL at age 17. This was handy since at 16 I could begin freefall parachute training in a buddy harness arrangement through the UK's parachuting association. I

also took up clay pigeon shooting and target shooting with every weapon I could hire or borrow: Bow and arrow, air pistol, air rifle and both small bore and full-bore rifle.

At the age of 16-¹/₂ I received my Provisional Driver's License and purchased a new car. From then on, either Fiona or one of her guests would accompany me on road trips so I could learn enough to take the driving test at 17. In return for this service, I lent them the car when they wanted to go out shopping or on dates. It was a Land Rover Defender station wagon with the 110 in wheelbase. It was as safe as houses, slow as molasses and had a manual shift with a heavy clutch pedal. Most women would hate driving it or so I had assumed. On the bright side it was diesel fueled which meant it was very economical to run when they borrowed it. Which they did more often than I would ever have thought possible. If you ever see an Air-Stewardess with an overly muscular left leg it is quite possible she had been on the Ex-Sploorer more than once.

On the Ex-Sploorer we used the forward deck mounted hydraulic knuckle boom crane to lift the car onboard and either stow it on deck for short trips or lower it into the hold for longer ones, on open waters, when it was rough. The powered hatch to the hold was only 7-ft wide by 16-ft long and it was a tight, tricky, job to fit it in and lower it down in any kind of swell or wind.

At the rear end of the hold under the VIP cabins there was a selection of 3D printing machines with which I could make almost anything within the printer's size limitations. With little previous experience of such machines, I had no idea just how advanced these machines were. All of them could make anything within their size range out of any combination of any materials. Alex suggested that word of their existence should not be spread around as they were new and their technology was commercially confidential. Being an obedient, un-suspicious, gullible human, I, of course, obeyed him to the letter.

The hold floor area and the space forward of that was my project assembly area and materials storage area. In order to get the car into the lower part of the hold I would need to clear up my 'man-cave', which as any mother or wife will tell you, is a bit like trying to grab a handful of water: Difficult.

Difficult but not impossible.

I could start to learn to fly from 14 years old, and had done just that, so I could take my PPL test at age 17 which I passed the week before I passed the driving test. I found the logic impossible to fathom. Aged 17 it was now possible for me to fly a plane, make love to a woman with her consent and drive a car. BUT I could NOT command my own boat, drink alcoholic beverages, go solo sky-diving or vote. I could however jump out of a perfectly good airplane at height if I was attached to someone else. If you think about that logically I would either have to crash with the plane or take along a passenger bound and gagged and strapped to my back for safety's sake.

Sometimes, I found it very hard to figure out who made up which laws and why they were so different in their age requirements and supervisory restrictions. For example, a suitably qualified pilot could get into a suitable plane and fly it any way he liked in approved areas away from airports. A qualified driver could get into a car but not drive it without risking all sorts of tickets and points off his licence no matter how experienced he is or how well cared for the vehicle, it's tires and brakes are kept.

A drivers personal judgement and experience is not allowed to keep himself and his passengers safe while not endangering or annoying other road users. A pilot or ship's captain could be responsible for up to many thousands of lives and yet he does not get speeding tickets parking tickets or other annoying interference as long as his judgement remains sound and unaffected by drink or drugs.

I guess that made me a rebellious teenager. The onset of the granny state held no appeal for me whatever. Not that I was a show-off of any kind, I just objected to getting qualified for something, gaining adequate experience in that subject but never being trusted to use the training and experience sensibly.

My disadvantage to my efforts at dating as I got older was that I also got more senior, the new girls didn't want to date a senior younger than they were and the senior girls were still way older than I was. By this time, I had virtually given up trying to find female companionship for myself. It was a good

job I had so many friendly women on the boat. Unfortunately, I suspected that all those 'friendly' women were not there for relationship purposes. They were my trainers in the art of female conquest. Nobody told me this but it was pretty obvious and eventually confirmed by Alastair who was to replace Alex when I reached 18 years old.

The telepaths I was to eventually meet had other uses for me besides marriage.

That lack of long-term commitment was probably why I was always on the lookout for female company amongst my peers. When I first went to university the youngest girl in my intake was 19 and already married, she and her husband lived in Aberdeen where he was a North Sea oil-rig saturation-diver. Nobody else was interested in even talking to me when they found out how old I was and that I was a child prodigy. I also discovered there were no end of people waiting to tell anyone who would listen what a little swat I was. This always seemed to occur as soon as there was the slightest possibility that they might become a friend and thus needed to know these things.

Eventually things changed: For my 18th birthday present mum and dad bought me a wonderful Digital SLR Camera complete with lenses and tripod. My grand-parents bought me a heap of books which I had always wanted. They were not strictly for educational purposes and hence were not available to me under the terms of Aunt Sploorine's will. Most were coffee table sized picture books, tourist guides for the world's ocean destinations, so I could plan future trips for the Ex-Sploorer.

Brian came up for the week of my birthday and brought a couple of friends from Cambridge and between them 3 sisters which should have been fun for them. Brian knew I would always arrange a nice cruise over my birthday since it was always in the summer break period.

My gift from Fiona was something completely unexpected. She had decided it was time I found out why David's smile had been so hard to remove. She had one special friend Charlotte and one close friend they both shared called Debra. They would also come with us on my birthday cruise. While I didn't either know or understand at the time all three of them were concerned about me. In general, their concern went something like this, either I was gay OR they were losing their looks. Over the last few years, I had apparently rubbed Sun block all over all three of them with no apparent reaction or interest.

This appeared to worry them a lot more than it did me. I regarded it as magnificent self-control. They regarded it as an insult. Although I didn't know it at the time, this apparent disinterest in young ladies of the 'enthusiastically co-operative' type was being blocked by the combined telepathic efforts of several of Alex's Sploor friends and associates. While the Sploor wanted me to become fully capable of the manly arts they didn't want me actually taking part in those arts until after I had been upgraded. That process they suspected would result in me being totally unable to continue with a normal human sex-life. Something about trying to fit a UK 240-volt 3 pin plug into a North American 110-volt two pin socket.

It wasn't going to happen.

Of course, being superior alien races nether the Sploor or Grooloos bothered to ask me if I even wanted these upgrades. I guess they cared about the survival of all of humanity more than my sex life.

Cruel but sensible.

If I had known that they had never even considered making plans to ever make a female upgrade with the correct socket I might have thought twice about that statement.

It does not always pay to be young and trusting even when you are dealing with advanced alien races, even telepathic races that cannot lie, who claim to be your friend. Not unless you talk to all of that race that are involved simultaneously, something I would one day be able to do but, not then.

The next sea-change in my sex life also came, on the eve of my 18th birthday the telepathic block on my sex life was to be temporarily removed. On the whole things were looking up. Nobody on board including myself realised that the military would be looming large in my future and there would be no girls interfering with that part of my Sploor devised growth plan. I often wondered if Alex had simply felt sorry for me when he allowed me to experiment with sex for a few months.

Later I was to learn that it was Alex who discovered what the other Sploor were doing and had taken my side. It was a long time after that I learned the deal had involved allowing any Sploor interested to tune in telepathically and get the video Alex was going to make of my first fumbling efforts.

I don't think the Sploor could remember such things as "Performance anxiety" but maybe some of them did. In any case the other part of the deal was that no Sploor was to ever mention the subject.

Especially to me.

The second oldest person on-board the Ex-Sploorer after David was Fiona at the ripe old age of 32. She had lost a boyfriend to a rival living in Aberdeen some three weeks before we left and I think she had saved up a lot of unspent passion in between times. Charlotte was now 27 and still single, she was onboard for the fun of the trip. Debra was a fairly recent friend and was around 24 I believe. David came along as chief engineer; he was the oldest on board at 42 according to his papers.

Note: David, a telepath, never told me he was 42 so he never lied to me about it. He carried papers which he just handed to me which had his age incorrectly stated upon them. His real age I never knew, I still do not know it, but I do now know it must be up in the millions of Earth years.

As we got ready to set out to sea I was as happy as I could be.

I was an overachieving 18-year-old card carrying nerd who now stood just over 6 ft 6 in tall and was solidly built, well-toned and very fit. Touch-wood, none of my adventures had ever caused me any "unfortunate" harm and I had what Debra described as a lovely smile.

3/ Graduation to adult education

We moved the boat out of Aberdeen's harbour for the last time and travelled 300 nautical miles across the North Sea to Stavanger harbour in Norway to celebrate graduation and the 18th birthdays of both Brian and myself. Brian having been born on the 8th June 1976, just 8 weeks and three days before me.

One night after we had spent a slightly rowdy evening in the local yacht club, I felt someone climbing into bed with me. As she squirmed over to my side of the bed, I had time to recognise the perfume and scan the mind joining me in bed. It was Fiona who had brought Charlotte and Debra along as well. Between them they had two things in mind. The first was that they had all been lonely long enough and the second was that all boys should be taught how men should handle a woman's body in order to get the most out of it.

I had been selected to receive their first lesson in tactile eroticism.

Poor Brian, I hoped he had found someone's sister who liked younger prodigies.

It is probably just as well that we were all too drunk to remember much of that night on the following day. Charlotte was an above average height, shapely, auburn haired young woman, who looked a bit fragile emotionally and always appeared distant and exotic. It turned out that she was a warm-blooded robust playmate who would try anything at least once, twice, or more if she liked it. She always showed just enough but never too much cleavage and always smelled nice.

Fiona was a tallish, biggish, larger than life, busty, blond bombshell with a great figure and 'big-hair'. She had a lovely smile, big blue eyes and all the personality anyone could ever ask for. Her only known problem as far as I knew was that she was bossy. She liked to oversee everything. What you ate, how you dressed, where you went and what you did. If I hadn't been her titular employer, I would have had an uncomfortable life for the last 5 years.

Debra was shortish but perfectly shaped in outline from any angle. She had glossy jet-black hair and a lovely tan that I happened to know extended all over her. She had bright piercing blue eyes and the best skin I'd ever seen on any human body. She was a bit bubbly and unsure of herself being the youngest girl in the trio but that made me her perfect target for conversation. She could always be counted on to know more than I did according to her own simple concept that she was older than I was.

An attitude I was more than familiar with.

She also liked to control what you touched, how you touched it and for how long you touched it. For a beginner like me she was probably the best teacher I could possibly get in all those manly arts that make the average parent gag whenever you brought the subject of sex up.

Debra was totally uninhibited and in the presence of Fiona and Charlotte that was really saying something.

One day I learned from Alex that Fiona had been carefully selected as a telepath capable of mothering me through university. A true companion helping me to make headway with the opposite sex without entanglements and generally grow up physically and mentally in as balanced a way as I could be raised.

On the other hand, based upon that 'hands-on' experience with all these young women, how was I to know they would mostly turn out to be great fun to share a bed with over the years? They all had a great sense of humour. When Charlotte, who often played golf with Fiona when she stayed with us, had asked me if I had any experience of extended foreplay, I answered that I hadn't played golf since grammar school.

I thought they'd never stop laughing. Thereafter we used our private code for 'things'.

Fiona and Charlotte then spent an hour or so teaching me about a different kind of foreplay that used a completely different kind of grip on the club. There was still only one ball per active player, the club was shared and no tees were required but the holes were a lot smaller and closer at hand and surrounded by traps of all kinds. These traps ranged from grass covered mounds to deep undergrowth all the way up to a slap or black eye!

The first thing they thought I ought to know was how a woman's clothes worked. How they were done up and where and how they were undone and in what order. Apparently, a lack of this knowledge often became a great passion killer and a good working knowledge of the basic mechanics was a good way for a man to start any session he hoped might become more intimate than a mere grope. 'Grope' became known as 'tactile interference of the unwelcome kind' by our little group and I was urged not to indulge myself at any time.

Since I wasn't even familiar with the grope stage of proceedings, they ran through the areas of a dressed woman it might be safer to explore before raising my expectations higher than the risk of a slapped face.

Apparently, baseball was also involved as well as golf because we now started discussing bases. Apparently, one got to first base; which was a kiss, before one risked anything else especially a knee in the testicles. Usually, an attempt at a kiss could quickly determine how the relationship was progressing. If lip lock was refused by a withdrawal of the head or hand the relationship wasn't likely to progress any further. Unless, that is, it was accompanied by something spoken to indicate the relationship had not reached that stage yet.

If a kiss has been accepted a couple of times it was time to explore the access potential to second base. Second base was best approached while a kiss was in progress. I assumed this was to muffle any screaming but I might have misunderstood that bit. Fiona had taken my left hand and placed it firmly over her well supported right breast and said: "Squeeze very gently or simply rub your palm around gently in a circular motion."

I did as asked until I felt a small lump appear under my palm and snatched my hand away with haste. Fiona seemed as pleased with my progress as I was. After all I'd been at second base before when it hadn't been protected at all. I'll admit it had been done with a hand full of greasy sun block but it was at least a fear I had already overcome.

Naturally I assumed third base was the other breast so I pre-empted my instructors and started gently massaging that one too. "So, this, presumably, is third base. Should I do the circles in the opposite direction or the same way?"

They fell about laughing again. “No Jason, second base for you, a right-handed man, is my right breast and touched by your left hand while your right hand embraces me for the kiss. Remember the kiss?”

This all seems overly complicated but so did most of the human rituals I have ever heard of. My father’s tales about his Masonic rituals had always indicated that they should be simple and primitive. So, one day I asked: “Surely, it would be easier to simply ask the girl if she was interested in a breast massage, wouldn’t it?”

That brought more shocked laughter and they started babbling on about courtship, romance, and other mushy subject-avoiding-stuff. All of which sounded like it could be an even longer and more complicated learning experience than this one was.

It was finally Charlotte who corrected my misunderstanding. “Second base is always one breast or the other depending upon which hand you need to use. Third base is down here.” She slid her hand down into her crotch. “But before we go there, we had better discuss how you should touch things.

Then they taught me the difference between kissing, licking, sucking, nibbling, tickling, caressing, massaging, picking, and fondling and which areas to use each variant upon and when.

For some inexplicable reason they thought the best way to learn all these things was if I were to become a trained masseuse. One of Fiona’s older friends had learned to do this at a professional standard to give her some way to earn an income when she was grounded between long haul flights. Using an enthusiastic Charlotte or a Debra as a ‘body’ I spent many happy hours learning exactly how to tenderise a worn-out flight stewardess.

I was even taught how to massage breasts to the point I could change their shape, move them around a bit, and ‘plump them’ when they got saggy. I was constantly surprised throughout the rest of my life just how much women needed such attention when they felt even slightly saggy.

Charlotte very carefully went over the different erogenous zones and in which order they should be tested. Then she thought about that and indicated that different women might have different orders of preference, she wasn’t too sure about that. It turned out, according to Fiona, the older of the two, that the female would more than likely indicate whether she was enjoying something or not and would often offer helpful advice as things progressed.

That made complete sense and was very helpful. I was beginning to think all this touchy-feely stuff was supposed to occur in a reverential silence without any communications taking place.

Finally, Fiona went through a lot of different positions and why it was sometimes important to use different ones for different reasons. She was very careful to stress what not to do without prior permission and what never to do with or without permission.

There were definite limits to what she considered normal sex and what she considered perversions. Apparently dangling one or other partner from a big frame by any body part was considered a perversion and should be avoided unless both partners were very experienced and trusted one another implicitly.

On that first night in Stavanger, it was almost 4 in the morning by the time they stopped teaching for the night, we were all more asleep than awake so they let me have some hand on experience at undressing women which ended up in so much laughter we tired ourselves out just before we simply fell asleep snuggled up together in a big heap.

I should also mention that Fiona, Debra, and Charlotte both had one other adorable feature, they insisted on constant practice until everything became second nature. they had had that concept drummed into them with aircrew training followed, for Fiona at least, by maritime drills intended to achieve the same safe result. “Perfection in everything you do; that’s important.”

I don’t think I had any ability to feel attachment or love for any woman at that time. Not that my heart didn’t want any emotional attachments but the Sploor had made it quite plain that they did not want me getting involved in any way with members of the opposite sex until I was ready and upgraded.

My brain had been trained to be quite adamant on the subject, touch, learn, experiment. But never, under any circumstances, was I to put down a deposit.

I was just glad I had wonderful, attractive, friendly women in my life at all, I didn't want to risk that by doing something 'inappropriate'.

That morning, apart from Fiona at breakfast, I don't think I heard anyone stir from wherever they were until just before noon. Then the dam burst and I found three agitated sisters out on the upper deck discussing how bad their dates had been. They saw me, shut up and looked blankly at me so I would move away with haste. I didn't budge, it was my boat and I was at work so eventually they had to leave instead, if looks could kill I would have shrivelled up and died right then.

I had a bowl of muesli for breakfast and a cup of coffee with a hint of dark rum in it to brighten things up and went into the wheelhouse to discuss trip planning with whoever I found there.

There was nobody there. Not a sound could be heard except the chatter coming from the turned down volume of the three separate VHF radios. The sound was either coming from the unit constantly set on Channel 16 the distress hailing frequency, the radio set on the marine weather channel, or the unit almost permanently set on the marine chat channel which tended to vary a bit with locality. On the Ex-Sploorer none of these radios was ever turned off while someone was aboard.

Idly I sat down at the chart table and sent a thought to Alex. "What should my next move be?" His response took a few moments to arrive which usually meant he was gathering the data he wanted to give me.

Eventually he came back with a lot of stuff all at once. "OK Jason, to begin with I'm going to hand you over to my partner Alastair. He will be your adult teacher and contact from here on since you are now 18. I'll still be available if you need me but try and get used to Alastair as soon as you can, here he is." The thoughts changed in some subtle way and Alastair came into my mind and Alex faded away. "Hello Jason, how are you today, I gather you had some new kind of fun last night. I hope everything went well?"

I thought to myself: Did everyone know about my sex life.

I quickly found out that silence was no longer, necessarily, a lonely thing.

"Yes Jason, everyone here knows about your sex life, didn't Alex warn you? You are a telepath like me and all the others you are going to meet so, you might as well get used to never being completely alone ever again."

I was surprised. Alex had never been so forthright. I guessed there was some kind of organisation behind my telepathic abilities but I'd learned to accept them without really investigating what they were all about. Apparently at age 18 it was now time to learn why I had these powers and others did not.

"Correct Jason. Well, worked out. May I come and sit with you?"

That took me back quite a bit. Alex had never even intimated that such a thing was possible. What would I be sitting with? A man or a green blob? Suddenly I found out, it was an exact likeness of Alastair Sim, one of my favorite, but long dead, English character actors.

This person could only be an extremely accurate projection of him that appeared as solid as I was but not quite so solid you would want to prod him in case you got a shock. He was there and yet possibly not quite all there at the same time. I think this one had been watching the film 'Green for Danger' in order to get the voice and mannerisms right.

Alastair smiled at me. "Correct. You will find all of us Sploor can individually project a solid form body based upon what we hope will be a familiar figure to all those present. Humanity has been broadcasting TV images into space since 1936. At least two alien races collected these images and where there was enough data to make a "replicant cloak" as we call it, we did so. I have a collection of over twenty human replicants I can adopt. I picked this one because he's English, I know you liked him,

and his sense of humour. This is how he appeared in the film: - 'Green for Danger.' I know you have seen it, it's in your mind."

"I can see you are wondering if I am an alien or not. To most of humanity I would be classed as an alien from outer space. Some might think of me as a God for no other reason than it was my species, the Sploor, that designed and created this and all 499 other universes for your human race to live upon.

I am not a God Jason, so do not get confused. I am a designer by trade and inkling. It was also I that helped design certain aspects of your human DNA. That's why I'm here. There is something wrong with humanity, you are not performing as expected and that may be a design fault."

"The species that created us Sploor, are called the Groolooos and they showed us how to create this multiverse and the humanity it contains. We will eventually show you how to convert to a Pure-Energy-Being (PEB) that uses 100% of your brain capacity just like we and the Groolooos can. You will then learn to become creators of your own multiverse and sub species. This process continues on until eventually a complete, well-rounded, all-knowing race is created who will convert and become Pure-Spirit-Beings (PSBs). A PSB will be the most advanced entity this Dimension will form. It was an existing PSB that created this Dimension which eventually led to the creation of the Groolooos who created us Sploor, who created you humans. But even then, there will still be no Gods amongst any of us."

"The best description you might choose to use is that I am a more advanced alien species compared to a human being such as you are now. I have a more powerful intellect and mind to support it as you will see as time progresses. BUT; over time you will acquire as much if not more knowledge than we have and yet you will not be Gods either. If there is such a thing as an almighty, omnipotent being, worthy of the title of God there is a long, long, way to go before any of us get to that level."

"And, you are quite right. I am just manifesting myself as a projection of light at this moment. I can solidify, if need be, but it takes a lot more effort. For the moment this projection will have to do. I represent Sploor central, think of it as the Sploor HQ for your Milky Way galaxy. We are the alien species who have been talking inside your brain since before you can remember. We helped you and many others gain the skills and abilities you are going to need to save your species, humanity; from a disaster as yet unknown to you."

"You will be wondering why we do not save your world ourselves? The answer is simple. If the threat was something physical, we would. Human technology is not yet up to doing that kind of thing no matter what your military might think. This threat is not physical it is sociological. Put simply: Humanity is not performing as it was designed to. Since we designed you, it is quite possible we missed something. If we did, it is most likely that you, a human, will be able to pinpoint it quicker than we could.

Also: Nobody could ever accuse you of being part of an Alien Invasion. Right?"

"In your case Jason, we began before your birth by making minor adjustments to your brain's pre-programmed survival instincts. We increased your brain's speed and memory potential, muscle growth, body growth, your speed, and reflexes we improved your sight, hearing and what humans call their 6th sense and your ability to control your bodily functions better."

"Didn't you ever wonder how you could hold your breath underwater longer than any other kid in school? How you always managed to outrun the sprinters, beat the boxers, react quicker in emergencies etc.?"

"We wanted you to be the best 'Jason' you could be so you could eventually use your enhanced abilities to help us solve a problem that will drastically affect both the Groolooos, Sploor and Human futures."

For the next hour or so I was given a comprehensive account of recent Sploor history and how things worked in the 'biggest' of the 'bigger' pictures: "Life the Universe and Everything." as Douglas Adams had described it in his wonderful book 'The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy' which I had both read and watched avidly on TV as a kid.

This was '*THE*' big picture and somehow or other I had been selected to play a significant part in it. Just how 'BIG' - big could get, I was soon to learn and it was terrifyingly 'BIG'.

I soon learned of my initial error where I had continuously thought it was ONLY the Earth that was at risk. It wasn't. When I finally knew what 'BIG' could really mean it meant this universe and all the other parallel universes humanity existed upon, plus all those we had yet to even imagine.

Parallel, previous, and future universes included.

It was a good job I was already sitting down. As the great English comedian Jasper Carrott would have said: "Smell it, I was sitting in it."

The conversation continued and over the next three hours during which nobody interrupted us I learned a lot more than I had ever thought possible. My life was laid out for me, my life-project was well defined and potentially highly dangerous, if not actually suicidal. Everything would be planned down to the last possible item.

It was simple. All I had to do was to prove the problem was communism and then eradicate it.

Why communism you may well ask?

Apparently, at some time during my university days, I had written a very erudite paper about human politics with regard to the falling educational standards of the UK since the destruction of the streaming system developed by the Conservatives in the 1950's. Even though I say it myself the arguments had been so simplified, so well argued, so well put, that it had, apparently, been sent up to the Sploor Supreme Council for review by Alex. I could not remember producing it as a document, in particular, I do not remember publishing it.

I did remember winning the debate.

All of which made me think it had actually been an aide-memoire created by me for use in that debate. I loved political debates and nearly always won them when I represented something I believed in and felt strongly about.

I was very good at arguing that greed was the true root of all of humanities problems and not wealth Per-se. I also liked to argue that intelligence and learning should earn more than sweat and toil. This whole concept promptly put me directly against the working classes which was not my intention at all. I was a conservative thinker, not a capitalist, I believed in small businesses, not monopolies.

Somehow or other, Alastair must have managed to get the edited text of the document presented to the Sploor Supreme Council from their archive. By then it had been altered, re-written, polished, perfected, and improved, considerably from the scribbled notes I usually produced for such debates. They had also updated world events to a period well past the period in which I had written it. I did not ask but would guess they went well past the times even Alastair had surveyed in 2012.

My thoughts, as usual, began with the most fundamental observation: Greed really was the root of all evil, bad politics, poor leadership and a general reduction in the education provided to the electorate as a whole. Greed was the insatiable desire to accumulate wealth by any means possible whether it be accumulated by criminal means or immoral means. Greed did not assume wealth had to be earned on merit, just amassed in any way one could accumulate it.

Obviously, direct theft of someone else's wealth or property was a criminal activity. But what if it became a state-run activity through taxation or licence fees for a service that everyone wanted such as the BBC's licence fee. This way for socialists to gather money provided justifiable theft and stood apart from the other mechanisms of greed since it was legal and unpunishable as such with the exception of losing at the ballot box. That was the next hurdle for the greedy to overcome.

Their ultimate solution was very simple, either remove the ballot box or rig the results or do both. Create a rigged system. Call it a democracy. Ensure no political competition is allowed. Propose one candidate who stands for election who cannot possibly lose even if only one vote is cast.

For such a system to work the electorate must be kept as uneducated as possible so they do not think about it, object to it or put up an opposition candidate.

The best way to do this was using intimidation as in the old-fashioned protection-racket: "Give us money regularly or we burn your business and home down." Not just said to one business or each individual but to one and all.

But how does an ambitious political activist get there when they start from an agrarian economy? It is hard to organise the workers when they are employed in very small numbers and their entire financial existence, including housing, food and any self-funded retirement is tied entirely to their employer's generosity. Tied to what was, in essence, a dictatorship?

The answer was supplied for them when the Industrial revolution began to happen. Workers flocked to the factories for a better level of pay even though they now had to pay for housing and food as well as saving for retirement. As this new reality sank in there was unrest. On a farm their children had usually worked but there was little exposure to danger when everything on a farm was operated by hand or animal power. In a factory or mill, dangers abounded and protection was non-existent. Health care was expensive and usually ineffective. Training was lax and limited BUT there were now enough workers in any one place to be organised.

How could the ambitious activist turn that situation around?

The obvious next step was to organise workers into Trade Unions: "We will take a small percentage of your wages every week and keep the management from abusing you."

It sounds so very good when it is put so simply like that.

Now the activists were doing better than the workers. The more workers you organised the better off you became. The back street protection racket had become industrialised.

But it didn't sound so good when they kept the management so far from abusing you that the whole company went bust and everyone lost their jobs. But that was when the smarter amongst the uneducated masses thought up a much better racket. Worker run political parties; Socialism became the industry of production.

Elect us and we will look after you for life. Put us in power on MP's salaries and although we have no idea how an economy works or businesses are managed, we will do better than those who have been taught how to do these things, have experience in them and their own monies invested in them.

Then we got Karl Marx who looked at all of this 'activism' and went one better. Under his communist concept the least capable would run everything and make the most capable work for them.

It was almost brilliant. I say 'almost brilliant' because it is only the educated and intelligent who can see through this idealistic rhetoric to see the obvious pitfalls and failures of any such system.

Brilliant as it may sound to the uneducated anyone with intelligence can see it cannot work properly once it is established and all the workers want to become leaders as well if not for themselves, then for their children.

Communism is really an umbrella name for this entire process because it includes so many ways of accumulating wealth under the guise of 'distributing wealth more evenly'. Under this umbrella one can find thousands of examples where some people are abused in huge numbers so that a few, at the top, get a more uneven share, and live in luxury. The level of luxury the leaders enjoy varies according to the methods used or the number of people being mis-used.

One reason socialism does not want real history taught is very simple to understand. How can you sell the masses on the benefits of communism when it has already failed under a completely different guise?

Slavery would be a good starting point. Amass uneducated people and remove all power from them. Provide a supervisory force with the power of life or death over the slaves but call it a union-free,

Police State. Make the slaves work until they drop, doing work that pays you well, since they do not get any greater share than the minimum needed to keep them alive while they are fit and able to work. Pay the police whatever it takes to prevent them mutinying and organising a takeover.

Socialism, while starting before communism with good intent has simply become communism under a different name. Socialism was started with the genuine and valid goal of improving the lot of the working class. It had the absolutely brilliant idea of creating the welfare state which was becoming necessary anyway thanks to the industrialisation of many job opportunities.

Slow-to-respond wealth producers, now called capitalists, were beginning to realise that they needed a healthy, educated, happy, rested, workforce, with a pension as a goal to aim for which also kept them in line. If only they had reacted more quickly the world would be a very different place today and one that may not have attracted the attention of the Sploor or Grooloo to begin with.

Unfortunately, the wealth producers did not respond quickly, if at all, and the workers used the only weapon available to them to force the issue. Withdrawing their labour. They formed unions and found blackmail worked really well: "Do what we want or we strike."

The problem with this turn of events was that the wealth producers themselves had yet to work out all the basic rules of running a manufacturing business because steam-powered, mass-production, was so new. Rules that any modern student of business administration should be able to reel off without any problems whatever.

To make matters worse the workers knew even less. They were told outright lies, and misled by equally uneducated people who were leading them in order to seek power over them.

Intimidation is not the way to run any successful business and never will be.

The Russians under the Bolsheviks were the first to take over all power and kill off their ruling class. By the time Stalin was finished using his poor judgement and inability to make decisions based upon knowledge and common sense, he had cost the Russian people dearly. They had won a war Stalin nearly lost before it had begun. He killed unknowable numbers of his own people beating the National German Socialist Party led by Hitler. He won thanks to Russian weather and his iron hand shooting his own people mercilessly when they would not defend his rule with their own lives.

The problems festered until the end of WW2 when Clement Attlee's Labour Party government came to power. The welfare state was born, the best and only idea worthy of recognition the original Socialist idealists ever produced. But, even then, they failed their followers when they could not even get it kick-started and working properly under post war financial conditions.

Churchill's Conservative government came back into power in 1950 and finished the job for them. They installed a wonderful, modern welfare system that did all that had been asked of it. A safety net for workers between jobs. A health care system for all. An education system for all that did actually give *EVERY* child the best education each child could absorb during their statutory school years. It also used taxpayer money to ensure all employment opportunities were covered adequately with suitable trained people.

Doctors, scientists, teachers, engineers right down to what many people of the day considered the lowliest jobs. Nobody told them that there were no lowly jobs anymore. In a modern industrial society, all jobs are vital and contribute to the whole nation running smoothly.

What they should have stressed was not the 'class' of the job but the educational requirements of each job. Now that everyone had an equal opportunity to benefit from what was widely regarded as the world's best state run, taxpayer funded, education system it was up to the individual to decide what income they would eventually work hard enough, to be eligible, to earn.

Nobody told them that producing bright school leavers involved a chicken and egg situation that would take 3 or four generations to hatch a gifted student. The first problem was the parents who had to work with whatever education they already had. Their kids would learn the benefit of an education

and be better parents to their own kids. That first generation of well-educated kids were unlikely to be management material for a few generations at least.

But that was not what the Labour Party membership had been led to expect.

Socialist logic stated: Our kids aren't benefitting and leaving school able to find middle management positions straight away. Obviously: There must be something wrong with the Tory system.

Thanks to that first generation of educated student's utter failure to dominate the job market socialism turned against a good education rather than embracing it. Common sense should have shown that those who got the top jobs were still the offspring of those who had been born to the most intelligent parents in the first place. That tends to be a truism today as it has been since teaching was begun way back in history.

Socialists thought the system was failing them because it hadn't worked immediately, for the first students to pass through the system. But other people, smarter people, on any side of politics, had noticed other problems a great education system would create.

Bright well-educated kids might want to become socialist politicians. All students wanted a university education when there was little need outside of specialist professions. Science, Medicine, Law, Educators at the highest levels, Senior Establishment figures and so on.

For many of those in those professions and situations an added concern was very simple. A well-educated, competitive generation, wasn't quite as attractive as it should have been. In the UK at least, a well-educated generation was likely to butt heads directly with the traditional class system not to mention all those poorly educated activists doing very nicely without intelligent competition.

When the socialists, and other interested parties, dismantled the Conservatives' streamed education system it was under the mis-guided assumption that education would not work for them. For some it had not been immediate enough. For others it might mean alienated their own positions and upsetting their cushy but unwarranted perches at the top.

Two major counters to this unforeseen problem were initiated. The socialists assumed that everyone must have a degree to prosper and the Conservatives realised that all businesses still needed workers on the shop floor.

My debate material had assumed this was about the time that great attitude changes occurred across the board. Satisfaction with having everything in life a person needed was no longer enough. The ever-increasing desire for more wealth had taken over. Greed had infected everyone just at a time when an ever-increasing number of new things to covet became available. Cars, TVs, Hi-Fis, furnishings, houses to own, assets to buy, caravans, RVs, and boats to sail, 2nd holiday homes etc. etc.

There were still the same two political arguments but now they had become polarised and much more sharply focussed. There were those who knew the best way to wealth and happiness was through knowledge, the application of a skill and hard work. They kept on pursuing that approach quite successfully. Then there were the others whose argument was based upon ignorance and a need to have what they considered their fair share of what someone else had worked hard to earn.

They wanted to keep the status quo but had produced at least one better educated generation of people who were not quite as naive or gullible as perhaps they would have been before their education had been 'improved'.

The snag was the silent majority had grown to see through the rhetoric of legal theft through taxation and benefits as a means to succeed. In my notes I always call this T&B meaning tax and bribe. Get into power and raise taxes so that you can bribe more people to vote for you on the understanding that you could provide them a lifetime of the same.

Socialism was getting tainted by its own greed rather than a desire to compete on an equal footing. That's when the desperate, idle, left, of society decided to cheat yet again rather than work at improving itself, it would rig elections by increasing the number of people likely to vote for them.

They found several ways to do this but all of them involved keeping the electorate ignorant, gullible, and naive. They needed dumber voters who could be persuaded that taking from those that had things to take was only fair if you could not get them for yourself.

Self-improvement through adult education and job training was never mentioned.

Eventually it became necessary to make the past errors of socialism and communism fade away. It became necessary to whitewash all the communist dictatorships so that nobody grew up aware of their failures. Nobody needed to learn about the mass murder of the educated which was becoming a hard sell to the newer well-educated generations. Promising better wealth distribution became viable when the electorate could not understand why there was only ever enough wealth to keep the leaders in great luxury. China became the new, untainted, example of a fully functioning capitalist economy producing billionaires by the sack-load in a union free, police state, without welfare systems of any kind at the lowest levels who could not afford it.

It seemed wonderful as long as you did not look too closely.

Blame the wealthy for being stingy but not the wealthy who supported the communist belief with everything they thought and did.

The welfare state became so abused it failed to function anymore for those it had been built to protect. Benefits as a career path suited all the new immigrant voters. Free health services attracted all their sick kinfolk still living abroad and only visiting to take from the welfare state.

Socialism became less and less popular for those that did the producing and wealth creation because they were not keeping enough for themselves to benefit from it anymore. That is when open warfare between the left and right of politics began to rear its ugly head on the streets.

It was also, according to my notes, why education was encouraged to fail. The very thing the Sploor and Grooloos could not let happen was happening everywhere. The self-proclaimed elite who worked in industries with direct access to public money thrived and held their greed aloft in delight. Anyone managing and working in nationalised industries could now decide for themselves what their fair-share was.

A classic example of this which is not as obvious as it should be is found in the entertainment industry. At a time when everyone expects a phone, TV, radio, the internet, and central heating, as a right certain things became the panacea of the people. In much the same way that the ancient Roman Emperors used the Roman gladiators fighting in the arenas to the death as a distraction. The modern politician wanted an industry viewed by all to spread their message and nothing else.

This opportunity had now presented itself before them. People placed by politicians in controlling positions throughout the entertainment systems ensured that this was what they got. But first they paid themselves gratuitously well out of public funded work. The BBC fell to the left, Hollywood became a shrine to greed. The one thing they could not afford was a vociferous opposition from the well-educated such as doctors and lawyers on legal aid used by the common folk nearly as much as the wealthy folk.

The whole, worldwide, health industry became a money-trough exchanging a vocation that provided well-being at reasonable cost to a unionised business intent on extracting unlimited sums in cash for that same well-being. Health was a necessity. People were prepared to pay rather than suffer and/or die. It is a system of mutual support honest politicians will always find hard to break. It was a perfect breeding ground for socialist greed.

If the politicians ever wanted to cut the doctors incomes back down to size, the lawyers dependence on legal aid down to size, it would also make it necessary to crucify other overpaid individuals such as those in the entertainment industry including sports. Cut the overpaid entertainment industry down to size and the left-wing politicians lose their dominance over the airwaves which are used daily to spread their greed and bile. This is where the self-serving name selected by such people, for such people, comes from: The Elite.

They are 'Elite' because they get to take what they want out of the public's pockets while at the top of the greed chain. They are almost untouchable. They take what they want whether they are worthy of it on merit or not. Who will stop them by rocking their boat?

And who pays?

The electorate who keep returning the unworthy to political office where they do nothing lest they lose their seats at the gravy trough.

Educational institutions continue to debase their very soul to sell worthless certificates in unneeded skills have made their 'elite' thinkers wealthy beyond belief. Like gold-fever, greed is insidious and easily caught by those never taught to think.

The whole world suffered from an excess of self-indulgent taking without thinking. The air we breathe became polluted; the seas we fish became filled of garbage we no longer disposed of properly. The land we used to grow food upon, including the waste dumps, was built over to house those who only took but never contributed. We polluted everything with ourselves in an orgy of population expansion far worse than any baby-boomers ever could.

The ignorant kept on being ignorant and the workers just began to despair. They could never win when everyone else took what they merely regarded as their 'fair-share' of what others worked to produce.

The main point the Sploor seemed to have focused upon was the simple observation that communism, socialism, and any other kind of dominant political system depended upon keeping the electorate as uneducated as possible. If the electorate thought about their situation, worse still, could think of better ways to do things than their leaders, they might start seeking change and that was unacceptable.

As it turned out this was a perfectly sensible aspect of my thinking to latch onto. It just happened to turn out to be completely wrong and totally irrelevant.

In short, my aide-memoire for a debate turned out to be exactly what the Sploor had been looking for. A reason the standard of education was dwindling that they could not have foreseen and thus be held accountable for. An explanation based entirely upon human failure which took the onus off their shoulders.

The moral of this debate is simple, history should always be taught as it had happened warts and all. If it isn't, we repeat the foolishness of the Marxist inspired revolutions in the past?

As my interpretation of the old saying goes: If you do not know history, you will only live to repeat the mistakes of the past for ever and ever. Making the same mistakes time after time is one good definition of insanity.

This is why I was selected from among millions and why I was to be given the task of clearing up the human mess I had managed to identify so well.

No great challenge there. Right?

As the sheer enormity of it all started to penetrate my slightly befuddled mind, I concluded that there might just be one small point they had overlooked. "How am I to do any of this?"

Alastair looked pained. "We were hoping you might come up with a few ideas about that."

"You see Jason we have been watching and monitoring several million humans like you. Babies we had turned into potential telepaths before they were even born. So far you are the star performer and I might add your answers to many examination questions over the years have led us to believe your analytical mind is just the thing we have been looking for."

"In one treatise you wrote that in your opinion the worst thing to ever happen to humanity was the evolution of communism. You argued that the whole concept of the less intelligent leading the more intelligent was farcical. That those who do not contribute to the society in which they live should be

allowed to live comfortably off the efforts of those that worked hard and did contribute was an abomination, a perversion of the natural laws of survival.”

“You argued that the well-recognised theory of Charles Darwin that life was about the “Survival of the Fittest” was a truth that should never be ignored.”

Alastair smiled broadly at me. “I was a member of the committee of Sploor programmers that wrote that part of your DNA helix, it is exactly like many concepts the Sploor incorporated into human DNA that they had expected humanity to follow without thinking about them. Originally, we had a list of about 100 items to incorporate into the Natural Instinct part of the DNA controlling the boot-up of the human mind. Much of that wisdom has been superseded by greatly simplified alternatives created by religions, human beliefs, and ancient rights and more lately by political concessions. What’s left you would probably recognise as ‘The Ten Commandments’ or some other similar dogma.”

“Things like: Obey your parents. Do not murder people. Only support those who need a little help to support themselves. Support those that have always supported you but can no longer support themselves. Do not steal. Never be greedy, only accumulate what you need. Teach all you know to those that will follow in your footsteps. Learn all you can learn. Learn one new thing every day. Never create false idols. ONLY listen to Role Models approved by the society in which you live. Do not lie or cheat and many, many, more.”

Having listened patiently to all this a thought occurred to me: “Why did you make me a telepath in order to do these things when you are already powerful telepaths. Why cannot you do all these things for yourselves without being seen? It seems to me that all I will be doing is using the telepathic powers you already have?”

Alastair smiled: “We could have made human adults telepaths and saved 18 years of waiting but that didn’t work out very well. You must understand some basic and simple facts of life.

For example: - English, human, males, do not walk into the lady’s toilets in open public places simply because it is not done.

You have been raised that way, to be polite. But if we had upgraded you as a telepathic adult, you would not automatically think like that. If we created adult telepaths the first thing, they would do is pry into the private affairs of absolutely everyone they could read. It is only by raising you as a telepath from birth that you grow up understanding how to behave as a telepath and accept other people’s desire for privacy.”

“Every question you may have has a simple explanation which can be given to you but it takes time to do so. We would prefer that you learn as you go along. OK?”

“In that case my next question is this. My treatise, the one that you seem to like so much, was based upon my education of events that happened on this planet, Earth. What makes you think it has effected every other human planet in all the Sploor universes? Have you checked? Is there a Karl Marx on every planet?”

Alastair stared me straight in the eye speculatively: “If it will help you, I would suggest that once you have your upgrade ,you spend your first year or so traveling around the multiverse. Travel as much as possible, visit all the places likely to prove most useful to producing or proving any theory you can invent. Develop the new abilities you will have and strengthen your telepathic powers to see if you can discern why things are not working here on Earth and as many other human planets as possible.”

“By which I mean, as we Sploor intended humanity to work.”

I was absolutely stunned and just sat there staring at him. After several seconds all I could do was mutter a simple: “You mean travel to other planets and check for myself? Is such a thing possible?”

Alastair smiled. “It is very possible young Jason. In fact, I have already arranged a guide to take you around and show you just what is possible. He will take you to each of the 500 Sploor created universes and show you one, randomly selected, human inhabited, world in each. He will also take you to 25 human inhabited worlds here in your own universe. We call it U-481 by the way.”

I simply goggled at him: "How long will this tour take?"

Alastair thought out loud for a moment: "Well, if you spend an average of three days on each planet, travel at the speed of thought between planets and don't waste time it should take about 3 months. That's if you do three in the morning and three each afternoon as well. You will, of course be using time compression as well."

"Did I forget to mention that? Sorry."

I just sat there looking stupidly stunned yet again.

"When do I sleep?" was all I could think of.

"Oh! You will get a full 8 hours R&R between days. In fact, knowing the guide I have in mind for you it will probably be longer. Don't worry about it. It will be fun just you wait and see."

"Jason, you have a very logical, dispassionate, and unemotional view of things. Emotions do not seem to influence you very much, if at all. Your analytical ability to extrapolate, step by step results from any defined action are unmatched by anyone else we have found."

"Hopefully you can reverse that analytical process of yours and look at all those worlds as they are then and trace back why they are as they are? Find out what person, event, or thing, had started them on their current paths."

"Paths that seems to be leading humanity away from holding education up to be the most important thing your children can possibly receive."

"Always remember the basic principle of existence: - to learn everything there is to learn about everything there is something to learn about. At least I think that's how it goes. It's not a Sploor saying. Life begins for all species as a single celled organism. That, given time, evolves into a multi celled organism and that eventually grows a brain and learns to think. However, that brain's size must be limited in size or it would be hard for it to survive. 'Stand and Fight or Flight' are two basic instincts. The human frame was designed by us to be the ultimate survivor. It can hide because it is small, it can run fast because it has long legs and a lightweight brain. The dinosaurs proved that big brains supported by big slow bodies were flawed in so many ways."

"You humans are initially limited to use only 10% of your brain. Eventually you must learn to use 62.5% of its capacity at which time you will know enough to convert yourselves, en-masse to a Pure-Energy-Being or PEB like we did. PEBs cannot only use 100% of their combined brain capacity but can add huge additional capacity to that. You will need all of that in order to create your own universes and the species that will evolve therein. Each iteration of life: The Grooloo, The Sploor, and now Humanity is expected to do these things, better, quicker, and larger than the iteration before them. Eventually a Pure-Spirit-Being or PSB is produced."

"When it is time for you to start your real work, travel around and use your telepathic powers to find the anomalies to your basic programming."

"Before you go, however, you need to learn a lot about leadership. With that in mind we hope to arrange some intense military training for you. You need to learn leadership skills and a lot more about modern military tactics. Have you any particular preference? Army, Navy, or Air Force?"

Once again, I was somewhat taken back.

Joining the armed forces? That had not been in any of my plans at all. The idea wasn't totally unappealing to me but what if I was posted off somewhere and couldn't help the Sploor anymore?

Alastair smiled at that thought: "No we couldn't allow that could we. How about Sandhurst, The Parachute Regiment and then the SAS as a 'Rupert'?"

"A what?"

"A 'Rupert', that's what they call any new officers in the SAS, or so I'm told. As I understand things you will be in the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for two years. That's if they accept you of course. Then it will take several years in the Parachute Regiment to qualify for an application to join the

SAS. IF you can get in there it will be several more years before you can consider yourself trained and experienced in anything dangerous.”

Alastair seemed to think of the SAS as the next step up in the realm of highly trained boy scouts. I would imagine that was simply because the SAS had very little television exposure that had been beamed out into space since 1936.

I hoped it meant that anyway. I had no idea if I was capable of getting into the SAS and even less about surviving through it if I did. It was not the sort of course any university trained you for and as far as I knew every prodigy before me had the good sense not to try getting into it. Even getting into it could kill you, what they might do to you after getting into it didn't bear thinking about.

In any case, I already suspected my best answer to the Sploor's quest might be as simple as a single name: 'Karl Marx'? I say that because socialism was already busy dismantling the best education system ever devised. That was the streaming system the Conservatives had introduced in the 1950's.

If I was to extrapolate a bit further back in time, I would go on to point a finger at either of: Those who claimed to have accurately translated the stone tablets into the 10 Commandments OR: Those who had translated that written text into any other language. Christianity sprang immediately to mind with the Roman Catholic Church blinking like a big red stop light in the center of the thought. If I was only to be granted a few months to do all this I wondered how long it might take to get access to the Vatican's closely guarded archives as well as visiting 525 planets? Just a thought.

Who else in the entire history of mankind had tried so hard to control humanity's acquisition of knowledge? The Catholics had even gone so far as to threaten one of the greatest human minds of all time: Galileo di Vincenzo Bonaiuti de' Galilei. If the church would lock up an astronomer able to show moons orbiting a planetary body what else had they hidden from us?

If any of this were true, it could get very complicated finding out for sure on each of 525 planets with only three days spent on each. Simply because finding out for sure, and then proving it, would involve countering their equivalent of the Swiss Guards, the Russians, the Chinese, and the North Koreans! Not to mention the Cubans, the KGB and Spetsnaz and whatever the others used for special forces or spying.

Following my earlier close encounter with a Jasper Carrott creation my stomach was now contemplating a Jackson Pollock as well!

Alastair wheedled on. “You are now 18 and we will try to get you into next September's intake at Sandhurst when you will be 19. In that way the whole program I've just laid out for you should keep you safe, away from any conflicts and in top form. You will be here in the UK learning leadership skills until you are at least 27, probably 28, if not older.”

Obviously, Alastair was thinking that none of this 'travel' or military training contained any risk. I couldn't help wonder what all those interplanetary religious bodies, the Parachute Regiment and the SAS would have to say about that.

Then I had another thought: It made me even more perplexed: “So all this rush to get me ready to work for the Sploor wasn't really necessary, was it?”

Alastair sighed. “Yes: I'm afraid it is necessary Jason. You are a very intelligent person but you lack street smarts, leadership skills and a toughness that can only come from experiencing hardships of all kinds. We want a well-rounded individual, capable of looking after both himself and others who can ultimately go anywhere and confront anything. Trust me, we did a lot of research on this subject.

I wasn't convinced: “And this task of mine requires me to be bullet proof as well, does it?”

Alastair put on his stern voice: “Jason; listen to me. We Sploor and therefore all of those beings who will help you are 100% totally invulnerable to any threat this multiverse and the beings in it can construct. We know. We built the universes and know what is in them and we designed the human seeds that do the thinking. There are certain technologies and materials that cannot be created in these universes, not even by us.”

“Things have become so urgent that we are sending you on a rough tough leadership course before we can upgrade you. That’s why you must be accompanied by an expert guide who does this sort of thing all the time and has done so for centuries. Once you are fully upgraded you will be quite able and confident enough to do what you deem necessary. OK?”

“You see, we doubt you will really be of use to us until we can convert you into one of us. We cannot do that until you are around 28 years old. We need someone who is highly intelligent and can think as closely to the way a Sploor thinks as possible. If you follow this new path, we have planned out for you it will be possible for you to take up command of the entire Sploor operation here on Earth. We have already started building the first of your three main bases.”

“Any other bases your plans require: On the Moon and Mars for example, will also need to be ready by then as well. Then there is one of your evacuation plans for dealing with an unstoppable Extinction Level Event. You once proposed in answer to an engineering challenge how humanity should pre-prepare off-world bases. You detailed how Earthlings would need to be spread around some several human inhabitable planets to ensure their long-term survival. Do you remember that one?”

I had to think back a long way to find that proposal. “Yes. That assumed that a giant space object the size of a small moon was heading for Earth. I don’t think the Communists are very likely to do that are they?”

Alastair smiled: “Probably not. But we Sploor like to be prepared. One day I will tell you what our home world Sploorine was like. If you had ever seen it, you would understand why we are a very cautious species. I’m sorry that such big things take such a long time to come to fruition but we believe this is our, and therefore your, best way forward if we are going to have enough facilities in place to be sure to succeed.”

“For example, you were thinking about gaining access to the Vatican Archives. As a Sploor upgraded Human hybrid you should be able to teleport yourself into it any time you wish. Wouldn’t that help a lot?”

I nodded. It was hard to argue with the logic and I could not compress my age and become 28 years old by tomorrow. Not yet I couldn’t!

What was there to say. It was either goodbye Sploor, together with my generous Aunt and a future I had worked all my life to date to be ready for; OR, ‘Hello Army. Followed by Hello upgrades.’

“The real question is this. Are you going to help us?”

I must say it was a lot to think about. Last night I had my first mouth to mouth, adult kiss, with a real, live, breathing (but intoxicated) women, and here today I was being offered the chance to save humanities future and the Sploor’s future. It all seemed so extreme.

My next stream of questions seemed to please Alastair. “How would these ‘upgrades’ help me? When can I get these upgrades of yours? How long will it take to be upgraded and what exactly will be the advantage in having them?”

Alastair simply smiled: “You are going to help us then?”

I didn’t answer him; I was still waiting and he was starting to look as if he regretted his offer and the subsequent need to explain it better. “Well . . . the upgrades shouldn’t take that long, maybe a year or so since you will also be the first human we will upgrade. There will have to be a lot of development and testing, redesign, and modification time. The big problem is you humans do not start dying until you are around 28 years old and we cannot begin the process before that. We need a stable subject. As for what the upgrades consist of the answer is I’m not exactly sure. I expect we will improve virtually everything except your brain.”

“That we will keep, augment, and enlarge but it will be kept as the base for improvement. Pretty much everything else will go and be replaced by bio-engineered materials so much stronger and more powerful than you can imagine it is difficult for me to explain them all.”

He looked at me optimistically hoping he'd said enough, he hadn't.

"What exactly do you mean by 'start dying'? And difficult or not I need to know everything if I am going to lose everything I am now."

Alastair looked pained again.

I added: "Don't you think I have a right to know?"

Now he looked defeated. He paced the wheelhouse for a full five minutes and then he sat down again. "OK: Here it is. You humans are growing and reproducing cells up to a certain age usually around 28 years old. After that time, you are no longer growing or producing new cells at the same rate. You are into a kind of maintenance mode as things degenerate until one day you all die."

"We need to allow all the growing to take place and begin the upgrade before the downward slope has begun and progressed too far. The reason we keep the brain is simple, it is you we want and you are your brain. The rest of you is simply the machinery that supports your brain and does anything physical your brain needs doing."

"We will give you a new carbon-ceramic skeletal structure of almost infinite strength and longevity. A bio-engineered silicone-ceramic skin that is more sensitive and tactile than you can imagine. A skin more controllable than you can understand and stronger than anything humanity has ever envisioned something flexible could possibly be. Your vision will become pretty much all seeing out to many miles and through just about everything except some of the more primitive radioactive materials such as you have here on Earth. By which I mean you will be able to see through a steel wall ten feet thick but not through a film of uranium metal. Your hearing will have a wider range and more analytical abilities than your species can understand."

"You can be made as strong as you like but we would suggest that you do not opt to be so strong you break things without knowing you are doing it. Your telepathic powers will be as strong as ours and raised to the level at which basic textures and tonal-nuances can be discerned. For example, I can easily sweep this galaxy for thoughts while I'm standing right here. The extra textures and tonal-nuances enable me to identify the person sending the thought from yet another galaxy. You will have teleportation powers and telekinetic powers way above anything you have now. You will also be able to heal almost, every common wound any human or other corporeal being could suffer from."

I queried "Almost every common wound?"

He looked thoughtful and added: "Well if their head has come off it might make things a bit difficult, in fact, if they are in more than one part you may be unable to help them. Especially if the parts are not all there."

"To all intents and purposes, you will be the same as us, except that we are now pure energy beings. The only difference is you will still have a physical solid-form while we are only energy and solid-form projections such as you see here in front of you."

"You will be powered internally so you will never need to eat, drink or breath again. You will be able to traverse space without any aids although the distance you can travel will be limited by your power source."

"We will eventually manage to use 100% of your brain capacity which is both the result of, and how, we managed to turn into pure energy beings. You will only be able to reach a maximum of around 62.5% brain usage to begin with, which is as far as you can go, without making the change to a pure-energy existence. You will not have enough power for the change so you will always exist as a solid entity. Your life span may be centuries, millennia or even immortal. We will not know until your upgrades are complete. All I can promise you is that you will live a lot longer than any human can now."

"What we cannot give you is mastery over time, that is something we have not yet fully understood ourselves. Trips forward and backward in linear time using scaling, say up to 50 or so years we might be able to manage. But ONLY if they become necessary. It would be better if you could find another way to solve whatever problem you are working on."

“There are probably a lot of other features that may or may not be available to your brain’s physiology. That we will not know until they examine you before the upgrade process can begin.”

“That’s about all I can tell you, do you have any more questions?”

I thought for a moment and then asked: “What about family? Will I still be able to get married and produce children?”

Alastair smiled sadly. “I’m afraid the answer to that is yes, but only by marrying another upgraded human female. The problem will be with your reproductive organs. On you human males they appear to be external. A very silly place for the Sploor design team to have put them if you don’t mind me saying so. After any upgrade they will be inside where they can remain protected. They function in the same basic fashion but they really are more suited for use on a female that has been upgraded as well.”

I frowned wondering what the difference could be. Alastair smiled: “Your thingy will have to span a greater distance, a female Sploor upgrade will have her reproductive organs well protected deep inside her new body as you will.”

“To be honest with you. Right now, I do not even know if there are any plans to produce any Sploor-human-hybrids in a female version.”

That was not something I had wanted to hear. “So, to sum up. My choices are to stay as I am or upgrade to a possibly immortal lonely life without love or companionship ever after. Right?”

Alastair nodded. “That’s about as fair an assessment as it could be at this time: Yes.”

“Are there any upgrades I can get before going into the Army? Those people will try to tear me to bits and rebuild me in their image. Is that what you want to happen?”

Alastair thought about that for a few minutes and then said he would have to check up and see, he’d get back to me on that one. Finally, I asked: “Can I have a day or two to think about it?”

Alastair nodded and promptly vanished.

Funnily enough my very first thought after Alastair vanished was about calling him back. If I wanted to call him back, I could do so using telepathy. When I was upgraded, I would be able to converse across multiple galaxies. So, was this the reason the SETI Institute was constantly unable to detect other life in our galaxy? Did they have any means of detecting telepathic communications? I did not call Alastair, but I did have a subject for debate at dinner that night.

That evening I took the whole crew out to an expensive dinner ashore in a very nice Italian Restaurant. Because the restaurant was very busy, we ended up in two groups. Brian and his friends had one big table while Fiona, Charlotte, Debra, and I shared a table to ourselves. Our Chief Engineer had decided to stay onboard at the very last minute as usual. What exactly he found to do there we could not imagine.

Debra spent most of the evening flirting with me and teasing me for leaving her all alone and cold that morning. Fiona was full of advice on what I should have done with Debra’s inert form which sounded wonderful. For myself, I couldn’t stop thinking about what Alastair had said to me that day. Finally, Charlotte and Debra started to slide a foot up and down each of my legs under the table and I started to pay more attention to the here and now. That became another very informative night with little allowance for sleep.

I learned, among other things, about ‘gift buying’ how to choose sexy lingerie, judge cup sizes without using my hands and all sorts of useful things. Homework for the next day was to go into a shop alone and buy a complete set of erotic underwear for both Charlotte and Debra. I would be marked by Fiona on colour selection, fit and the suitability of each item tomorrow night when I would have to put them on each girl.

Life was going to be tough for a few months: But someone had to do it.

What I did not know was that after leaving me Alastair had returned to see Wilfred and report on his first meeting with me. It was a tough de-brief, Wilfred and Stanley asked Alastair a great many

questions. He had to admit to all the errors he had made and how he had managed to cover them all up while pacing backwards and forward asking them questions he could not answer himself.

He said they should have been more specific about what the upgrades would entail. It was a rather obvious question for Jason to have asked. Their answer completely surprised him: "We have no idea. All we do know is that they should be available in about ten years or so. Could Alastair keep me occupied and interested that long?"

Alastair had blown his cheeks out at that response and indicated that all he could do was try.