

Psiquantum

by James Lynn Smith

I lifted the helmet-type device from my head, taking care not to tangle the connected wires.

The attendant took it from me. “How did it go this time?” she asked.

“Fantastic. Only adventure dream I’ve had in ages. A lady friend and I were driving through the mountains, and she had a secretive smile on her face. Soon the car started levitating off the road. She laughed and said, ‘Isn’t this exciting? I’m glad we came.’ Then I woke up and here you are.”

“At least it’s an adventure, not one of those worrisome, where-did-I-lose-my-memory dreams you were having. Seems the therapy is working.”

*

I paid my fee at the Dream Therapy Center and went out to the street. This therapy, as a self-help activity, was a new concept in my book. It seemed to work but I wondered about side effects. Lately I had strange urges to invite dangerous people into my life, tell my director to take a hike, and go sky diving. But the most incredible thing was the impulse to study quantum theory under Professor Clara Simmons. She tried to keep it quiet, but she also had a secret interest in psychokinesis. To me this was a fringe science, and that’s why it was interesting.

The device in the Center was simple. Before you went to sleep, the helmet visor projected video of pleasant beaches and waves to the eyes while your ears picked up soothing sounds from built-in speakers. The only addition was low voltage, electromagnetic pulsation that rippled through your head. Pulse rate and modulations were said to be proprietary, but I figured that was hype. Reasons for

mood and sleep improvement could be either the procedure or simply the courtesy of people at the Center.

My name is Frank Novak. I married young, while still in high school, and got divorced when my wife decided she wasn't ready for responsibilities. Heartbroken, I joined the marines and afterwards went to college and buried myself in a career. Now I work at a company called Megoceanic. I write code for my boss, Chris Johns. I let a decade or two slip by without much effort to seek relationships.

Eventually my stoic life led to an emotional rebellion. I couldn't sleep well, had awful dreams, and began to have lapses of memory at work. Johns suggested I try Dream Therapy. It helped, but as I said, there are those strange urges.

I resumed the walk to my car and decided to phone Professor Simmons and see if she would school me in quantum theory.

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“Hello, Clara Simmons speaking.”

“Dr. Simmons, I'm Frank Novak, not a student. I wondered if I could sit in on your class in quantum theory.”

“We have already started and there's an audit fee. What training do you have?”

“For my master's, I took physics and math as a double-minor with computer science as a major.”

“I see. If it's been a long time, you may find quantum physics difficult. Is it worth the fee to you?”

“Doctor, I've also heard of your interest in psychokinesis. If you have time, I would like to know more about that. Maybe after class.”

“Where did you hear?—Hell, never mind. If you are interested in that, come on to my class. Forget about the damned audit fee. We're in room 433 in the

physics building. Evening class starts at 7:00 PM.”

*

I struggled with the class because I’d forgotten so much math. But the words were familiar: Heisenberg uncertainty, probability density, Schrodinger’s equation, and more. After class I approached the professor’s desk. She was in her mid-thirties and had an attractive face with brown hair severely pulled back and parted in the middle. She wore a soft, pink sweater top with short sleeves.

She looked up. “Mr. Novak, I presume. You have a question?”

“Yes. Does quantum theory fit or conflict with your pursuit in psychokinesis?”

“Both. But a scientist lives with apparent paradox and creates a theory to explain it until, through research, it is proved or rejected. Classical physics definitely conflicts with claims of psychokinesis, but new discoveries in quantum physics open the door for the role of consciousness in quantum events.”

“Doctor, I’ve heard that it enables mind reading and miracles at a distance.”

“Most of what you hear is rubbish. Too many fruit-loops think a new discovery they can’t understand means their pet fantasies are waiting in the wings.”

“But they promote those fantasies, write self-help books, and collect fees for advising the gullible.”

The faint vertical cheek lines near her mouth broke into dimples when she smiled. “And I suppose you want to know what is true about quantum phenomena so *you* can write a book and make money advising the gullible.”

“Ouch. That’s cutting to the chase.”

“Sorry. My mother evolved from a chimpanzee and tact wasn’t her strong point.”

Already I liked her. When she rose from her chair, I saw her face wasn’t her only attractive feature. Her jeans were not quite skin tight, but were revealing

enough.

“By the way, Frank,” she said, “you can drop the Doctor business. I’m just Clara.” She extended her hand. “Let’s go down to my lab. That’s where my office is.” She picked up her instructor materials and led me into the hallway.

I followed a few steps behind so I could enjoy the rhythmic, natural movement of her hips. Entering the small office, I sat in the chair she indicated. “Your bookshelves are full of science books. How do you have fun?”

She nodded at the books as she sat behind her desk. “This *is* fun to me. I also enjoy putting equipment together, making measurements, and finding new discoveries in the data. I can show you things, but it wouldn’t make sense without some explanation.”

“Okay, what’s the basis of psychokinesis? I’ve heard of “mind-over-matter.” Like levitation or bending spoons.”

“That’s show business and trickery. Psychokinesis is more serious. Say we shoot electrons at a single neon gas atom and knock one of its electron to a higher energy ‘orbit.’ To relax to its original state, it has to emit a quantum of light energy, a photon. Now suppose an array of photocells are placed to detect the photon. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle says we *cannot* know in advance exactly when and which photocell will be excited by the photon.”

“So things are fuzzy on the micro-scale. Where does the mind enter?”

“Hold on a second. Imagine one photocell is connected to an amplifier that sets off an explosion. Another is connected to an amplifier sending signals to a vending machine with cookies. In advance of an observation—*observation* involves your mind—you don’t know if you will be blown up or served a snack. We can only predict a probability function. But an *observation* forces the function to collapse into a singular event. Psychokinesis might be the mind’s selection of which event occurs, cookies or explosion.”

I leaned forward. “That way the mind could affect things in an unnatural way.”

“True for a single event but, over the long run, the opposite occurs to satisfy statistical probability.”

“The question is how the mind can do this selection.”

She took a deep breath. “Yes, that *is* the central question. Do you meditate and imagine the desired detector being excited or do you find some mental power to call at will? Most psychokinetic work is to validate that it exists, with little to indicate *how* it happens. Theories vary from hard science to far-out deities.”

“Is this related to mental telepathy or clairvoyance?”

“Definitely.”

“How long have such studies been going on?”

“Probably as long as civilization. I know of parapsychology experiments by J.B. Rhine at Duke University in the 1930’s, the work of Edgar Casey, the Ganzfeld experiments for ESP, and later the Institute of Noetic Sciences. Should I go on?”

“No thanks, my mind is getting boggled already.”

“Studies show isolated plants, even bacteria, communicate about threats from environmental changes. Nanotechnology provides a way to deposit organisms into surface structures of sheet material. For telepathic microorganisms, it’s possible to construct psychic mirrors. Placed about the head of a person with ESP, the mirrors may serve as a resonant chamber, like a laser, that emits psychic waves in a straight line.”

“That would make a powerful beam, maybe interfere with a communication satellite.”

“Or repair one. Let’s present both sides.” She smiled, showing even, white teeth and once again those gorgeous dimples.

I wanted to believe all this, just to get her smiles. But I was a bit skeptical. “Do you think psychic waves are made of quanta also?”

“If so, I would call this bit of mental energy a ‘psiquantum.’ Maybe I’ll write a paper and coin that word.” She rose. “Come into the lab.”

We walked through a door into a laboratory. There were dishes hosting strange, scummy growths between isolating sheets, cabinets hosting electronic instruments, and wires everywhere. Also a desk with Zener cards and a partition between it and another.

“It looks messy in here, but my research associate’s room looks like the Frankenstein lab in old movies, but with modern equipment in addition. Dr. Holden has built helmet-like head units with sensors, electromagnetic pulse generators, and psychic mirrors. Here is a prototype. He’s gone much farther in his latest work.” She handed me the bulky helmet.

The inside perimeter was crowded with strange instrumentation. Short wires with connectors came out the top. “This reminds me of helmets at the Dream Therapy Center on Main Street, only bigger.”

“You’ve been there? I’m part owner. Dr. Holden is the biggest stakeholder. He has resources I couldn’t begin to fathom.”

It must have been the expression on my face, for she knitted her brows and said, “Hey, my involvement is just a way to supplement income and get positioned for commercialization should my research pan out. There’s no psychokinetic boogey-bear stuff going on there now. You’re safe.”

“I was a little surprised, that’s all. I think the Center is helping the quality of my sleep—and dreams.”

“Sometime I would like to hear more about it.”

*

Two days later I went back to the Center and asked if Dr. Holden was on

duty. The assistant said yes but he was delivering advanced therapy to a special group of clients.

“What kind of therapy?”

“Paranormal phenomena enhancement, PPE for short. This takes place in a separate therapy facility in this building.”

I tried to keep a poker face to hide my curiosity. “Can I enter this group?”

“First, Dr. Holden would interview you to see if you’re a likely candidate. But maybe he wouldn’t mind if you sneaked a peek on the intercom video.” He switched on a wall-mounted monitor above the reception desk.

What I saw and heard became more incredible the longer I watched. About twenty people sat in lounge-like chairs mounted with units that covered their heads, except for faces. The units were larger than the helmet-type ones in the regular Dream Therapy Center. Numerous wires from each unit attached to connectors in the top back of the lushly padded chair. This was apparently an enormous investment.

Dr. Holden was speaking in a deep, resonant voice. “Now that your mind is at ease and you desire to experience psychokinesis, let’s go through a few mental exercises to warm up. Imagine you are digging with a shovel. You want to put a plant in the hole. Feel the hard shaft of the shovel. Notice how the spade sounds as it slides into the ground. Intensely sense the weight of soil you move to the side. Take your time. Continue this for the next three minutes...”

Holden quietly walked around the room as they silently practiced the assignment. After an interval he looked at his watch. “Now, bring your attention back. As a first step in moving objects with the mind, you have synchronized with physical sensation. But psychokinesis has a mental component. Imagine you are doing bookwork. For instance, looking at your financial investments or going on-line to check your bank accounts. No one is looking over your shoulder. Silently,

in your mind only, go through the whole process. Imagine you log in with your ID and passwords...”

I guessed he was leading them into mental activity that was both personal and greatly significant to them. Perhaps using the motivation to intensify focus.

The attendant started to switch the video off.

“No, wait just a minute,” I said. Something difficult to believe was taking place.

A wooden chair sat on a section of floor near the front of the room. The floor underneath was covered with a smooth, long, black mat. And the chair was trembling.

“Focus your mind’s energy on the chair,” Holden said. “Imagine you can touch it with your hands. Now move it sideways, toward the entrance door.”

The chair stopped trembling and moved an inch or two toward the door. Then a foot more.

Holden raised his hand. “Okay, now relax. In the next session we’ll do more. It’s best to do this a step at the time, or it could get out of control.

The attendant switched off the monitor. “Leave your name and contact information and I’ll get it to—”

“Never mind. I’ll come back later.” I was perplexed, but mostly troubled, and needed to contact Clara.

*

“...and that’s what I saw,” I said. “Is this something you have witnessed?”

With raised brows, she fiddled with the glass filled with pens on her desk. “I had no idea of such a group session. Dr. Holden has always been an enigma, but this takes the cake. Didn’t even know about another facility in the Center. In psychokinesis, he’s apparently generations ahead of anyone else. But without proper controls, someone could be injured, and this bothers me. Why isn’t he

letting me in on what happens?”

“And what puzzles me,” I said, “is where the money for this comes from. This goes way beyond his brain scan lab here at the university. He’s bound to have multiple resources or else a huge private fortune.” I looked directly at Clara.

“What’s the prospect for our visiting that facility?”

“If we sought his permission, it would alert him that we feel something is amiss.”

“Right, I would rather find out what I can about the facility without his being aware of it.” It was evident we needed help. Luckily, being an employee at Megoceanic, I had valuable contacts. A colleague who was another code writer specialized in industrial counter-intelligence. “Clara, I know a guy who might hack into computers at the Center so we could see what comes up.”

*

Ten days later, Jim Brown leaned back from the keyboard. “Been working on your request for a week, Frank, but I have assigned tasks too. I have to keep the on-line work for you undercover. But I can tell you there are income-generating franchises for this ‘Dream Therapy Center’ set up in several cities. Each appears to have two separate profit centers. Client lists for those second centers identify dropouts. Knowing you would want to talk to a few of them, I contacted Mike, the police detective you once mentioned. He ran a check on the dropouts. Most are either missing persons or turned up dead in back alleys. Police could be on the verge of starting a new case, but would need to know where evidence is that the *Center* is connected with it.

An idea popped into my head. “Jim, can you get me the city’s layout on that building the Center is in? I want to locate that facility I saw on the monitor and make a map in my head.” My next stop was Megoceanic’s security. Knowing nothing about picking locks, I had friends there that would soon change that.

*

Two days later the attendant at the Dream Therapy Center's reception desk was busy, and I quietly slipped past him into the hall behind the waiting room. The layout I memorized made a map unnecessary. I took the elevator up one floor and entered the hallway, moving toward the PPE room where Holden held his sessions. I saw that a hand-print access lock installation had begun but as yet was incomplete. *In the nick of time. Soon lock picks won't work.* Keeping pressure with the tensioner in my left hand and turning the pick with my right, it took longer than I thought to enter.

Once inside the PPE room, I turned on lights and went to one of the setups where the client normally sat with lowered head gear. Tilting the head unit, I looked inside with my penlight. More complexity was packed inside than anything I had seen so far and meant nothing to me.

Walking to the podium, I examined the console where an instructor or operator would sit. There was a built-in computer with keyboard, a monitor, numerous switches with strange lettering, and an optical recording unit. Though not knowing the purpose, it was obvious the instrumentation was legitimate. I scribbled model and serial numbers in my pocket notebook.

Next was the chair that moved. I picked it up and found it to be bottom-heavy. Turning it over revealed peel-off felt pads on the leg ends. Peeling one up, I saw the core of the leg was a dark material like iron. Putting the chair aside, I pulled back the smooth, black mat under it. By searching, I found a way to get a foot-wide strip of flooring, seven feet long to hinge up and reveal a hidden electromagnet underneath, connected to a chain. That was what pulled the chair toward the door.

This whole psychokinetic thing is a hoax! Yet the instruments were real and high tech. The true purpose of the facility was an enigma. I closed the strip of

floor, replaced the mat, and set the chair back where it had been. I then left the room, took the elevator, and discovered the staff at the reception desk had gone. I let myself out the front door and locked it back. Tomorrow I would talk to Clara.

*

“I almost knew it was too advanced to be true,” she said. “But I’m like you. What is really going on in there?”

“We need more information. If we could get records, recorded video, or anything off that computer in Holden’s PPE room, it might help.”

“I’m sure it’s password-protected.”

“Yes, but remember, I’m a code writer and have hacker associates. We need a way to log in and a way to record.” I punched in a call on my cell phone.

Jim picked up sooner than I expected.

“Say, Jim,” I said, “could you fix me a kit where I can log in to Holden’s computer and download a beaucoup of Gigabytes?”

“That would be two kits, actually. One is our beta version of the access unit under development here. It’s designed to get around IDs and passwords so you can operate the computer right there. The second kit is simply a data recording device like the super thumb drives popular in the early 2000’s.”

“When do you think you could fix me up? I want to visit Holden’s facility under dark of night.”

“This could get us in a lot of trouble. If you’re implicated, I’ll have to say you took it without permission. What is the computer? Anything to indicate the operating system?”

I gave him the data from my notebook, hoping it was enough.

“Stop by here before I knock off work.”

I looked at Clara. “I’ll be going back tonight. Need to get in before they beef up their security lock system.”

“I’m going with you.”

“It might be dangerous.”

“I’m still going. Since I’m a familiar face, I could fabricate a reasonable excuse for being there if we’re caught by a night guard.”

*

After dark, when everyone appeared to have left the Center, we walked from my car to the front door. Luckily, it was still the old lock. I opened my shoulder strap satchel containing the pick tools and kits for computer access. Picking the lock was easier than before and Clara helped by holding a penlight. “It’s on the second floor, down the hall on the left,” I said.

I went first and she followed. We stopped from time to time and listened for any presence. After stepping from the elevator, we walked silently to the PPE facility. Hall lights were dim. Once again, Clara held the penlight while I picked the door lock. Inside, I flipped on one set of lights and moved to the console chair. Pulling out my battery powered access unit, I plugged into the computer entry port, then turned it on and waited. It booted up with the login page which flickered as the access unit began its work. In less than a minute, I had access to a directory structure.

“Let me see that,” Clara said. “Here’s where I might be of help. It’ll take too long to copy everything.”

“Right. We don’t want to be any longer than necessary.” I plugged in the recording device and moved aside.

After fifteen minutes, she said, “Okay, let’s get going.” Nodding, I put the memory device in my pocket.

“What’s that?” she said. “I think I heard something in the hall.”

We heard two male voices. I shut the lights off and locked the door back with the deadbolt. “There’s a large cabinet in the back of the room. Use your

penlight to guide us so we can hide behind it.”

She moved ahead of me and I followed. Once crowded behind the cabinet she shut the penlight off. “Listen,” she whispered. “They’re unlocking the door to this room.”

The two people entered the room and the lights came on. I recognized Holden’s voice.

He said, “Until we get the security access completed, I want you to personally inspect this room with due diligence. The console is—What’s this?”

I heard steps, probably toward the console.

“This looks like some kind of plug-in device I don’t recognize.”

With a sinking feeling, I cursed under my breath. Though the computer data files were in my pocket, we forgot to put the access unit back in my satchel. I heard a snap, the crinkle of leather and a metallic click. *The guard, he’s armed.*

In a low voice, I heard Holden say, “That big, empty cabinet back there, check it out. Look inside then behind it.”

As steps slowly approached, Clara whispered. “Should I come out and pretend to be alone? Could say I was just curious.”

“I don’t believe that would fly.” Feeling that more than stealth was needed now, I looked upward and saw a pipe jutting from the wall. Hoping I could reach it by jumping, I waited until the guard grabbed the handle and swung the cabinet door open.

With all my strength I sprang upward and grabbed the pipe. Pulling my feet waist high, I rammed them forward against the top back of the cabinet. With a loud crash and cry of alarm from the guard it fell over. The guard was trapped underneath, maybe inside. He would be a while getting out.

Dropping to the floor, I glanced toward the console but didn’t see Holden. Maybe he left as the guard reached the cabinet to avoid possible gunplay. But

perhaps he saw us and then ran out.

“Let’s go,” I said and took Clara’s hand, grabbed the access unit, and headed for the room entrance. The guard would soon work himself from under the cabinet. After switching off the light I peered around the door. The hall, still dimly lit, was empty.

“Holden may be calling 9-1-1 now,” she said.

“Could be. Or maybe he doesn’t want police snooping around. Probably left the building.” We headed for the first floor, using stairs and stopping at every turn for sound. “Together, let’s keep a low profile and run zig-zag back to the car.” We scurried back to my car. “You drive, Clara. I want to make a call.”

“Jim, can you come back to the office?” I said. I know it’s late. We have the computer files. Our intrusion wasn’t all smooth, and I think Holden may be onto us. Time may be of essence, so we’ll give the memory device to you and then leave. We’ll stay in touch by phone. If you find anything relevant, try to get the police detective, Mike, working with you. He and I are tight, but don’t specifically tell him how the files were obtained or anything he couldn’t repeat without trouble for us. Let him originate his own reasons for collaboration. If there’s no crime, there’s no problem. Holden can’t actually *prove* we took data.”

“Frank,” Clara said, “what do you think Holden is up to?”

“Don’t know, but he got out of there when he saw someone was snooping. Maybe we should go to the university and see if he’s up to anything there. It may give us a clue.”

“There’s a lot of technology there. If he’s destroying evidence, it might include equipment.”

*

We stopped at the Megoceanic section office and delivered the memory device to Jim. Driving away toward the university, I was thankful to have such

loyal friends.

We entered the physics building and went by Clara's lab and office. Nothing unusual. Then we went to the lab where Holden did research. The door was locked, as expected. But we heard noises inside.

Clara said, "I think I smell smoke."

I looked along the hallway until I saw a fairly hefty fire extinguishing cylinder. Detaching it, I ran back to the lab door. With a swinging thrust, I rammed it into the door, breaking the latch. The entrance swung open. We ran inside and Clara went to windows, lifting them to reduce smoke.

"Hold it right there," a deep voice said. I tried to peer through the smoke, but felt a blow to my head and everything went dark.

*

Later I opened my eyes and saw flames. I was on the floor and didn't understand why a woman was sitting in a nearby chair without moving. Then I felt the ache in my head and realized something was amiss. A gradual return of feeling to my arms and legs enabled me to push off the floor. Puzzled, I approached the woman. Then I understood. "Clara! Talk to me. We need to get out." She remained motionless but there was no blood. Maybe she had been anesthetized. Despite my disorientation, I hefted her to my shoulder and managed to exit the building. I took her to a safe spot and put in the 9-1-1 call.

Finally she came around, moaning and shaking her head. After a deep breath she said, "I felt a sharp pain in my neck. Next thing I knew you were shaking me. What happened?"

"I think Holden injected you with an anesthetic. He had set fire to his lab. I think the fire trucks have it under control now, probably won't reach your lab. Let's get away from here before we're found and have to answer questions we don't have time for."

*

After helping her to the car, I drove to my place. A glass of water and a couple of analgesics for our headaches was first on my mind. “Take this and lie here on the couch until you feel better. I’ll be in this lounge chair if you need anything.”

After 20 minutes of silence I asked, “You doing okay?”

“Much better. Things are running through my head. If Holden finds someone snooping, why does he go on a destruction rampage? Seems stupid to destroy all his work, questionable though it is.”

“I know. Like destroying evidence, but for what? That reminds me, I need to check in with Jim.” I pulled out my phone and called.

“This is Jim. That you, Frank?”

I put the call on speaker mode so Clara could hear. “Yeah, we went to the university lab, and guess what? Holden’s set fire to it. Tried to do us in too, but we managed to get away before becoming soot rubble and called 9-1-1.”

“My god, man. That Dream Therapy Center is on fire, too. Just came in on the news. A night guard came out barely in time and reported it. I need to call your police detective now. I’ll Rouse him from bed if necessary. You guys hang loose and get some rest. Call you later.”

Clara said, “Holden doesn’t know you, even after seeing you. But he knows who I am and where I live. I’m certain to be on his undesirable witness list.” She raised one eyebrow. “Could I stay here tonight?”

“Of course.” I waited for her to explain that she meant for this to be a pragmatic, situational proposal. Instead she looked evocatively into my eyes with a slight, mischievous smile. My pulse increased as I stood and took her hand. She rose from the couch, wrapped her arms around my neck and pressed her soft breasts against my chest. When our lips touched, my trembling hands traced the

contours of her body. Passion for me was unfamiliar and painfully exquisite.

*

I was drifting in the air and saw a glittering object hanging from a tree. With only mental intent, I maneuvered a slow, careful descent onto the limb. Then a sinister creature with a chainsaw buzzing appeared and began to cut the limb away.

Waking confused, I finally reached over and hit the buzz alarm off-switch on my clock. I felt there was something to remember, some significant event. A vocal yawn next to me brought it all back. I rolled over to meet a disarming smile. “Hello beautiful,” I said.

“Hello yourself. Do you always seduce a woman before the first date?”

“Before answering I have to know your definition of a date. If you don’t call breaking and entering, escaping a bonfire, and a dessert of psiquantums a memorable date, I don’t get you.”

She laughed, kicked the covers off, and bounded out of bed, heading toward the bathroom. My eyes feasted on her nicely rounded rear.

*

I made breakfast, simply eggs, bacon, toast, juice, and coffee, but this morning it seemed magnificent, like Taj Mahal fare. Afterwards, serious thoughts intruded on our morning.

Clara said, “You’d better get to work.” Then she frowned and added, “Holden invented something very significant but took it in the wrong direction. Something still unknown.”

“True. It seems—”

My phone rang. I scampered around and found it. “Hello. Is this Jim? I punched ‘speaker’ so Clara could hear.”

“You bet, Frank, and get this: the detective and I have discovered that the dropouts from Holden’s PPE group had large sums transferred from their assets to

three out-of-country accounts. The ones found dead in back alleys had the most withdrawals. Police are looking for Holden. They have eyes at the international airport, in case he tries to leave the country. There have been tens of millions transferred into accounts, probably in his name.”

“How do you suppose he knew how to get into their accounts?” I asked.

Clara raised her brows, surprise written on her face. “Oh, my god,” she shouted, “he was copying their thoughts.”

“What?” I said.

“Remember you told me about the exercises you saw on a video monitor where they imagined they were accessing their accounts? That’s what the head units were really doing, creating mental records, not enhancing psychokinesis. He made an astounding breakthrough, but used it dishonestly for his own advantage.”

“It does make sense now. Afraid my skepticism blinded me to that angle. I only knew something was fishy.”

Jim overheard via the phone. “So that’s what the video files on this memory device were. We sampled a few and guessed he had cameras hidden in his clients’ homes.”

“No,” I said. “Those were visual recordings of *thoughts* collected by headgear right there in the PPE room. He was stealing information from the minds of wealthy, bored people who wanted psychic adventure. Keep me informed, Jim.” I punched the phone off.

*

Clara and I went back to our respective jobs and word was that Holden and associates in his covert enterprise were picked up and arraigned for murder, conspiracy, grand larceny, and other serious charges. I called Clara and asked where her research was going at this point.

“My interest in psychokinesis has dwindled,” she said. “And Holden’s

remarkable work in mind-mapping and recording would be dangerous in the wrong hands. Anyhow, nothing is left of the PPE room at the Center or in Holden's lab. All his work and equipment was destroyed, maybe for the better."

"It's only for the better without ethical guidance. Foreign entities must be working now on the same thing Holden was."

"They were doing that in Japan, back in 2008. They used functional MRI scans of blood flow in the cerebral cortex to map crude mental images to a display."

"Then you should pursue this research."

"I only have the crude prototype I showed you in my lab."

"Okay, but you've been handed the opportunity of having the preeminent position in important mind-mapping research. You may find a way to reverse it and restore memory to people who have brain related trauma. Don't waste it. You're no longer just a tinkerer in psychokinesis theory. "

"The position you suggest is scary. It's a lot of responsibility. If I take it on I'll need a lot of encouragement. But first I need to use my prototype to look in your head and see if you're completely nuts."

"It takes one to know—"

"In the meantime, I have ideas on how you could have better dreams at night. All you have to do is promise to wake me up to a nice breakfast."

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