

Chapter 32

NOBODY WAVED GOODBYE

THE OVERCAST BEYOND the study window grew another layer of cloud. The room began to dim like houselights going down. Dr. Colton sat and pulled the brass chain of his banker's lamp. The green glow lit his face from underneath. He contemplated me a while, reaching a decision—or mulling over one already made.

A point of no return had come.



“You and Luke had barely turned eleven when you set the fire that razed your home and killed your foster father.

“At the time, Garrett Finnestad was active in the Glanbrook Township Fire Department. It was he, investigating afterwards, who spotted you and Luke and brought us news. The Caucus set to work to have me named your legal guardian, and with your placement here, we took you out of hell and gave you paradise.

“Nostalgia is an old man's trap, one that I've avoided and am no more likely to fall into now than shuffleboard. Still, when you were at the Farm, the place was different somehow. Brighter. Summers seemed to go on for forever, with winter just a blink between the long, hot months that saw the sun set late.

“The excitement that surrounded your arrival was like

Christmas Day. Psychism doesn't run in families. You were the first, the only, siblings ever known to share it. What's more, you were a mirror set—empath and transmitter—and twins, though not identical. Possibilities for solving riddles opened up before us. We felt like evolutionary scientists who'd stumbled on the missing link.

"Your gifts were strong in each of you, stronger than we'd ever seen. Luke could, for example, imprint even when a subject couldn't see or hear him. Up till then we'd always thought that contact—auditory, visual or tactile—was required for imprinting. As for you, whenever you read subjects, it was eerie. You *became* them, so much your mannerisms and expressions changed.

"Your prodigiousness, in combination with your otherworldly appearance—your eyes, of course—had everyone beguiled. Everyone, that is, but Garrett. Where the rest of us were given to indulgence, he remained inflexible and stern. Chores *would* be done and people treated with respect or there'd be hell to pay.

"You yourself got on with him. Perhaps it was your empathy. Garrett had been scarred by F-RK. More, I think, than people realized. He'd been a dedicated patriot. MKULTRA had destroyed his trust in flag and country. He felt utterly betrayed. You would have sensed that even through the camouflage we use to guard our privacy.

"Luke, on the other hand, distrusted him, openly defying Garrett every chance he got. For one so young he could be frighteningly obdurate, even facing someone twice his size with military training. Garrett, for his part, spoke in dark allusions any time Luke's name came up.

"From the start, the two of you were secretive—normal for two brothers ostracized the way you'd been. But around your third year here, you started to grow taciturn as well, exchanging looks instead of speaking in the company of others. We attributed the change to teenage sullenness and let it pass.

"Then the mishaps started. Little things: keys misplaced and found in odd locations, reading glasses sat on, coffee spilled down shirt fronts, stairs missed going up. It was as if a wave of clumsiness

had struck the Farm.

“Garrett was convinced Luke was responsible. Most of us dismissed the accusation. Imprints always touch the conscious mind. One becomes aware that something is intruding. Non-psychics usually feel them as unbidden thoughts, unmotivated urges, unexpected insights. A psychic’s grasp of his or her own mental map, however, sets them in relief. The foreign influence is easy to distinguish. Only a transmitter with an empath’s sensitivity could imprint a Caucus member so adeptly that the imprint wasn’t noticed.

“That, or a transmitter who could read an empath’s mind.

“Given the improbability of brothers—fraternal twins at that—having mirror psychic gifts, I was not prepared to rule out the latter. I spoke with John. For several months we kept an eye on you, becoming more and more convinced that you were hiding something, something so miraculous your hoarding it seemed pure ingratitude.

“I wanted to confront you, however John advised against it. ‘Teens need their secrets, for a time at least,’ he said, ‘and lose respect for anyone who forces them to lie.’”

“Would it have mattered if I hadn’t heeded his advice? Most likely not. Secrecy itself was not the issue. Rather it was who you were, *what* you were. Both of you—you, and most particularly, Luke.

“For many years, season permitting, Garrett had the habit of sitting by himself on the veranda as the sun went down. No one bothered him. The time was sacred. He’d been free of drugs and alcohol for decades. Still, not a day went by without its struggles.

“One evening in the summer of your sixteenth year, the Farm was empty but for you and Luke and Garrett. Cook was on vacation and a member visiting had tickets to a country show—George Strait at the Coliseum. The Farm brought out the cowboy in our mostly urban members.

“Earlier that day, Luke and Garrett had had words, but things had settled by the time we left for Hamilton. Garrett saw to it your chores were done then took his chair on the veranda.

“Luke has never said if what came next was planned or whether opportunity set things in motion. He wouldn’t let me read him afterwards so what I know comes straight from you. Telepathy with him left traces in your mind, however not enough to ascertain pre-meditation.

“This much is certain, though. For Luke it was a game, like the minor mishaps, only this time getting back at Garrett was the prize. Anticipation of it lit a fire in you. In play, the candle to your moth was always Luke’s excitement.

“At his suggestion, you crawled under the veranda at the south side of the house and crept around. He, meanwhile, went up to Garrett, saying they should clear the air. Disarmed and thinking you were elsewhere, Garrett felt no need to camouflage his mind. While Luke kept him distracted, you watched and read him through the floorboards.

“After twenty minutes, Luke told Garrett he was going to the library. Instead he snuck around the house and joined you under the veranda.

“I don’t know how it’s done—no one does but you and Luke—but there the two of you linked telepathically and Garrett-in-your-mind became a part of Luke. The game began.

“Garrett had been dry for decades but the call to lose himself in alcohol had never gone away. Combating it required a superego stronger than the craving at all times. His strictness with the two of you reflected that—a halo of the discipline he practised on himself.

“Party to your empathy and all its insights, Luke imprinted Garrett, not with the urge to drink, as he might have done without your help, but with permission to relax his discipline.

“The subtlety and skill involved were staggering, far beyond what Luke could manage on his own. Garrett, a founding member of the Caucus, never even registered the imprint. He went indoors and came back with a tumbler and a fifth of rye. In short order, he was hammered.

“Luke toyed with him at first, getting him to scratch his head, pick his nose, swat at non-existent bugs. Emboldened, he went

further. Could he get Garrett to jump up and down and shout obscenities? To laugh hysterically? To piss himself?

“The light was dying and your hiding place was getting cramped. Not yet ready to give up, Luke imprinted Garrett with an urge to joyride on the Farm’s old Massey-Ferguson. Keeping a safe distance, you followed as he stumbled to the barn and fired up the tractor.

“Responding to Luke’s stimuli, Garrett drove it down to Nebo Road, where, weaving back and forth across the centre line, he headed toward Whitechurch. After narrowly avoiding him, a neighbour two farms down alerted the police.

“At this point Luke grew tired of the game, and imprinted Garrett with a yearning for his chair again. In no condition to perform the simplest of manoeuvres, Garrett botched his turn and flipped the tractor in the ditch. The OPP, already on their way, showed up minutes later. The two of you, in hiding, watched as an emergency response team pulled him out from underneath.

“Flashed cars were waiting when we got back from the concert. You and Luke, innocent as lambs and properly distressed, were sitting in the kitchen with the officers. In their opinion Garrett wouldn’t last the night. They offered to escort me to St. Joseph’s, where I sat with him until the end.

“Sat, and read his garbled memories. The picture that emerged was chilling. We’d always known Luke harboured psychopathic tendencies, but had assumed, from your successful integration at the Farm, that your empathy—and the compassion that goes with it—tempered them, held them in check. But when you merged, conscience and compassion disappeared. Luke’s propensities held sway. You followed where he led. Together you were utterly remorseless.

“It was still some time till sunrise when I got back to the Farm. Everyone was sleeping, but the shock of what had happened lingered in the air like silence following a thunderclap. I couldn’t bear the quiet. John was at his cottage on Cassandra Island. I called despite the hour.

“Detachment is John’s greatest gift. Even roused from sleep, he

grasped what needed to be done. You and Luke could not remain together. Whatever hopes we'd had for you would have to be abandoned. You were too much of a danger.

"John advised a separation that was swift, complete and permanent. One of you would have to leave the Farm for good. The other would stay here, his psychic gifts disabled. We had no doubt who that would be. Luke's powers of mental suasion were too great to let him loose upon the world. As for you, John was, I think, already formulating how to seal the split. He offered to drive down and take you to his cottage right away.

"Securing your agreement would be crucial. 'Words will not suffice,' John warned. 'We're asking for a sacrifice that comes with no reward. David has to *know*. Let him read you, Robert. Let him see himself and Luke through others' eyes.'

"Luke would have to be sedated till you left. John suggested ketamine, an anaesthetic with dissociative properties we'd studied in conjunction with prevoynance. You may have heard of it. I understand it's known as Special K. We still had phials locked in the Apothecary.

"The room you shared with Luke is opposite this study. You always rose ahead of him. I waited till you went downstairs then slipped across the hall.

"You'd left the door ajar and I noticed that Luke's bed was empty. Peering round, I saw him tangled in your sheets, sound asleep and curled toward the wall.

"Even intramuscularly, ketamine acts quickly. I injected him, and Luke roused only long enough to rub his thigh and mutter.

"You knew you were in trouble when I found you in the kitchen. Seeing what was in my face, you paled and followed me upstairs. Seated as we are right now, I confronted you with Garrett's death and what I'd gleaned before he died. John's advice was sound, but I wanted—needed—you to hear out loud what suffering you'd caused.

"I then demanded that you read me, opening myself as I had never done before. The horror on your face as you began to grasp the thoughtlessness—the viciousness—of what you'd done convinced

me you were truly seeing free of Luke.

“Frightened in a way I hope you never are again, you offered no resistance when I, in turn, read you, confirming that you understood why brothers Luke and David Ase could be no more.

“John arrived at noon. By then the members staying here, and those we’d reached by telephone, had learned of the events surrounding Garrett’s death. ‘Draconian’ was used but no one balked at what we planned. We gave you time with Luke, still heavily sedated, then packed your things and took them to John’s car.

“The lane was empty as the two of you drove off. Nobody waved goodbye.”



Silence *can* be deafening.

Dr. Colton came around the desk. His mouth was moving, but I wasn’t hearing him. He touched me on the shoulder.

“... everything, for now. The Caucus will be meeting for the next two days. Spend the time with Luke. What happened happened long ago. Both of you have changed.”

He squeezed my shoulder.

“We’ll talk again.”