

# DAWN

And here is where all begins and ends.

Brian McDaniel's fingers tapped along the table. He was waiting impatiently alongside his colleague, Colonel Leslie Thompson, for Daniel Lockhart, the chairman of the powerful military and science company, New Horizons. In Brian's line of work as a clinical cytologist, he never had to wait very long for anyone to meet with him. Leslie, however, was happy to have at least a little downtime. Finally, Daniel entered the room. He nodded at the others as he sat at the table.

"Sorry I'm late," Daniel began. "I was seeing Amy and Marcus off. They've just hit the beds. I plan to do the same shortly."

“I was about to do so myself,” said Brian. Daniel looked regretfully at the man and told him, “I’m afraid that won’t be possible.”

Brian frowned.

“Why is that?” he asked. Daniel averted his eyes. It was hard to ask such a thing of two people who had been so good to him, especially after what had happened.

“I need you to stay here, up top, with Leslie,” he finally said, taking many a pause to find the correct words. “I need you both to do me a favor.”

“And what might that be?” Leslie asked, now very interested in what Daniel had to say. Again he took his time thinking of the right way to explain it.

“When we arrive at Eden,” he started, “I want us to rebuild as an ideal society. Leslie, you said that this ship contains records of all the most important events in human history leading up to what happened. I

need you and Brian, over the course of our voyage, to examine these records thoroughly. I need you to look at every successful action humanity has ever taken in its path of evolution and compose a strategic document out of them. This document will tell us what we need to do to create an everlasting utopia.”

The air in the room was heavy, but all three of those present were certain that this was the right thing to do.

“One thing I’d like you to focus on primarily is human rights,” Daniel proceeded, “and how they evolved. I believe this new society should be founded on those rights, and that they should be respected far better by our new humanity, as it is indeed possible that Man’s disregard for them helped precipitate what happened, along with Brian’s theory, of course.”

Brian recalled the interview, feeling knowledgeable and remorseful simultaneously.

“And as for the theory,” Daniel added, looking straight at the cytologist, “see to it nothing like that *ever* happens again. I’m not sure how you can manage it, but if you can—.”

“Every measure will be taken,” Leslie interjected, now also facing Brian. Guilt and pride clashed within the scientist: pride in the fact that he was the man for the job, guilt in the fact that...

The officer and Brian were, though still composed, astounded by what was being asked of them. They realized the responsibility this man was putting on the two of them and, regardless of any reluctant thoughts, they had to accept it. This was what their journey was all about. Humanity needed to succeed from now on. If it failed again—it couldn’t fail again.

“Do you both understand?” Daniel asked. His eyes were hard and direct. The two nodded in agreement, slowly.

“We’ll do whatever it takes, sir,” Leslie said. Daniel clenched his teeth behind closed lips, then said, “Good. That is all.”

He left the others alone to ponder how they would go about their mission. Brian kept shaking his head, pictures of all that had brought them to that fateful moment racing through his mind: pain, destruction, defeat, betrayal, sorrow, utter annihilation. It all left him with just one question, one for which he had no valid answer, no solid truth:

“How did we come to this?”

# BOARDING

Daniel Lockhart watched with relief as his wife, Amy, and young son, Marcus, crossed the elevated boarding platform into the *Guardian*. The boy beamed at the giant spacecraft as he entered it. His father beamed too, but not at the ship. The child had finally awoken, and it had been found that his memory was at least somewhat intact. There was also confirmation that Marcus' prior aggression would no longer be in control of him, confirmation provided by Brian. This lifted an even greater deal of weight from Daniel's shoulders.

Before boarding himself, he stood in awe, absorbing the immensity of the silo they were within one last time. Then, turning to his friend, Leslie, he asked her, "Are there any historical records aboard the *Guardian* I don't know about yet?"

“Every major event in human history,” Leslie began, “is aboard it, save the most recent one, of course.”

“Is that so?” said Daniel, a plan formulating in his mind. “One other thing: you said that it would take twenty to thirty years for us to get to Eden. Are the stasis beds that were scheduled to be installed finished?”

“Indeed,” Leslie answered, wondering what Daniel was designing in that head of his. Her curiosity subsided quickly. She was thinking of someone. Her eyes wavered as the thought rolled through her mind. There it was, in the water, slowly descending to the ocean floor. She shook the image off.

About three hours of boarding passed as crowds crossed the massive gangplank and entered the *Guardian*. Everyone had to be within the ship’s many passenger levels and safely buckled into their seats prior to departure. After the estimated fourteen hundred and fifty people (crew included) were safely

aboard, the enormous ship tilted vertically until its nose faced directly upward. The flight crew, led by Leslie, was bustling, activating all of the ship's primary systems. Leslie had previously led the flight crew of the *Vanguard*, a ship used for planetary exploration.

In her chair on the bridge she was solemn, glancing over the flight deck and contemplating the all too short passenger list. In a perfect world, the entire population of Earth would be loaded onto the vessel. But, as attested by preceding crises, imperfection was the order of the day. Saving these few for the sake of the species was the best that could be done, given the circumstances.

Though Eden was a good distance off, at least it was there. At least there was something. They would soon be taking off. They would soon leave the dying planet.



# CHILDREN

Kenro was tired. He couldn't sleep. Even though everything was going according to plan, he couldn't shut his eyes for too long. He didn't know why. Perhaps it all seemed too easy, after what had happened. It did feel a bit like a dream, or, more accurately, a nightmare.

"I like the quiet," the man next to him whispered. Kenro turned to look upon the serene face of the Dalai Lama. His eyes were closed and his head was tilted back against the seat.

"It makes for a nice ride," he went on. Kenro envied him. Even after the horrors of recent memory, the Dalai Lama still managed to rest. Nobody else on the transport could do the same. Through the dim light Kenro could see their faces. They were like him,

wide awake. They weren't talking, just looking, hearing, feeling. It all seemed too good to be true, and yet, in actuality, it *wasn't* too good to be true at all. It made sense for this to be the way out. It made sense for them to survive, to live on.

“What do you think, Mr. Chauren? Is it too dark in here?”

Kenro kept eyeing the faces as he said, “I'd rather it were brighter.”

“Sometimes the darkness helps,” the Dalai Lama told him. “It can be calming.”

“What if I don't want to be calm?”

“Oh? And why wouldn't you want that?”

Kenro sighed. He knew his answer wouldn't prove satisfactory.

“I just don't like the idleness is all,” he said, and the Dalai Lama returned, “Being calm and being idle are

too very different things. One can calmly put out a fire, or build a bridge.”

“One can also enthusiastically do such things.”

“Is that how you feel when you design holograms?”

Kenro looked longingly at an imaginary object. It was a holographic flower he had crafted for an important day. It wasn't any kind that had ever grown on Earth. It was his own creation. It had twenty-one petals, appearing in three layers: ten on the bottom, seven in the middle, four on the top. The stem and sepals were a deep purple, while the petals and stamens were bright pink, changing to aquamarine and scarlet red at timed intervals. It could be expanded in size so as to be used for a parade float. It was never used.

“Yes.”

Elsewhere, Daniel Lockhart was walking down a hallway alongside Brian McDaniel and two armed bodyguards. They were in a hospital. Most of the

electricity had gone out since the event—something to do with the tectonic shift. Brian noted the incessant flatline noises coming from many of the rooms.

“Can we bring any survivors?” Brian asked. Daniel looked back at the cytologist, saying, “Only a few, if any. We can’t fit the whole world inside.”

“I know. I don’t like that.”

“None of us do.”

They turned past a corner, and upon doing so spotted someone from afar. Daniel held a hand out, halting Brian. The bodyguards stopped as well. The stranger’s arms hung, swinging like chains. His hands, however, were clenched fists. His eyes were covered by long hair, but their fury could be felt from a mile away.

“Sir?” Daniel called. The man lifted his head slightly. Brian trembled for a moment, then relaxed. If anything happened, *they* had the advantage.

“Sir?” he repeated. The man took a step in their direction. Daniel looked over at one of the bodyguards, who in turn looked at his partner and nodded. They both had their weapons at the ready. The man took another step their way, and another, and his appearance became more evident. He had been a patient there. His right ankle looked twisted, mangled. He nearly fell over several times. As he drew nearer, they could see his eyes and hear his low growling. Finally, he tried to lunge forth, but his ankle stopped him. He yelped, spit dangling from his lips, hanging over the floor. His hands came up, clawing at the floor like a—.

“Do it,” Daniel ordered. The bullet soared down the hall. The first one didn’t kill him. He fell over, beginning to beg for mercy, but not in any coherent language, only guttural snarls and howls. Daniel looked away. Brian did the same. He knew what had happened to this poor soul.

“Sir?” the shooter asked, not willing to fire again unless told to. Daniel couldn’t watch as he quietly responded, “It’s too late for him.”

And the dog was put down.

“Why is calmness so important to you?”

The Dalai Lama smiled, replying, “It isn’t.”

“But you just defended it.”

“Does that make it important?”

Kenro thought the matter over. It was clear to him the answer was “no,” at least from his opponent’s perspective.

“You don’t want to be calm,” began His Holiness, “because it feels unnatural at such a time to be calm. It has nothing to do with a want for enthusiasm. You look at the faces of the others in here, and when you see their apprehension you think that’s the right thing to do.”

Kenro rolled his eyes, “What, are you my therapist now?”

The Dalai Lama didn’t look at him. His eyes were on another as he said, “It isn’t wrong to feel angry, Mr. Chauren. At the least, it means you’re still human.”

“And what does that make *you*?”

The Dalai Lama didn’t answer. His eyes remained on Klara Valentina, the Russian woman towards the front of the transport.

Daniel, Brian and the bodyguards passed two more turns. It was here they discovered a silent man clutching an infant in his hands, his face stained with tears. Brian went over to kneel beside him, placing a hand on his shoulder. Daniel was cautious in his approach, but knew it was all right when the man didn’t lash out.

“Are you all right?” the cytologist asked. The man didn’t even look at him. He just kept staring at the

baby. Brian looked at it. His heart sank. Daniel noticed it, too. That was why the man's eyes were drained.

“One of my men here can get you out safely,” Lockhart stated. The man was still, petrified by his own child.

“He can have a proper burial later,” Brian added, looking back to the father, who finally turned to the scientist. “Right now you have to get out of here. Don't waste this chance.”

The man looked over at one of the bodyguards. At first uncertainty held him back. Then, after deciding there was no better alternative, he slowly stood up. Brian rose with him, moving the father beside his escort.

“This way,” the bodyguard beckoned. They then departed to Daniel's transport outside.



When they were gone, Brian's guilt was revealed. He punched the nearest window of one of the patient rooms, cracking it. He then immediately vomited.

"Brian!" Daniel exclaimed, quickly grabbing the cytologist and supporting him. He coughed for a moment, then looked up at his friend.

"Daniel, I did that."

"Brian, stop."

"The interview, Daniel."

"The interview didn't kill anyone, got it? You didn't kill anyone."

"He looked newborn."

"Look at me, Brian."

He looked. Daniel kept holding on.

"You didn't kill *anyone*."

“But—.”

“Brian.”

He didn't say anything back. He wanted to agree with Daniel, but it was so difficult. Eventually he might get over it, but for now...

The Dalai Lama unbuckled his seatbelt and stood up, moving around the seats to go speak with Klara. Kenro didn't pay him any mind. As the elder approached the politician, he smiled at her, nodding. She smiled back, or attempted to anyway.

“You're feeling well?” he asked, and with an air of humility, something she hadn't felt in some time, Klara answered, “Better. It still feels strange though, all of this.”

“Good.”

“Good?”

“It *should* feel strange.”

Kenro had now turned to watch them from afar. After having synced the mouths of holographic humans to voice actors for so long, he could read lips, though only the Dalai Lama's face was visible to him.

"Why is that?" Klara said, looking at the faces of her fellow passengers. The Dalai Lama indicated the obvious, "It's strange."

Klara laughed a little at the simplicity of it, then agreed, "It is."

"I came here to ask something of you."

"Did you?"

"I did. My friend over there is being a bit pessimistic. I can hardly endure sitting beside him and I was just wondering if you wanted to trade seats with me."

"You want me to cheer him up?"

The Dalai Lama's eyes twinkled satisfactorily as he looked back at Kenro, answering, "I like that idea."

"Why not do it yourself?" Klara pointed out, and the Dalai Lama told her, "I need to take a nap."

The seatbelt clicked and the ends slid apart.

"It's this one," Daniel said as the trio turned right. This was the hall. They stayed along the wall, looking out for any more threatening adversaries. When they reached the door the bodyguard took point, aiming carefully as he swung it open. He surveyed the room before informing Daniel, "All clear."

Daniel immediately stepped inside. There, in bed, heart still beating, lungs still breathing, was Marcus Lockhart. The father's relieved sigh was very audible. He looked back at Brian, who was more than happy to see the child alive. If he'd somehow not survived...

But he *had* survived, and that was all that mattered. Daniel came beside him, looking to the cytologist and asking, “The patch...”

A neural patch rested on the boy’s forehead. He was also hooked up to two drip feeds: one for food, one for water. Brian shook his head.

“Don’t remove it yet,” he said. “Wait until he wakes up. It’ll be safer that way.”

The other bodyguard was called on via comlink. Once he was finished escorting the man with the baby he would acquire the transport’s emergency gurney and bring it to the waypoint sent to him—Marcus’ room. While he waited, Daniel held his son’s hand tenderly. They were almost out of this. Just a little longer and it’d be over.

“Brian.”

“Yes?”

“We’re going to make it.”

“I know.”

“I mean on Eden.”

Brian still wasn’t certain of it.

“We’re going to make it,” Daniel reiterated.

“We’ll give it all we’ve got,” said the cytologist.

Daniel gave a gentle squeeze to Marcus’ hand and finished, “We’ll have to give it more than what we’ve got.”

Kenro was doing his best not to look at Klara when she spoke.

“He said you were,” the Russian told him, again. Kenro retorted, “Well, he’s wrong. I’m fine.”

“I can usually tell when someone is wrong,” she explained. The holographer replied, “Ah, yes, the

quintessential trait of your kind: knowing when someone is wrong.”

“Are we talking about Russians?”

“What do you think?”

“You think I did a bad job working with Mikhail?”

“I didn’t pay much attention to the election.”

“Enough apparently to compliment my talents. Daniel mentioned what you said to him when we met.”

“It was the briefest of praises.”

“But a praise nonetheless.”

“I never said you were a bad politician,” Kenro asserted, finally turning to her. “I just don’t like that anyone who ever has the slightest disagreement with your stances on anything is immediately dubbed

‘enemy’ by you, thereafter bombarded with sound bites and propaganda and—.”

“If I remember correctly,” Klara cut him off, “the ratio of positive ads to negative ones used in our campaign was ten to three.”

“And yet I remember the negative ones so well.”

“Then they were effective,” she told him. She paused before adding, “Sometimes you need to stick your hands in the mud before you can clean it up.”

“And sometimes you can just clean it,” Kenro riposted. Klara shook her head, sitting back, defeated.

“I’m not cheering you up, am I?” she asked, and the holographer’s gaze fell elsewhere once again.

“I’m fine,” he whispered.

Daniel was aboard the transport now, in the back with Marcus. The boy was lying in a small bed. His father’s hand still grasped his. Brian was nearby,



seated with the two bodyguards. He was quiet. They were all quiet.

There were a few survivors inside, those who had been discovered on the way out. Only seven, including the father they had found. He was still holding the tiny body, hoping it would raise its head and lift its eyelids. Nothing happened. The others were just ordinary people, some young, some old, all weary. They still couldn't believe what had taken place. One of them seemed more agitated than the rest. A watchful eye was kept on him.

Daniel looked over at the cytologist. None of it was his fault, but at the same time, if he hadn't gone on air, if he hadn't said what he said...

Brian only hoped it would all work out in the end. He hoped Eden would be a good home, a better home. Hope: it was as abundant as unscathed minds and untarnished souls, but it was all they had.

The hands stayed together. The points were clasped, sealed by paternal love. Amy was next to be picked up. He heard her voice over the comlink. He knew she was okay, but Marcus still hadn't...

“...awakened.”

Kenro's interest had been redirected. The Russian held his attention now. She was talking about Man, about how, after such a catastrophic event, perhaps the curtain of unreason, insanity and violence had been lifted, about how Man might forget the old power struggles, wars and civil disputes, the uprisings and cultural differences, the politics, the greed. She spoke of how this sudden shift in what was important, though appalling and dreadful in form, might have been just what Man needed to finally wake up. And Kenro, to a certain extent, agreed.

“Perhaps,” he began to respond, “we will have stronger ties to one another thanks to all this, tighter bonds.”

“At this point, anything is possible,” said Klara, pleased with her progress. “Incidentally, do you happen to have any of your holograms on you?”

“Not here, I’m afraid. They’re on archive loaders back home. They *can* be accessed wirelessly, but not with a comlink. I talked with Leslie about it. She says they can be uploaded to the ship once we get there.”

“At least they’re safe.”

Kenro seemed less overwhelmed by the situation regarding Earth. He nodded at Klara, telling her, “Right, I’m happy about that.”

“Our new world will need a cultural foundation of some sort. Your art fits in with that perfectly.”

The holographer smiled a little, replying, “Are you trying to get through to me?”

“I don’t *try* to do anything, Mr. Chauren.”

“Kenro.”

“See?”

He chuckled at her. She chipped away at the geode. Tiny crystals were visible now, glowing vibrantly with color, truth and light. Collectively they were a man, a creator, a thinker, an artist, a friend. *That* was Kenro, not some brooding, angry fellow who ignored the wise and denied amity from comrades.

“What brought you to America, Kenro?”

He didn't have to think twice. In a flash he remembered the poster and answered, “Freedom.”

“A trite reason for journeying to the Land of the Free,” Klara stated.

“Trite,” the smiling holographer concurred, then adding, “but true.”

“I suppose so.”

They both spotted the Dalai Lama as he stood up, stretching his old bones. Kenro laughed a little, and Klara grinned.

“Well,” she started, “I suppose that’s my queue.”

Kenro stuck his arm out, saying, “Wait until he gets over here.”

“Oh? You’d rather I stayed?”

“I just wanted to ask what your contribution to our new world would be.”

The Dalai Lama drew nearer as she thought it over. She smiled, responding, “Lingual diversity.”

The two laughed, and the elder smiled. His little operative had done her job. *That* is when the child’s eyes opened.

He blinked a few times, adjusting his vision to the dim interior. Only moments ago he had been walking with a stranger across snow-clad earth. Now the hum

of an airborne transport en route somewhere filled his ears. He noticed drip feeds linked to him and wondered how he came to be in this condition. Memory gave him no guidance, so he was forced to investigate further. He put a small left hand to his head—right, he was a boy, a *young* boy—and felt for anything unusual. His fingers touched a patch of some kind. Bits and pieces of the past drifted back to him. There was a goldfish, and noise, and heat, and a knife, and a loving mother, and an honest father, and snow.

The boy looked around and sighted a balding man seated far off. He was the type of fellow who would have appeared intelligent right at first glance had he not been asleep and snoring vehemently. The youthful eyes might have scanned further on had the obvious not become apparent: something was holding his hand. It was a man, a familiar man. He looked an awful lot like the stranger the child was with before blacking out. He was sitting, napping, waiting for

something. The boy shook the man's hand, and slowly the lids came open.

At first it was shock that hit Daniel. His son didn't understand what the matter was. The man did not dare move, fearing that this was all simply a dream and that any sudden motions would wake him. But, after having pinched himself twice, it became clear that this wasn't just a dream. Dreams had never felt that real to Daniel, that good, that right. And Marcus couldn't help but remember...

“Daddy?”

That was all it took for the tears to flow like streams.

“So, Mr. Chauren,” the Dalai Lama began, “is it too dark in here?”

Kenro smiled and answered, “I'd rather it were brighter.”