



SURRECTION

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By Douglas Hemme



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Chapter 1

Hedonist

Malcolm rhythmically tapped the eraser of his mechanical pencil on his desk. An incessant tapping that would surely have touched the nerves of any audience, if there were one, in his expansive poorly lit workspace. The tapping was a nervous tick he had since he could hold a pencil. Since he could hold anything, really. It was a reaction that tapped into the rhythm of his psyche like a biological metronome. The sound of it echoed through the mostly empty room. The beat of his life force.

No, not his heartbeat. The heart was just an instrument to keep the body oxygenated and the blood flowing. The heart was nothing more than a variable rate, variable flow, multistage diaphragm positive displacement pump. What he tapped into was much deeper than that. Something in the consciousness.

When he was young, the doctors who put him on the autism spectrum called it an autistic tic, or more colloquially, *stimming*. But there was more to it than that. To Malcolm, it was his mind - his consciousness - calling out to his body, in a way that no one else notices, seeking a way out. And he was determined to set it free.

It was four o'clock in the morning and the sun would be up soon. Malcolm had pulled another all-

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nighter, but he was so close to a breakthrough. He could feel it. This time was different. The night before, he had surrected, if just for a moment, and he had to figure out how. The culmination of his years of research, trials and errors, was finally within reach. A breakthrough that could very well redefine the human experience. A *surrection* – the human consciousness leaving a living body – that can be initiated, controlled, and most importantly, ended by returning to the body. *The advancement of knowledge humankind could gain from this was astronomical. Pun intended*, thought Malcolm.

For years, he had been panned by critics for practicing and promoting pseudoscience. When Malcolm first created his company, Pāra, LLC, he was inundated with media scrutiny. Well-known for his wealthy family, anything he did or associated with made the news. This time, founding his company resulted in business magazine articles dubbing him a “modern day Timothy Leary” for his work with hallucinogens. Psychologists, philosophers, theologians, biomedical engineering and pharmaceutical company CEOs all called his work and his goals laughable.

Fortunately, he did not require external investors or academic approval for his studies. When his parents died, nearly two decades before, Malcolm had inherited a sizable estate, including a trust fund that enabled his relentless pursuit of separating the consciousness from the body. He was looking for an

authentic out-of-body experience; not just one that tricks the mind through hallucinations; simulated traverses through the universe – merely imaginary within the mind. He wanted to truly transcend his bodily form, detach his consciousness – his soul – from his body to explore the cosmos, and be home in time for dinner.

His venture came at a cost though. Surely the monetary cost was easily achievable for Malcolm, but the regulatory one required the sacrifice. Shunned by academia and shunned by investors, Malcolm took the brunt of societal judgment for his cause, while the government would share in any reward. It was just as well, since his aim was to share any discovery freely with the world. He did not aim to patent and gain monetarily, and a government contract was a necessary arrangement for the procurement and use of controlled substances otherwise unattainable for research. The one condition was the arrangement was to be kept secret, and knowledge shared, of course. He was more like Timothy Leary than people knew.

Malcolm was certainly experienced in the transcendent traditions of various cultures around the world, traveling for rituals, meditation, yoga, spirit walks, or psychedelic journeys. Yes, he had been there, and luckily with little to show for it. No free t-shirt. All Malcolm got was this lousy scar on his right forearm from falling into hot lava rocks after passing out in a sweat lodge. Well, that and, much

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like the Jimmy Buffett song, a new tattoo of questionable origin. His tattoo was a mandala, though, not a Mexican cutie. At least the anonymous artist produced clean lines.

Now in his mid-forties, Malcolm's body was the aggregate of these adventures, as much as his state of mind was the amalgamation of the experiences. Undeterred by a failure to find a probably non-existent reproducible path to surrection through existing rituals and spiritual journeys throughout the world, he set about utilizing his inheritance to discover a pathway himself.

A biological engineer by education, Malcolm's extended family kept the expectations of him high, just as his parents would have had they still been alive. Sid and Martha Wallace came from old money and had the luxury of doing as they pleased, living where they pleased, and working or not as they pleased. Still, sloth was a vice that was looked down upon with disdain throughout the family. The family money had luckily been distributed amongst the previous generation before their untimely death, and with no siblings, their estate transferred to Malcolm uncontested. What his family thought of him and his ambition were inconsequential. They did not understand the mission he was on, nor the journey he was taking to get there. In their eyes, he would always be a hedonist nepobaby without goals or purpose other than to spend his family fortune on pleasure. As such, he remained estranged from them.

This was hardly the truth, though. His singular focus required travel and research, for what he hoped would result in a significant contribution to humankind. The intoxicating effects of hallucinogens were merely a side effect of his work, not the end goal.

Years before, he was in his final year of undergrad at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, when the news came. Pulled from class by a school administrator, he was saved from the slightly-less convenient finding out about his parents' death via a phone notification when the helicopter they were flying in had a mechanical failure and plunged into undeveloped land in West Texas they were surveying for a potential purchase. International news was quick to report the tragedy, considering the prominent status his parents had in both the United States and Great Britain.

His father, Sid, had chosen a career in finance. An obvious choice for one with more money than he knew what to do with. It was easy to apply the concepts in business school with little concern for risk when failure was only a minor financial inconvenience. Still, he created large holding companies and consolidated vertically integrated industries into one investment. Then, he would do it all over again with their competitors, essentially hedging his investment. At that point, the only driver for profit was that of economic growth and the only competition was recession and regulation.

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Unfortunately, stifling or swallowing up any external competition was a requirement for the business model. Classic monopolistic practices. But with different companies and boards in each holding company, he could pull the strings in multiple ‘competitors’ without fear of monopoly busting regulations.

Sid could have chosen a different route. His father, Fredrick, the heir to the family fortune, chose a more leisurely life, the largest burden being the judgment of others in the family. If not for restrictions on his finances, he might have given it all away, too. Many assumed that Sid was short for Sydney, or Sedrick, or some other classic European name. No. Fredrick named him after Siddhartha Gautama, the one known to the world as the Buddha, or “awakened one.” Malcolm suspected that his grandfather had this same unique drive as he – to seek enlightenment.