



It didn't register in the young child's mind that he ran into somebody until his rear informed him that he flopped hard on the desert floor. He didn't know where he was when he opened the eyes he closed when he found his book and found himself somewhere dry, pitch black, and warm enough for him to ditch his coat. He didn't have an idea of where he was at--for all he knew, he was in another world, or somewhere else--so he merely walked in the direction in front of him hoping he'd find something before he got too hungry, too tired, or both. He quickly caught the book that fell to his side and peered up to see what he ran into.

And saw a pair of steely eyes from behind a white expressionless mask staring back at him.

He naturally gulped. Even if he was able to talk, he was too scared to do so. He just slowly backed away to put some space between himself and this floating pale face before he'll turn around and book the other way at top speed.

“Don't be frightened, child.”

It came from the mask. A voice that seemed to echo in his mind. It had a quiet power to it, soft to the ears yet was made as a command. Nevertheless it seemed to sting in the child's mind, as if he would be in pain even by the gaze alone. It didn't stop him from backing away.

Until two white gloved hands went for his shoulders. The child let out a scream when they touched, his mind racked with intense paranoia. The scream was quickly stopped when one of those hands covered his mouth.

The mask let out a long and loud *ssssshhhhhhhhhhh* with seared into the child's ears. Not as if he'd be able to say anything else. The 11-year-old was absolutely trembling before the man in front of him. If he could get his eyes away from that white mask, he would be aware of it. He had on a tuxedo, complete with a top hat, bow tie, and coattails. There was a medallion that hung from his collars and a cape that was red on the inside, black on the outside, and rose up to the man's head which made him all but invisible in the darkness at first. Granted, this costume can allow this figure to be menacing and frightful

if it was needed, but even if it wasn't the case here, it left this child visibly in terror, even when the figure knelt in front of him with his arms on the child's shoulders.”

“It's all right, child.” He told him. “You're quite a bundle of nerves here. You're obviously lost, in fact, I don't think you not know where you are, do you?”

It was a question, and despite the calm voice, it carried a demand for the child to speak. However, the child could only shake his head in the 'no' direction.

“I would expect that this place can be very dangerous for someone like you. Do you know what awaits you a couple miles down that road?”

Another 'no' shake from the child.

“Then come with me, child. I'll help you.”

This one was less of a command, more like an invitation. For a while, it has yet to register in his mind. He did indeed heard stories about people who would take him away to do something to him. He didn't know exactly what that something actually is, but he was told that it wasn't nice. However, the child just couldn't refuse this man. Maybe it was the fact that it would be the *second* time that he was taken somewhere, the first one caused by the book he was still clutching to with both his arms now. Or maybe it was a touch of naiveté. Or maybe it was the fact that this man's voice was getting to him.

Or maybe it's the medallion that the man is holding between him and the child. It caused a kaleidoscope that sparkled right into the child's eyes, causing him to blink

. . . . and opened his eyes again in the most comfortable bed he ever found himself in. It was all he knew about until he instantly fell asleep.

This room is monitored with a couple of hidden cameras, viewable by a laptop computer the masked man had in another room. He paused a bit as the child sat up on the bed, wondered if he needed to go see him, but relaxed when the child fell back on the bed and went back to sleep. He merely went back to settling a school ID card that has been sent through the wash at least once by the keyboard part of this laptop.

There was another laptop on the table the gentleman was working on. This was connected to a dreaming young woman by a USB cable and something that was implanted in the woman's head, a biochip some call it. She was dressed more like a grandmother than a 20-something woman, with a country farm style long-sleeved blouse over a full figured bra and girdle, padded panties, white hoseries and black strapped

and sensible shoes. A long blue padded dress and a pair of half-height glasses were there to complete the look, along with her hair being bunned and gray.

Her eyes were closed and fluttering in dreaming and her lips were stretched into a smight smile. What she's dreaming about is hinted in what is running in the connected laptop: 250 years of motherdom is being downloaded directly into her brain, more memories of being a mother than America is old. 250 years of loving, caring, and nurturing flodded the woman's mind and filled her heart. When the program is complete and she is back to herself again, she'll be a 250 year old grandmotherly person in a 20-something's body.

“You'll be the envy of all the senior citizens, Ursala.” The masked man siad while patting her young, yet elderly, hand with his gloved hand. The fact that she can't hear him and won't respond—being lost in a computer generated world for stimulated centuries—didn't matter to the masked man.

Copper then returned to the first note and, after studying the sleeping boy again, called up a word processor screen and began to type:

Adam Packbell

He opened it to reveal virgin lined paper, and continued:

12-28-1995: I have found this child wandering around my Mansion with only the shirts on his back and a large coffee-table sized book in his arms. He was a bit unresponsive as well as terrified, displaying signs of what I initially called autism, as I approached and questioned him. It is apparent that he was alone and I doubt that anyone would look for him in the vicinity, so I took him inside.

It is with great surprise that I found his school's ID, which resides in the St. Louis area! I attempted to call the school, and later the authorities at that town, with a rather curious result: It appears that the child was lost in a snowstorm after a traumatic event, and was never seen again. By now, he has been presumed dead and was dismissed as such. Despite the tones of voice on the other end, I can tell that the child was not thought of highly, especially with this public school. They originally thought of this child as a bright, talented, and successful member of their student body, but the brain damage caused by this accident and the lack of compassion from the peers and faculty has erased all possibility for him to be that.

I would have just dismissed this as another Over-Bullied case, but this happened **fifteen years ago!** This means that, not only has this child traveled through time as well as across states, but such cases are not a modern trend. I shudder to think what will happen in the future.

But how can a child virtually disappear from Missouri and end up in Nevada a decade and a half forward in time, I wonder?

I cannot help but shake the feeling I have about the large book he has. It's as if it has a strange power but isn't completely known yet. It is very elaborately ornamented with foxtails and the word down it's spine: FoxFire. Maybe the child knows more about this book, and I'm very interested in what he has to say about it.

Once I can get him to come out of his shell, that is. The treatment he got in that school must've been horrendous, since the only thing he learned is how to withdraw into himself. The main reason why he decided to follow me home and not either run away or cower into a ball is the promise of a good dinner and a warm bed. Maybe by now he'll be able to open up to me by now. I needn't worry about it: I've handled worse cases like Adam. Getting through his shell would be a cakewalk.

Copper leaned back at his chair after writing that, his heart going out to this time-lost child. More out of what has happened to him before the time slip than the actual slip itself. As he did, he held a couple pictures, the first one with a rather handsome young man with what appeared to be at first a Tibetan Monk, but his features were American. And Old, about 80 years of age. At one corner was an autograph:

“To Copper, good luck in your calling,
as it was once mine. Lamont, 1980”

The second one was of the same younger man, a bit older, with a wife and child in a Las Vegas tourist attraction, dated several years downstream compared to the previous picture. The child was of a young boy about 11 years old, and he looked exactly like Adam.

Adam did show a lot of promise before he lost his way, or would it be more correct to say that he was taken from his way? I'm certain that there is still a bright and gifted child behind that thick accent and eccentricities, someone who would grow up to go father than even I can take a person. Someone who, as my old mentor would say, would be excellent for redemption. It is imperative that I restore him to that original condition. Maybe that is something I should do first, then worry about that book.

And that's where making a fantasy world for him will come in play. It's high time I make up for some lost time with my own family life:

Adam woke up to the smell of a rather scrumptious meal that was obviously delivered to him as he slept. As he got up to devour it, he looked around to find where that man—was

it a man, he couldn't tell from that mask he had on—tucked him into. He found the wall to wall shag carpeted room rather large and well lit because of the mirrors on the walls and ceiling, giving it a more spacious view. Or was that because he tended to make himself smaller where he laid or sat.

He found a card that was placed with the dinner. As a reflex action, he naturally read it:



“Everything is going to be all right now, Adam. I have taken you to my home, where you will find sanctuary and a place to heal and learn. Please, accept my hospitality and do not fear. I will leave you to explore, and shall visit you later.”

Almost immediately after wondering how he'd got his name, Adam noticed that the man must have taken his abused ID from his back pocket. Oh well.

As he explored the room, he didn't find much else except a radio which can play quiet music. The drawers and then-discovered small refrigerator were empty, what was supposed to be an outside window only encased a light box that was bright enough to register in his mind as outdoor sunlight, and the two visible doors lead to only an empty closet and a very ready and well equipped bathroom. He couldn't find a door out; it seemed that the masked man wanted to keep him here. He also saw the side show posters and pictures that were posted where there were no mirrors. One of them was a show poster of that very man who took him here, and that's where he found out about the name of *'The Great Mystran, The Once and Future Living Shadow!'*

Well, at least he now knows the name of the Mystery Man who sent him here. That's one mystery down. He'd find the rest soon enough, he'd thought.

He decided to take advantage of the bathroom to give himself a much needed bath.

The moment Adam slipped into the bathroom, a mirror slid out to reveal a hallway, and two figures quietly walked into the room: The first was Copper, while the other was a girl at about the early teens, but with fox ears instead of human ones, and a brushy tail appearing behind her under the skirt of that spunky one-piece red dress with matching boots; with a green hairbow and gloves over her hands. The girl was pushing a cart with the brightly decored box Copper had earlier and a leather shoulder bag, which also had a notebook on a clipboard, a set of mechanical graphite and color pencils with a sharpener, and extra room for anything that would be found later.

As Copper found Adam's large book and slipped the book into the bookbag, the foxgirl laid a fresh set of clothes and took up the discarded clothes and used dishes into the cart. When she is finished, she nodded to Copper with an apparant constant smile and some rather sudden moves of her head and wheeled the cart into the doorway, closing the mirror-disguised door and closing off any signs of the hallway beyond.

Copper quietly crept over to the far corner and began to concentrate making sure that, when Adam finishes the bath, he'll won't see anyone with him. Even the hidden camera on the roof of the room saw Copper vanish. Copper knows that, thanks to the white noise piped in as a background noise as well as the noise in the tub, the child isn't even aware of what's going on at the other side of that door.

Adam spent a lot more time than what he thought he usually spends in that large spa-like tub. With the bubble gum-scented bubble bath fluid—when was the last time he had a bubble bath?--and shampoo with the soap. He soaked in there until the fingers got all good and wrinkled and then rinsed himself off and grabbed a towel to dry.

To his surprise, he also found a T-Shirt and briefs his size as well as a bathrobe. He made sure he had them on and he was dry before he left the bathroom.

When he returned he was surprised to find out that someone had not only taken the tray that held his dinner, but his old clothes as well! In his place was the new clothes an the bag with his book in it. He found a note on top of the bookbag and read it:

I thought that this bag would make that book of yours easier to carry. Your clothes needed to be washed as well.

Adam laid the book bag down at the bed, and then picked up the new set of clothes. A pair of blue pants, socks, a button down shirt and a bold red vest. He put them on, finding them comfortable enough for his liking, and he looked rather handsome wearing them as he checked himself up in one of the mirrors.

He smiled. It was a bright smile that lit up his face and surprised the heck out of the boy. The surprising part was that the laugh was in fact his own.

A soft ethereal voice, yet familiar to Adam, surprised him all the more: “Don't stop on my account, child. I was longing to see you wear a smile.”

Adam turned around toward the bed, where the voice came from. He could swear that nobody was there before, but there he was, Copper Mystran, that dark cloaked masked figure that took him here--wherever *here* is--apparently appearing out of nowhere!

“Don't be frightened, Adam. Come here, let me get a closer look at you.”

The command-slash-invitation of his voice was added by that gloved hand that seemed to hover before the child and crook a finger. He cautiously moved toward Mystran again, who knelt down to his eye level and held the child's gloved hands with his own. Once again, if he felt the fear over what this meant before that Christmas Eve, it quickly died down when what he always expected and dreaded didn't appear. Mystran just held him there, his eyes behind his white plaster smiling mask—a more friendlier version of the mask he wore before—locked into with the boy's eyes.

“I've taken countless young people, just as yourself, here to this place,” the voice behind the man's unmoving mouth began. “In the times I've moved among the shadows of this world, I have seen way too many slip through a short and lonely life without knowing the good they can do with themselves. I take in those kids and find that potential which I tend to and nurse over until they grow up to make a good life for themselves. Some of them I keep here, while others go away to a better life than what they would have gotten.” He then eased back and rubbed his plaster nose. “I don't know which path you'll be taking, but until you do, you will live here, in my Mansion. Please, don't worry anymore, and be at ease. Think of yourself as one of my children now and forever, Adam.”

The boy merely blinked at this. He knew what he heard, but part of him didn't understand it. He has simply haven't heard of talk like this, at least not in such a benevolent tone. He wanted to reach up to him, touch him.

Mystran somehow sensed this, and moved the child's hand up to that mask. “Go ahead, Adam.” He explains as that smooth and firm layer of plaster that is held fast to his real face was felt, poked and explored. Only the eyes were visible, through the holes. The mask covered the rest of his face and hooked under the chin to cover most of his head. “I've been attracted to masks as I've been learning my own talens as a child. Got into them mainly because I feel I can actually do some good with them. But...one day...”

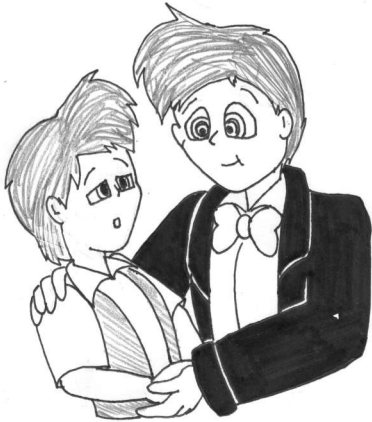
He sighs, showing a bit of sorrow over it. Adam blinked and moved closer.

“I had an accident that all but destroyed my face. You wouldn't want to see what it is now, which is why I will always hide it. I didn't want to have people run in terror at my gaze.”

“ooooh,” Adam said, finally finding his voice. “ah'm sorry, mistuh Mystran . . .”

Adam didn't know it, but Mystran was smiling behind his mask. "That's all right, child. I adapted with my infirmity, and it gave me an affinity with people who were hurt as well, some inside as well as outside. People like yourself."

All that the child cared to know was that there was someone who was like him. Someone with his own pain that kept him different from everyone else. Someone Adam himself felt a kindred soul with. For the child, that settled the matter. It was the first smile he had on his lips in years, and he almost didn't know how to make one, but he showed it to Copper as he finally sat on his lap when he was invited to, finally able to relax with somebody else in this room.



"You really liked it being quiet and all," Copper told him as he stroked the boy's shoulders. "Was it too loud where you came from?" The child didn't know what to say, feeling rather small next to this larger-than-life masked man. "Or is it because you don't really talk that much since I first saw you?"

The continued pondering out loud finally got the child to talk again, although barely a whisper. "Nah, ah can't tawk good."

Copper immediately disbelieved that. "You've actually been told that? In some southern states, that accent of yours will fit in very well. There's nothing wrong with that voice of yours, Adam."

He could only blink when he heard what Copper said. "Nobody ever told you that, did they? Countless hours in speech therapy and public ridicule, just because you were a budding southern gentleman in a Yankee town. No wonder you ended up being called class dunce." That made Adam tense up again, only to have his shoulders forced back down by Copper's strong yet gentle hand.

"Sssssh, relax child. You're safe here. Nobody will care about that accent in your voice; nobody will think of you as strange or weird. That's right, child. Take a deep breath. You are safe here. Let it out. Slowly. That's right."

Adam's exhale was the loudest sound out of his mouth since he arrived in Copper's version of his home. The child felt relaxed, and strangely good though. He looked up to the masked man, who smiled at him, his voice calm and quiet.

"I find you to be a very intelligent person despite what they said about you," Copper continued as he picked Adam up and set him on his lap. "I know what caused you to

have those problems you had back in that school. You probably remember that you were in an auto accident when you were a child, do you?"

The boy had to think for a while, but then he suddenly nodded. "Dere was 'n accident that made me go to th' hospital," he weakly said, "but ah didn't know if dat caused it...."

"You probably won't notice, since you were so young then, but there are studies that accidents happening to kids as young as you were really do have an effect like you had. You get a bump on your head hard enough, and your brain can get out of wack, which can and do give a person problems like you had."

Copper gently embraced the boy with his white gloved hands, and looked into his eyes with his own eyes full of wisdom and compassion. "What happened to you, from that accident to what made you come to me, is not your fault at all, and I can fix it. I can help fix your mind, and bring back your misplaced brightness. I can easily do it, if you want me to."

"How?" was all the boy can say after a long pause, the perpetual tension slowly seeping from him as Copper stroked his sholders.

"Don't be afraid, child. Take a deep breath. Let your body relax. Let it out. Slow. That's right. Let your eyes fall on my face. Can you find my eyes? You can easily see them sparkle, can you? Yes, they are. Your eyes are drawn to them. That's it. Take a deep breath. Let your limbs go limp. Let it out. Slow. Relaxed. That's it."

Indeed, Adam can actually see those eyes sparkle from behind that plaster face, or maybe he's imagining it, but he can't pull away from them even if he could try. Everything around them and that sparkling seemed to fade away in a haze, even Copper's voice seemed to grow softer, until they were just noises in his ears. His eyes grew heavy as the limp, relaxed feeling spread into his body and up to his head, still trying to keep their gaze on that sparkle.

Copper's expressionless face seemed to smile as Adam's own slackened. Children are always easy to hypnotize, which was Copper's method of training and molding, and Adam was no exception. Just how far Copper can take Adam is still a guess however, and it depends on how good his imagination still is with the tests he has planned.

"That's right, my child. You've traveled long and far to come here. You've traveled long and far to Copper and you, my child, must be very tired. You need to relax and release all that tension from your trip now that you've finally arrived. You've arrived to my home finally and you need to rest, to empty your body and mind of that trip. Take a deep breath. That's right, child. Let it out. Soon your eyes will close and your mind will be empty and asleep. You can't help but fall into a deep, deep, restful sleep. Sound and safe.

You can't help but drift off to sleep, child”

When Adam's eyes finally fluttered closed, it was as if the bottom fell out from under him, letting him slip...no, he *fell*...into an even deeper and dreamily state. The initial shock of the drop shook all over his body, causing his eyes to flutter open for an instant, but nothing registered in his mind by the time the eyes closed once again. He felt himself sink into a warm, dark, quiet and very blissful sleep. Adam really did feel safe here, as he felt himself settle into a warm lap and arms, filled with hearth and warmth and home. It all seemed to flow straight into his mind and all over his body, gently pulling him even deeper into that soft dark slumber

“Good boy, Adam,” Copper tells the entranced child as he brushes the hair from his relaxed forehead. “You're deeply asleep and your mind is empty. You are far away from your past, and you can't think of it anymore. That's okay, child, you're with a loved one now. You can forget what happened back then.” Adam can still feel something on his brow, something he thought was Copper's hand, but its presence is making his mind begin to feel strange. Fuzzy. Like a fog has rolled into his head and growing thicker by the moment. “In fact, those memories are disappearing from your mind now; fading off into oblivion. Notice how the farther off into oblivion those old memories go, the better you feel. It's okay now for them to leave because you're with me, my child; safer now than you have ever been. You're my child now, and you can let go of what has now passed into oblivion. You'll be waking up to a new life and a new world. A world of light and love and happiness. A world where you are healed, and ready to grow”

The boy sighed as he slumped into Copper's arms, his mind as far away and sinking into a white milky fog. Does he know what happened to him? He doesn't remember what happen to him, or how he got to this loving masked man, or anything else for that matter. Every running thought in his head eluded him, going farther and farther away into the fog, and Adam doubted that he wanted to go out and chase them anymore. He just wants to sit here and dream, and listen to that masked man's voice.

“...and now you hear nothing but my voice, see nothing though your heavy eyes can just barely remain open and I will pull you deeper and deeper now Adam and you want it, you want so much to fall deeper and deeper into my magic spell, yes, give up all control to my voice, let it move you, obey everything you hear, Adam . . . You do so want this, do you, child?”

What Adam said in his deeply entranced stupor surprised Copper. . . “Yes, papa.”

“Papa now?” Copper said, betraying an raised eyebrow. “Even in this deep trance you know will do deeper. You think of me more like your father than your uncle, now, do you my child?”

By the time Adam said another, “yes papa,” Copper decided to play it.

“You think of me being your father, now, as I bring you completely into my magic spell, and you want that more than you've ever wanted anything, more and more you'll find that wonderful feeling of being my beloved and obedient son. You do want that, my child. You do want to be my son, happy beloved, and loyal to me, your father.”

Adam listened to that repetition for about five minutes before he spoke again. “yes . . . father.”

“Yes, that's right, my son,” Copper replied, smiling proudly. “I am your father, my loving child, and you know me as nothing other than your father. And you slip deeper and deeper into my loving spell, as a child does to his true parent. Feel my wisdom, and tenderness, know my love and pride, my son.”

Adam sighed another ' . . . daddy . . . ' as a joy he haven't known of before overflowed him. He's a son now, a son to a father who is actually *proud* of him. Who is approving of him and what he does and who he is.

Copper, who is now known as merely Father to Adam, whom he's called nothing more than 'his son,' to him, felt some tears between his face and mask as he decided that Adam is finally ready . . .

“And now you will forget everything but this, my son, as I begin to cast a spell to make you a magical being, and you want that more than you've ever wanted anything, more and more you'll find that wonderful feeling of my magic going through your ears and your very being. And your voice will answer automatically now, as you hear it say the number 'ten.'



An almost inaudible sigh: “..tennn..”

“And counting down...down...downnn to twenty...”

“llevennn... twelvvve.... “ his soft voice droned obediently.

“And keep talking as you follow my next commands. That's a good son, 'thirteen...' and each count makes you understand that you want only to soak up everything I say 'fourteen,' that's a good boy, how much my words will become your own thoughts...”

Now his head had tilted into his father's chest, all his limbs relaxed; limp and inert as he laid there in total relaxed sleep. Copper inwardly thanked himself for not being a pervert in this stage; By this point, any consenting woman would be molded into a doll-like harem girl for him to pleasure and be pleased by. But this case, it was different. A deeper reason.

After all, as he heals Adam, Copper might even heal a bit of himself.

“And my voice are becomming irresistible to you now... they've always been irresistible to you, you feel only pleasure at being able to be my son, and how easy it is for you to be my son. And how easy it is for you to be a good son.

“Let's prove my unbreakable magic as your father now, Adam, feels sooo goood to feel it. You will count to one hundred, deepening more and more all the way, and soon you will not be able to remember the correct numbers, no, you will try hard to remember, but you will forget, and you will be surprised to hear that every number has turned into words of magic and love, and that phrase is embedded completely within you and it is this:

'You are my Father, and I am your child' and begin counting now, and try to remember all these numbers very well.”

Again the muffled murmuring. “One, two, three...” As Copper guessed beside his teasing, he didn't last past the teens. “Fourteen, f- fifteen, six... seven... sixteen... uhhmmm three, four... nnnine... threeee...”

Copper leaned closer to his child's upturned ear. “Yes, you just can't remember, too hard to remember, the numbers become the commands soon...”

“...five...my...nine...your child...three..my father...and i am...your child... you are...my father...and I am...your child...” He eventually repeated this litany until his voice was like that of when he was awake and talking softly: “You are...my Father...and I am...your child...You are...my Father...and I am...your child...You are...my Father...”

While Adam was chanting Copper found a pair of white gloves. When he was ready, he returned to his son's receptive ear. “You can stop now, my son. Let your voice trail off to silence. Breathe deeply and fully.”

“You are....my father....and i am....” The boy quickly quieted down.

“Now you can hear and obey me completely, my son. You can remember the numbers, all the numbers again. While you count to one hundred I will speak to you, still casting my magic deep inside you. Keep counting, child.”

“One....two....three...”

“As you continue counting, in a steady beat of numbers that just flow out of your mouth, you will feel my magic go into your wrists and hands. I am giving you magic hands now, child. They will feel warm and comfortable as they are worn, feel them as I put them on you, you will find them to be feel very good as they slide over your hands.”

“twentyfour, twentyfive, twennysix, twennyseven...”

Starting with the far arm and then with the other, He pulled those white gloves over the child's unresisting fingers. As he does so, the child kept going at his count: “fordyfive, fordysix, fordysseven...”

Now with Adam's hands were in those gloves, and Copper hefted the limp appendages into Adam's lap without feeling the slightest response.

He was near the fifties now.

“Count very slowly, my son,” Copper said, stroking the boy's nose as he spoke. “Enjoy the sound of the 'fff' as you count.”

Obediently the child voice came: “fffffftyonnnnee... fffifffftytwoooo...” Copper smiled a bit to enjoy his work, what was once a cautious and frightenable child was now a happy and pliable son, entranced in his father's lap, “ffffiffftyyyyfffffourrrr...”

“My dear beloved Adam,” Copper murmured,

“ffffiffftyyyyfffffiiiffffe...”

“When your voice reaches sixty I will slowly turn on the magic. Your wrists are now full of magic, and they float as they show their magic, like helium balloons, and as you hear your voice approach sixty the magic will become greater and greater... you are completely unable to move your heavy, sleepy arms and wrists, completely unable to move them, now even a finger, not even the slightest bit by yourself, but the magic will pull up and up on your magic hands, up into the air towards the power. Relax and enjoy the feeling as I control your arms with my powerful magic...”

The child progressed on to the sixties: “sixtyyy...sixtyyy one....sixtyyy twoooo... sixtyyy threeee...” and, as if he were a marionette tied at the wrists, his dangling, limp arms now jiggled and jerked slightly and, fingers still frozen in those gloves, began lifting up off his pal. In a moment they were raised straight up in the air.



“Feels wonderful to have the magic taking over you... you know you want much much more, Adam, you want it more and more as you forget the numbers once again, replaced by my magic phrase.”

There was another deep sigh from the child.
“sixty...nine...seven...seven..one...my father...and I am...your child....you are my...father...”

“And now as I count from five to one, the magic grows weaker, and your heavy arms... so heavy, so limp and soft... will be able to sink deeply down again. 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1, and you sink still deeper.”

It was here where he had some fun: Copper played with his arms, raising and lowering them more rapidly for a few minutes. He later did the same with his legs using a specially designed shoes; oversized and plush style slippers that resembled red hightops with a white stripe. As long his Father's magic flowed over him, Copper told his enthralled son, he will know no fear. He will always feel safe and brave. Nobody will come to do him harm, nor will he be afraid of anything he might do to cause any trouble. He will always be a good boy, a happy and loving child, and it would be all he'd need to think about.

And finally, he wrapped an ascot tie around his son's neck, telling him that it is filled with a father's love and guidance, and with it on, he will always know of his father's love and influence over him, that Father can but whisper in his hear and it would become his thoughts. When he prompts him to, he will instantly slip into this deep warm trance, overfilled with love and happiness. Adam himself couldn't remember just what those words are, that magic phrase that will slip him back into this warm dark place, but he will know the phrase as his loving Father whispered it into his ear.

As Copper prompted, the enthralled child will be very comfortable with Copper gave him, and will always have them on, the gloves, the shoes, and the tie.

Adam, his eyes closed and his body slack, was in an heavenly bliss, as he's slipped even deeper into sleep and was laid down on the bed, lost in his dreams with his loving and proud father over him, and the little child wanted nothing else in the world than to be there.

Copper looked back to the child's serene and calm sleeping face, which goes with a limp and warmly inert body. His breathing, body heat, and REM movement being the only

signs of life. He'll still remember what happened to him while he's in a trance, and would long to be there again, once he naturally wakes up where he's at. That will happen in another time, though. Other duties await.

He then turned around to find a twitching fox ear behind the ajar door panel, which he swung away to reveal that fox girl from earlier. The girl *eeped* like a child caught with her hand in the proverbial cookie jar when Copper swung the door exposing her.

“Eavesdropping, Tara Kit?” Copper sternly said with his eyes staring holes into her. “I didn't know that Etiquette Parameters in your programming can be self-overridden.”

Tara clearly looked ashamed as she looked down to the floor. “I'm s-sorry. But Adam . . .”

“ . . . has been through a lot, I know.” Copper said completing her thought. “It's obvious that the poor kid's been through a life I wouldn't want to wish on anyone. At least I can help him heal from it and hopefully make a better life for . . .”

“He is so . . .”

What Tara interjected made Copper pause a bit to look back to her.

“ . . . alone.”

Tara starts to shrink in the wall behind her, looking downcast, but Copper took Tara's chin in his powerful hands and pulled her face up to meet her eyes with his. “I'm surprised. I didn't think that an android would actually feel for a person.”

“Yet I do.”

“Very Impressive.” He then takes a remote in his pocket and pushes a button on it. “Very.”

Tara immediately stiffened up with a jerk. Her face slackens and her eyes becomes placid, all resemblance of her personality appears to be switched off and she talks in an robotic monotone.

Awaiting commands.user designate.copper mystran

“Open Command List of Users.”

opening.list of users.copper mytran.end list

“Access identity file on Subject: Adam Packbell and append his identity to Command List.”

acknowledged . . . processing . . . new list.adam packbell.copper mystran.end list

“Append Emphathy/Friendship Parameter of Adam Packbell: Accompany and Assist at fullest capacity, attachment level at absolute, and all restrictions to emotional chip disabled. Sexual parameters restricted until User is 16 years and above. Age limit can be self-adjusted if User is willing.”

processing . . . complete parameters changed.

“Program Mode: New Program, one time only:”

program mode on.awaiting new program.

“Locate Adam in room in front of you. In a few moments after I leave this room, you will carry him to your room, and his will stay there with you at all times.

Acknowledged.

“Run Program and Exit Control Mode.”

Just as suddenly, life reenters Tara's body. Her back relaxes and her formerly expressionless face brightens up almost as quickly as it left. She blinks and shakes her head as the light returns to her eyes. She managed to let out a “huh?” before the program takes hold.

Tara gets up and moves over to where Adam was lying. She looked at the child's serene face and emitted a soft sigh.

“Tara?”

Copper's voice in her ears caused her to reply, but her gaze was still locked on Adam.
“Yes Copper?”

Copper declares before he leaves: “He will never be alone anymore.”

Tara couldn't answer what Copper said; she was lost in the sight of her new owner. She was scanning him very thoroughly, taking a good reading of his physical being. She used every available sensor in her systems, setting monitors to his vital signs, acquiring his dental records, his fingerprints, his blood type, his DNA, his voiceprint barely audible as he talked in his trance, his physical scent which is still present in it's minute level. She took a sample of almost everything and kept detailed digital records in his memory, each item stored in her predominant memory banks labeled with his name and the words "Alpha User, Adam Packbell".

After a moment, Tara acknowledges an internal command in her mind. She slung Adam's book bag over her shoulder and with both arms showing greater strength than a normal girl, picked his limp body in her arms. As she carried him out of the room, a young woman with her face masked similar to Copper's and wearing a shiny French Maid outfit stood waiting to clean up that room for the next stray to wake up in.

When Copper returned to the room he came from, Ursala was waiting for him. The 250 virtual years has come and gone, and the laptop has brought her back from her sleep. She has unplugged herself from the computer, slipped into her dress and was putting on her glasses when Copper arrived. She turned to greet him with a smile and bright eyes over her glasses, but as she walked up to Copper, she felt somewhat strange.

"Something the matter, Ursala?" Copper asked.

Ursala now looked like the grandmother she was turned into, and her voice, though smooth, had the softness of age. "Not that I know of...but I feel so...young. All those years felt so real, and I even believe so...but I didn't age a day while I was there, didn't I?" She blushes and smiles, embarrassed at what happened to her, not that she's complaining.

"Imagine what you can do with a 20-something's body, my dear. But if you think that it's inappropriate for you at your age to go fauning over me, I understand."

She giggles. "You kidder. But it's true. I'm way too old for that now. I'll leave the hanging for your arm for Melissa."



Copper chuckled. Melissa is his first assistant, his apprentice, and recently his significant other. Her face, despite plastic surgery, was disfigured enough to warrant a mask which matches Copper's. She's the one dressed as a French Maid and was cleaning up after Adam at this time. And later on, she'll return to Copper, one of the few people she can trust to show her own battered face—a trust Copper himself returns—for the latest in a long string of intimate nights.

“Of course,” Copper said with a head nod. “Besides, there's the matter of my son for you to tend to anyway.”

“Oh, Adam,” Ursala said with her eyes lit up. The memory was there. The sweet handsome Adam Packbell, the boy she is told to smother with love, and was filled with the need to do so. “Where is your little man?”

“Upstairs in the mansion levels. He's still asleep though.”

“Oh good, I can make him breakfast.”

“Yes, now you can make up for what happened that brought me to you.”

“Hmm? Come again?” Ursala tipped her head, not knowing what Copper's talking about. Copper noted this.

“Nevermind,” Copper said while directing Ursala out the door and toward the staircase leading to the upper levels, where she went up after giving Copper an thank you kiss on his plastered cheek.

As Copper turned around to return to his office, he found Melissa exit the room she was cleaning. They embrace like lovers, white frozen noses touching like eskimos.

“You're feeling good, Copper,” Melissa said with her Chinese accent, as Copper stroked her long black hair tied up in a top-knot ponytail. “I assume Ursala's an success?”

“More so, Melissa. She couldn't remember that home invasion that caused her miscarriage. This proves that I can flood someone's brain with enough memories to accelerate time's ability to heal mental and emotional wounds.”

“That's quite a breakthrough.” Melissa's blue eyes looked through both masks into Copper's own.

“You got it. This could be what I need to bring mind control victims back to normal. The process needs to be refined, however, but it's a step in the right direction.”

“That's a cause to celebrate, Copper,” Melissa said as she wrapped her arms around Copper's right arm. “Come on, Guy. I'll make us some drinks.”

Tara weaved around halls and up stairs. Eventually she found her way to a floor that was actually above ground; Copper's underground lair lead into an actual and unassuming mansion-like house in an well-to-do gated community in Las Vegas, and she eventually reached what will be their room, an average room for an average girl, on the second floor of the mansion. She settled him in her fluffed bed with the stuffed animals. Laying the book bag down at the floor, she resumed with her thoughts as she held and stroked the white gloved hand of the still sleeping Adam and smiled, knowing that he's in their bed.

“Odd.” she thought, “For along time I've considered this my bed now that he's here it's our bed.”

She stares at him with a look that starts to show a bit of longing. She hears his breath as his chest rises and falls, a deep breathing that comes with a deep and restful sleep. “What a lovely voice he has. Seemed different though. I guess that is what prompted me to listen in even though my courtesy protocols told me 'no.’”

She found out that those protocols were overruled by what is going through her in-board emotion chip at the time. She realizes with a bit of surprise that she can actually feels affection toward this young man. No, not affection, more than that. This was the biggest sensation of an emotion beyond the usual infatuation and fondness she has experienced. She felt more toward this human than what she could find in her records. And more than what she can hold. In fact, if her eyes could have them, they'd have hearts for irises.

She moves her hand across his torso with tender gentleness, feeling the breath go in and out of his body. She felt a warmth in his body that matches the warmth she detected in her own physical being. A warmth that caused her body to fidget involuntarily like a school girl after seeing her first crush.

Her face blushes red, as her voice carries a soft tender tone. “Adam, you can be sure as long as I function you'll never be alone again. I shall throw my body between you and death if I can.”

At that, Adam smiled, hearing her voice in his deep trance. The thick fog of his magical trance, he found himself in was replaced with an relaxing floatable cloud and the warmth of an undying love.

Tara sighed as she sensed what is happening to him. He felt warmer to her touch, and he was blushing as well. She can even detect changes in his scent as well. Tara Kit wouldn't

claim publicly that she has an imagination, she is after all an android. But she can actually see herself with him. Playing games, going out of adventures, sharing good times. Recharging with his sleeping body in her arms. Being happy. That's what she wants for her Alpha User, her Adam. That's what she wants for him for as long as she lived.

She finally can't resist anymore, she softly sat on the bed, picked up Adam's still dreaming body and embraced him in her arms. She rocked his limp body in her lap and declared that she will be his and none other. Tara was in Love with the boy. Capital L Love. The fact that few androids if any ever experience this emotion is completely lost on her.



“I want you to be happy, Adam” She said as she absentmindedly stroked his head. “I want this life and world to be happy, and I'll help you make this life a happy one. I'll be here with you for as long as I live. You'll never have to be in that sad lonely world anymore. I will love you with all of my being.” She knows it to be true, because it is her programming now. To her, this pre-teenaged boy is everything, nothing else matters, and she was his, and his alone.

Her voice was down to a soft whisper as she moved over to his ear to say, as if she was reverently addressing her master, “I will love you, Adam Packbell, for all eternity.” She then gently presses her lips against his and offers him a very warm and long kiss, sealing the programming she gave to herself.