

The Genuine Article

The Ohio Center for Neurological Research and Disorders building was much more elegant than some of the neighboring structures. It rose ten stories with a series of multi-tiered columns connected in between with large sections of glass that shimmered brilliantly in the midday sun.

Wright entered the building, working his way up to the fourth floor. The elevator doors slid open to reveal a long hallway with several doors on either side. At the end of the hallway stood a single entrance. The name on the plaque read, “Everett T. Bradford, MD. Director of Neurology.” Wright casually opened the door and walked in.

An attractive young woman sat behind a small “L” shaped desk, tapping at a computer console while talking through a headset. She paused for a moment, acknowledging Wright with a friendly smile, and then quickly ended her call.

“Good morning Jack. Dr. Bradford’s been expecting you,” she said cheerfully. Wright smiled coyly and replied, “Good morning Andrea.” Her smile grew slightly as she motioned to an opposing door. As Wright passed, the young woman sighed with enamor. She wanted to say something more, but simply lacked the courage. Instead, she momentarily fantasized about him. It was not the first time. Her eyes followed him to the door and as he disappeared into the adjoining room, thus signaled the end of the fantasy. Sighing once again, she redirected her attention back to her duties.

Bradford was sitting at a large oak desk, thumbing through several papers. He didn't bother to look up as he addressed Wright.

"Have a seat Jack," he uttered gruffly, motioning with his hand. Wright complied as Bradford continued to casually thumb through the papers. His head was cocked back as he read through a pair of thick-rimmed glasses.

Bradford was not a particularly handsome man. Two narrow slits formed his eyes and a larger slit formed his mouth. His lips were thin and colorless as well as his hair, which was more gray than blonde. His face was accentuated with a large, beak-like nose, and his ears flared out excessively from the sides of his head. Physically he was in better than average shape for a man of sixty-four, but the skin on his hands and face was sun-damaged and leathery.

Several minutes passed as Wright sat patiently, still awaiting Bradford's attention.

"This is real interesting stuff Jack," Bradford exclaimed, waving the papers in the air and then dropping them onto the desk.

"What's that?" Wright inquired cautiously, sensing deception in his voice.

"Your article on Synaptic Transference of course. It's truly inspirational. I especially enjoyed the part where you compare the human brain to a lead-acid battery."

Wright saw no point in trying to elaborate and instead, responded sarcastically. "I'm glad my research amuses you."

"Well Jack, you have to admit. Most legitimate research is published in medical journals. Unfortunately, *Popular Science* isn't one of them," Bradford jeered.

"Perhaps, but that's not what I came here to discuss. The reason why I'm here..."

Bradford interrupted. "I know why you're here. You wanted to reassure me that the experiments you've been performing are in no way related to this nonsense you've been preaching for the last two and a half years. Frankly, I hope for your sake, this is true. Because if I find out otherwise, I will do everything in my power to have you banned not only from this facility, but from the entire medical community."

"Look Bradford, that..."

"Doctor Bradford, Jack—Doctor," Bradford interjected. Wright ignored the pretentious comment and continued.

"That research has nothing to do with the Delta wave experiments. You can be assured of that. So far the information I've collected has been very conclusive. You've seen the reports. If I were hiding something, you'd know about it. Come on now. Do you seriously think that I'd take that kind of chance?"

"Like I said, I hope for your sake you're not," Bradford responded skeptically.

"I can assure you I'm not," Wright said firmly.

Bradford nodded and his tone became solemn. "You should know that your actions are being closely monitored. If I have even the slightest suspicion that you're not on the level, I'll pull the plug on this project."

Bradford sat back, clasping his hands together as if claiming some imaginary victory upon their exchange.

"I get the message," Wright responded coldly and exited the room.

Bradford picked up the receiver of his telephone and slowly dialed an extension. It rang several times and a voice finally registered on the other end.

"This is Bradford. I assume you'll be in the ER tonight?" Bradford was making more of a request than an inquiry.

The voice responded with a “Yes.”

“Make sure you pay close attention to his actions,” Bradford demanded. “If he does anything out of the ordinary, I want to know about it immediately.”

The voice responded with a brief affirmation and Bradford replaced the receiver.

Wright had found Merritt in a small lounging area within the emergency facility. They were currently discussing the dream Wright had earlier that morning.

“...it was as if everything was going great until my mind started wandering. I tried not to let it wander, but I just couldn’t seem to focus. Cass sensed this and got really upset. What’s even more strange is that I don’t think it was her anymore. Someone or something else took over.”

Merritt interrupted politely. “What do you mean by someone or something?”

“It wasn’t Cass anymore. Her eyes turned completely black and she became this cold unfeeling...” Wright paused for a moment trying to think of an appropriate word. “...demon. It was like something out of a horror movie.”

Merritt nodded, slightly intrigued by his friend’s ominous account of the dream.

“Perhaps it’s just your own inner turmoil playing out in your dreams.” Merritt made an earnest supposition.

“No Chris, I thought about that. When I was having the dream and things were going normal, my thoughts were my own and Cass acted as I would expect her to act. But when the dream became violent another presence took over. It said and did things I know Cass would never have said. In fact, it said things that even I’d never thought about.”

Merritt placed his hand on Wright's knee as he spoke. "Jack, you have been under so much pressure lately. Bradford's been breathing down your neck. The project has been nothing but a headache so far. And on top of all that, you haven't had a good night's sleep in how long? It really doesn't surprise me that you've been having these nightmares."

"I understand that," Wright said, discernibly frustrated, "but I'm telling you something's not quite right. I've had nightmares almost every day since Cass died—that's to be expected. But up until recently they were relatively normal. They didn't start getting weird until this project began. And the closer I get to success, the weirder the dreams become. It's getting to the point where I'm almost afraid to sleep."

Merritt paused, carefully considering his next words. "That's a hell of a dilemma Jack," he declared. "I know you don't want to hear this, but perhaps you should consider shelving this project. I think your sanity is slightly more important."

Wright shook his head. "No. I've come too far to quit now. I'm so close to capturing a transmission. Besides, if it doesn't happen soon I think Bradford's going to shut me down anyway."

Merritt gave a slight look of puzzlement. "I take it you already had your little conference?"

Wright nodded with an awkward grimace.

"How is our good friend Dr. Bradford?" Merritt scoffed.

"Oh, he's the same old pompous S.O.B. he's always been. He even brought up my past research. God! The gall of that man." Wright's eyes burned with rage, recalling the earlier conversation.

“Well, Bradford may be many things, but stupid isn’t one of them. You can only fool him for so long before he catches on. For both our sakes I hope you get something soon. I’ve put my neck on the line here Jack, and we’re both going down if Bradford figures it out.”

Just then Brighton entered the room. “Good morning, Chris—Jack.” He greeted them cheerfully and both men replied on a similar note.

“Did you hear about that John Doe we lost last night?” Brighton inquired delicately.

“Yeah, he turned out to be an undercover cop,” replied Merritt, a notable regret in his voice.

“You should have seen Nurse Hardcourt’s response when she found out. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone with less feelings than that woman.”

Brighton went on to depict his entire confrontation with Hardcourt. “I had her dead to rights, caught in her own racist hypocrisy, and I could’ve nailed her to the wall, but I didn’t. You know what her final response was?” Brighton paused for a dramatic climax. “Well, even I miss one once in a while,” he jeered.

Wright immediately responded with a kind word. “Well, you handled it commendably. By not saying anything you let her stew in her own contempt. You’re a bigger man for that.”

Merritt concurred with his friend by simply nodding and Brighton relished the compliment.

“Well, gentleman I have some things to take care of. I’ll see you later this afternoon.” Wright stood up and left the room.

Brighton looked to Merritt and motioned towards the door. “You know I like Jack, but he’s really running himself into the ground. I can’t believe he is doing all this simply for

the sake of some anomalous Delta wave readings.” Brighton hesitated for a moment. “Do you think there’s any credence to the rumors that he’s actually performing some kind of soul transference experiment?”

Merritt, visibly irritated, responded harshly. “Good Lord man, don’t be so naïve! You know how these rumors get started. By people who have nothing better to do than stick their noses where they don’t belong. And when they can’t dig up anything good, they fabricate something. That’s it, nothing more.”

Merritt terminated the conversation abruptly and walked out of the room. Brighton stood alone dumbfounded.

In the east wing of the emergency center was a small makeshift office where Wright often processed the data for his Delta wave studies. A single desk stood away from the door with a computer monitor and several piles of neatly stacked paperwork resting upon it. The only unusual item was a small stand-like interface sitting next to the monitor.

Wright walked in and sat down to a blank computer screen. He stared for a moment, pondering the events of the day thus far, and began to sort through one of the piles of paperwork. After flipping through several articles of paper he came upon a magazine. It was the issue of *Popular Science* containing his article. He contemplated discarding it, but instead opened the magazine and located his article—*SYNAPTIC TRANSFERENCE: Opening Our Mind to Other Dimensions*. He eased back in his chair and began to read.

Since the dawn of time, man has endeavored to answer the ever-elusive question: where did we come from? Men have created gods and religions

to explain the roots of our existence and shroud them in mysticism. Hence, we enter the twenty-first century clinging to unexplained beliefs all based upon one single notion—faith. We have reached the farthest depths of our solar system, via probes, and have ventured to the bottom of the ocean, but do we dare question the vein of our own existence? Jackson Wright responds with an emphatic “Yes.”

The brain is the most unexplored organ within the human anatomy. Researchers have mapped only macroscopic details of the brain and there are still many other areas that remain a complete mystery. Yet, Wright has taken a totally different approach. He is neither a neurologist nor a parapsychologist, but a research scientist who has made some astounding discoveries.

Within the thalamus and hypothalamus (the brain’s relay station between the cerebral cortex and the brain stem) lies the potential for a high frequency transmission node. Unlike our normal brain wave activity, with frequencies lower than that of standard household electrical current, this high frequency transmission is believed to run well into the terahertz range. That is 1,000 times greater than even the highest microwave and radio transmissions. So, perhaps you’re wondering, what is the purpose of this transmission? Wright believes it is the gateway to our soul. It sounds like something straight from a science-fiction novel, but Wright has verifiable proof to backup his findings. There is one catch though. As Wright explains, the carrier frequency is only

present near death, which is the reason why the transmission rate must be so high.

“There are approximately 100 billion neurons [brain cells] which can develop thousands of connections with other neurons. That constitutes a possible storage capacity of well over 100 trillion bits of information.” This is contrary to some research scientists, who have theorized that human memory might only consist of a few gigabytes of storage capacity. Wright explains, “...in order to transmit not only a person’s lifetime of experiences, but the entire neurological makeup of that person, the brain must transmit the information and structure of every single neuron.” Based on Wright’s calculations and what we already know about brain cell counts, it would take anywhere from three to five seconds to transfer the entire contents of an average human brain (currently, there is no man-made device that can receive information at even a fraction of that speed).

Assuming that Wright is correct, there still remains a much more intriguing question: where is this information being transmitted to? Wright does not have a definitive answer, but offers several theories (some explain things such as ESP, telekinesis, clairvoyance, etc...) which pose very tangible arguments. “The real thrust of my research is to...

Wright looked up to find Bradford standing in the doorway. He discreetly folded the magazine and dropped it into a wastebasket beneath his desk.

“Catching up on some paperwork,” Bradford queried.

“Actually I was just sorting through some of the old research data. I’ve already compiled most of it. I figured I had a few hours to tidy up before the next batch of readings,” Wright responded nervously.

“Well, I just wanted to let you know that I just reviewed your last Delta wave report and I have to say...” Bradford fought to impart a compliment. “You’re doing a good job.”

Wright sat there, slightly dumbfounded by Bradford’s admission. “Well, thank you Dr. Bradford.”

Bradford paused for a moment and then spoke again.

“Look Jack, I know we haven’t been seeing eye to eye, but the research you’ve done here cannot be ignored. With proper mapping of Delta wave generation during emergency situations, we will be able to better anticipate and perhaps even prevent potential brain seizures and other damaging conditions. In fact, I’ve already talked to the Board of Directors about having your research fully endorsed.”

Wright was becoming increasingly suspicious. Bradford had never been this cooperative.

“I appreciate that, but why do I get the impression there’s a catch here?” Wright offered respectfully.

Bradford wore an insidious grin. “There is no catch,” the tone of his voice increased, “I just want you to be recognized for your fine research. We’re going to move you out of this tiny little closet and put you into a great big office adjacent to mine. Additionally, I will be personally assigning two of our best young research scientists to assist you in the final stages of the project.”

“Damn him,” Wright thought to himself. The last thing he needed was this man looking over his shoulder, but instead of reacting, Wright concealed his contempt and responded graciously.

“That sounds like a very tempting offer, but I’d like a few days to think it over.”

Bradford’s demeanor quickly shifted as he retorted angrily. “Well—don’t think about it too long. I’m pulling a lot of strings here. You have a chance to redeem yourself after that ridiculous article and you’re a fool if you throw this away. Oh, and by the way, don’t think I didn’t notice what you were reading when I walked in.” He paused momentarily for a reaction. “You better wake up Jack, or before you know it you’ll be spending all your time stocking shelves at Radio Shack!”

Bradford turned and plodded down the hallway. As he approached the nurse’s station, he caught Nurse Hardcourt’s eye. She was reprimanding another nurse for neglecting her duties. Hardcourt paused for a moment and made direct eye contact with Bradford. He stammered momentarily and then turned down another corridor. Hardcourt ended her lecture abruptly and dismissed the nurse.

After a few minutes, Hardcourt walked casually down the same corridor as Bradford and entered a small supply room, locking the door behind her. Bradford was standing in the back of the room, partially obscured by a supply rack.

“Hello Evy,” she murmured softly as she approached him. “What brings you to this neck of the woods?”

Bradford was slightly distraught as he spoke. “That damn fool Wright doesn’t know who he’s dealing with. He thinks he can continue to dance around me, but I’m going to get the proof I need and then I’m going to bury him!”

“Calm down Hon, you know I hate it when you get upset,” stroking his hair as she spoke. “Wright is an insignificant bug and you shouldn’t let him get to you like this.”

“I realize that, but he’s a menace to this hospital and he needs to be shut down. Unfortunately, if I go to the Board of

Directors now and withdraw my endorsement, they're going to want to know why I gave this man so much latitude in the first place."

Hardcourt spoke compassionately. "I understand, and I'm sure that Wright will eventually stumble. And when he does, you'll be there to grind his face in the dirt." With the last sentence she gave a genuine smile. Bradford nodded in agreement.

She was now interlocking her fingers in between his, rubbing them gently. She brought her mouth to his ear and sensually whispered, "Is there anything I can do to ease your tension?"

Bradford relaxed slightly, took a deep breath and responded coldly. "Yes—just keep an eye on Wright." With that he left the room. She wanted to curse him as he retreated, but her overwhelming admiration for the man disallowed her the gratification.

A few moments passed and the door opened again. Her eyes lit up. "Perhaps he had changed his mind," she thought, but it was another nurse.

"Nurse Hardcourt, you're needed in the ER." The nurse spoke urgently. Hardcourt immediately dismissed her frustration and headed for the emergency room.