

# Chapter 2

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2075**

## **18:00 hours - Emerald's home, Rockley**

When Dieter returned from work, Emerald was waiting for him. They had a lot to discuss. He kissed her softly.

‘I have to ask you something,’ his words were heavy and hollow.

‘Why? What have you heard?’

‘Not heard really, I saw something. I received a misdirected data packet a few weeks ago. And before you ask, I don’t have it, it was redirected not long after I read it, I checked today. It was marked Elysium, mean anything to you?’

Emerald’s thoughts leapt back to Martha’s office before her trip to Prague.

‘Greek Paradise?’ he nodded, ‘Martha mentioned a dream of Elysium last night, last night, shit, it feels like weeks ago! Other than that no, nothing.’

‘Okay then, that’s what I thought. I mean, apart from the Martha’s dream stuff, there’s no way I could’ve known about...’

‘Dieter!’

‘Yeah sorry; you knew that.’

‘What was it?’

‘At the time I thought it was a spoof press release, one of those in office jokes, but now, I’m not so sure. It read something like, ‘Pan-Panacea’s Chief executive Wallace Robyns is to be sacked following his dereliction of duties in allowing the viral activation of the anti-Cancer virus’.’

‘But we’re months away from ACV distribution. So if that was a press release, what the hell is going on?’ Emerald sank into the implications. ‘The resorption deaths are not the whole picture are they, D!’

‘Looks that way. I’m whacked, Em. Will you make some food whilst I shower?’ she nodded and he left her staring into the carpet.

After the meal they took a mental deep breath and broke their oaths

to Holisticorp, each relaying what they knew about current projects. Emerald continued, from her more privileged position, to fill Dieter in about other corporate developments. By the end of the evening they had fried each other's brain with the highly technical, scientific secrets of Holisticorp. Neither had any firm conclusions about Martha's purpose for the horrors Emerald had witnessed, nor a sufficient explanation for Dieter's data packet and Emerald returned to it.

'If Martha's already prepared a dismissal statement, she's obviously expecting repercussions from the ACV,' Dieter nodded in agreement. 'so why is she still going full-steam ahead to get it out on time? Unless there's something else in the ACV? Something she's covering up, something bad enough to risk panic, chaos, maybe even death!'

'And, Wallace is going to be the fall guy,' Dieter added.

'Yes, so, what do we do?' Emerald looked at Dieter in the vain hope that he could make it all right again. He bestowed her with a loving smile, reached for her hand and looked into her eyes.

'No matter what, we're in this together,' she kissed him and he continued, 'Considering how little we apparently know of what's really happening. I mean, on the one hand Martha's quietly cloning people and murdering the originals for some reason and on the other it appears she's planning blatant mass destruction with the ACV. Our best course of action remains to stay silent and keep our eyes and ears open. It would be infinitely more difficult if we were no longer working for her.'

'True. But it's hard, D, watching, waiting, being sneaky! I'd much rather tear her hair out in a straight fight! She needs to be punished for those already murdered!'

'And perhaps for the personal deception too?'

'Oh yes, absolutely.' Emerald's hand tightened to a fist.

'I know, Em, I feel the same. We've both spent years working on projects that we believed would benefit humanity. To learn now that we may have been party to, not only the, well, what you saw, but possibly countless other components of a secret malevolence, leaves a very bitter taste but it is best to wait.'

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2075 - 69 days to Inoculation day**

## **19:21 hours**

For weeks Dieter had sought new pathways through the computer systems, new connections in existing data but ironically, after all his hard searching, Emerald made the initial breakthrough.

‘D take a look at this; it’s the company’s monthly shareholders report.’ She pointed at a table of exports.

Dieter studied it closely then, as he noticed the increase in the organs for human transplant column, the colour drained from his face.

‘That’s a 25 percent increase in a quarter. Shit! How many people *is* that?’

‘I can’t tell; the figures are nondescript it’s just organs, but I think we can assume that it’s due to resorptions. We’ve got to stop her, D. If they continue at this rate there’ll be no real people left!’

‘I agree. This isn’t just about sales though. If Martha wanted to increase profits she could simply grow the organs, or grow clones and slice them up. There’s no need to use the organs of real people!’

Emerald winced under the memory invoked by Dieter’s concise description but stayed focused.

‘Maybe the event itself is significant? The sales are just a way to get rid of the bodies without having to dig mass graves.’ Emerald shocked herself with the ease at which she had arrived at her conclusion and it halted her in a collection of memories. Past conversations and events trickled into a pool of realisation.

‘Martha said she’d modified the organ generation process to give us a 98 percent success rate. I just accepted it, put it down to her being typically efficient but it’s clear now she was exaggerating.’

‘Exaggerating? Outright lying! If these figures are anything to go by, it’s no wonder Holisticorp’s sole supplier of replacement organs for the American religious liberty wars.’

‘None of this explains the ACV though. Why is she willing to contaminate the stock from which she is harvesting?’

## **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2075 - 17 days to Inoculation day**

### **23:57 hours**

With the deployment date for the tankers imminent, Emerald had analysed and re-analysed the anti-Cancer virus, only to repeatedly discover it was infuriatingly innocuous. At the end of yet another long evening at home checking data, she was once again getting nowhere.

Her anger and frustration vented in a rather infantile exasperated scream, closely followed by a hurled and smashed cup which brought Dieter rushing up the stairs.

‘Are you okay?’

‘I must have checked this a hundred times, D! There’s nothing in the ACV that shouldn’t be. It’s exactly as we designed it, a 100 percent efficient cancer seeker and destroyer. Once in one’s system it’s like having a lifetime supply of cancer antibodies.’

‘Wait, that’s it!’

‘What?’

‘If there’s nothing in the ACV that shouldn’t be...’

‘I’ve just said so haven’t I?’

‘Yes, but what if the ACV is *in* something it shouldn’t be? The carrier virus, it’s a deactivated herpes viral strain yes?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then the answer *must* be *there*?’

‘I’ve checked all that!’

‘With eyes open to what we knew then. You may see something different now!’

Unsure, Emerald worked through the data again, highlighting anomalies that she’d previously disregarded.

‘There are some things I can check but the strain is so harmless! It would have only minor effects and only on a few people. If you’re going to add a secret extra tweak to an inoculation complex you’d have to have a serious reason but the purpose of this defeats me; it’s like Martha’s playing some sick practical joke to give everyone cold sor-r-r-r.’ The word had turned into a huge body-shaking yawn that left Emerald’s eyes watering, she wiped away a tear as the yawn tailed off.

‘Oh, sorry...’ she said through a little shiver, ‘...to give everyone cold sores or chicken pox! That said, it *has* to be it. There must be something in the carrier vi-i-rus!’ Another yawn and more tears.

Dieter spoke softly, sympathetic to her wearied state, ‘Enough, Em, you need to stop.’

‘You know as well as I that the ACV deploys across the FSN in only three days. We have to deal with this *now*. I just wish I knew what Martha hoped to achieve.’ She looked into Dieter’s much younger eyes.

‘You just look so tired, Em. You forget your age. I’m knackered with all this extra work and I’m twenty-six years younger than you.’

Get some rest!’ he urged.

She knew he was right and didn’t really mind him pointing out the age gap, she was quite smug he was her toy-boy. She hugged him. ‘Are you coming?’

‘No, I’m going to tidy up. I’ll see you in the morning.’ They kissed and she went to bed.

## **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2075**

### **04:30 hours**

Emerald awoke sweating and cold from her now recurrent dentist-chair nightmare. She looked at the clock, *04:30, Crap!* and tried to sink back to sleep but the chair was waiting. She felt for Dieter but his side of the bed was empty. Puzzled, she pulled the silk sheet aside, grabbed her robe and drying the perspiration from her face with the soft towel of the sleeve, wandered to find her man.

Dieter was staring into the flames of a newly lit but already roaring fire. He was dressed ready for work and tucking into a thick piece of toast.

‘What are you doing up? You’ve only had a few hours!’

‘Nightmare again,’ Emerald mumbled into his shoulder as she slid her arms around his waist, hugging the memory away. She kissed his neck, took a slice of toast from his plate and settled down onto the soft wool rug next to him in front of the fire.

Real fire! It was hopelessly decadent and irresponsible but a luxury they could easily afford and, I would say, a necessity when trying to banish a nightmare.

‘Want some good news?’ he asked smiling. Emerald needed some good news, any good news and he had her attention. ‘After you went to bed, I was thinking about what you’d said,’ Emerald just stared blankly at him. He explained, ‘about the anomalies. I wondered if you’d made any notes so I asked your computer. It displayed a file detailing the problem genes in your preliminary tests and I asked it to correlate them. It did and they combine to make the carrier virus active after a certain period.’

Paying full attention now, Emerald asked, ‘How long?’

‘The timing of the symptoms and severity will vary from person to person, it’s unpredictable but the simulations suggest that before spring next year the ACV will mutate, reactivating the herpes carrier to

form a virulent new pox.’

‘A new pox which by then will be carried within every citizen of the FSN! Hell. Everyone could die in a single day! I thought you said *good news?*’

‘It is, well not that bit, but I set program running to discover a solution that would substitute or delete the anomalous sequences you highlighted but keep the original anti-cancer effects intact.’

‘And?’

‘I want *you* to check the entire reformatted gene sequence to make sure I haven’t bugged it up somehow but I tested the solution on a sample of the ACV about an hour ago and it fully repairs the carrier. The ACV will be carried by a completely benign herpes strain as per the original model.’ He was grinning broadly.

She couldn’t believe it. Last night they were days away from failure, this morning they could be equally close to success. ‘We’ve done it!’ fell out of Emerald’s mouth and she found herself grinning too, beaming you might say. They had beaten the brilliant Martha at something!

‘Well, as soon as we’ve repaired it all! There are however a couple of, not insignificant problems,’ his smile faded and took Emerald’s with it. ‘Firstly, to fully repair the entire stock of the ACV, we are going to need fifty barrels of our formula.’

‘One barrel per Tanker, that’s a lot of weight to move around, D, we can’t do that on our own!’

‘Tell me about it, I’ve been at this all night.’

‘You’ve not slept?’

‘Cat naps, whilst the computer worked stuff out but I’ve had such a successful night, I’m hyper! It’s as you said though, a lot of weight to move so consider this. We, you, go to Martha and say, *I have found a fault in the formula, and this is what we have to do to change it*, or something like that. Surely she would have to acknowledge it?’

‘I suppose. I haven’t thought of going to Martha with anything since we decided to keep things quiet, but...’ *Could we with this? It’s what I’d have done before the Smithson’s died, but...* ‘No, I have to keep things as surface as possible with Martha. I couldn’t convincingly explain why I’ve been checking the formula so late. You know how perceptive she is, D. She’s the exact opposite of stupid! I can’t get into a detailed conversation with her it’s too risky. She’d perceive the truth in seconds and seconds later, if she *is* behind all this, she’d *insist* I take a seat! We’re going to have to find a way to do it ourselves.’

‘In that case, the second problem we have is not as troublesome as shifting fifty heavy barrels and is in fact caused by your decision, which I fully agree with by the way, not to tell Martha. In fact, at first it appears more troublesome. However, I might even boast that everything is in hand and you shouldn’t worry.’ He sat in the fireside rocking chair.

‘Yes, D, very encouraging but what is it?’

‘What is what?’

‘The second problem?’

‘Oh, right, didn’t I say?’ she smiled at her absent-minded professor.

‘Sorry. The second problem is getting in and out of the ACV tanker warehouse without anyone seeing us but, as I said, I think you can take care of that. You just have to make some arrangements.’

‘What about the vat seals on the Tankers?’

‘No problem, I called up the blueprints for the vat seals shortly before you got up. I have a few bugs to work out but they’ll come good. Our biggest dilemma is the liquid quantity but I’ll look into that today. For now though, you should go back to bed, Em. You don’t have to be anywhere or do anything today.’

Completely convinced that Dieter really did have it all in hand Emerald relaxed. Wrapped in the copious towelling robe, she gazed dreamily into the flickering fire. The remnants of her tension slipped away and she snuggled against his leg, comfortable enough to doze again. He helped her to her feet and then to bed.

### **10:30 hours**

Sitting on a high stool in the kitchen and still in her robe, long after a luxurious bath, Emerald was staring, entranced by the dust particles floating between shadows of the kitchen window’s blind. A subconscious respite for her troubled mind. Intermittently all through her bath, whilst drying and breakfast, she’d had a nagging feeling that she already knew Martha’s purpose or reasoning, only, she’d forgotten, *most infuriating!* She was still mesmerised when Dieter arrived home a little after twelve.

‘Oh you’re up. You look much better.’ Smiling, he leaned to deposit a file and Memgem case on the counter and kissed her as he was passing.

‘How’d you get on, D?’

‘Brilliantly, I’ve arranged a lab. They can easily produce the quantity we need, we can pick it up at 18:00 tomorrow. The lab boys

were a bit suspicious about making up such a large amount so quickly but when I said you were fiddling with a new project they were okay. You're going to have to provide a requisition for their records though,' he looked pleased with his progress. The stress lines of the last three months had given way and hope danced in his eyes again.

'Excellent.' Emerald stepped to him wrapping her arms around his waist, 'I've been pondering Martha's intentions and I feel I know something but,' she leaned away a little to see into his beautiful eyes, 'as I'm not getting anywhere with that, I have decided to forget it in favour of a far more pleasant mindset. You're free for the rest of the day right?' he nodded. Grinning, she took his hand and led him to the bedroom.

They both realised the moment skin brushed skin that they needed the revitalising freedom of the primitive much more than they could have guessed or admitted and enjoyed each other for a number of hours before finally falling comfortably asleep.

## **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2075**

### **08:20 hours**

They awoke next morning to the bedroom terminal announcing a call. Dieter sat up, a little disorientated, 'Answer call.'

It was Dawson at the lab, a creepy little fat man, a bit sweaty and grimy looking and always with a huge angry pimple somewhere on his face. One of those people who cause a shudder, not by doing anything in particular, just for being.

'Morning, Mr Fredric, miss McKenzie,' his speech stopped cold and his piggy eyes widened as he saw Emerald.

'Yes, Dawson?' Dieter prompted indignantly, moving to obscure Emerald from the camera as she pulled the sheets around her.

'Oh, Oh yeah, right, right the quantity? Right is it, Mr Fredric?'

'Dawson, you're babbling. What are you asking?'

Dawson repeated his question more lucidly, 'The quantities to be mixed in this batch will make up into fifty barrels, is this correct or should it be five?'

'No it's right. That's not a problem is it? Because I was given assurances...'

'No, no, not a problem. It just seems an awful big... but fair enough then, sorry to have bothered you, and you, miss McKenzie,' he said,

tilting his head, straining to see past Dieter even though it made no difference to his camera view. ‘Oh no wait, Mr Fredric, I almost forgot, there’s no delivery address and...’

Dieter cut across him. ‘Load it on a Transport ready for departure at 18:00 hours. Miss McKenzie will contact you later with destination instructions. Goodbye, Dawson!’ Dieter closed the link and returned to Emerald. ‘We’re on our way, things are starting to happen. What have you got planned for today?’

‘Lunch with Martha but whilst I’m out I’ll arrange access to the ACV warehouse for tomorrow night. It should be quiet there by then. All the tankers will have been loaded ready for the six a.m. start. What about you?’

Dieter went into the en-suite as he answered, ‘I’m going to work on the electronics to break the vat seals,’ then shouting over the noise of the shower, added, ‘the work that I should have done last night!’

‘I didn’t hear you complaining then?’ Emerald retorted playfully.

‘Still *really* not!’

His response brought a smile as she entered the kitchen. Emerald ordered, ‘Amy; prepare, OJ, toasted Danish bread, thick cut Seville marmalade, grilled bacon and a pot of Colombian for two in thirty minutes.’

The food bar’s A.I. responded, ‘Certainly, miss.’

Emerald walked back to the bedroom and selected a dress while Dieter finished his shower. Less than an hour later, she collected her PCS and ‘gem case and left for work.

### **13:15 hours**

Dieter had been working on the seal breaker since Emerald had left. In the past hour he’d tried various ways, with a number of clamps and all available fingers to solder a particularly difficult joint. He had just found the right position and was starting to solder when a vid call came through. The beaming smile and consequential apple cheeks of his young assistant’s narrow face appeared on Dieter’s retina. He put down the iron, careful not to move his other component supporting hand.

‘I hope this is important, Nigel!’ Dieter could see it was by the excitement in Nigel’s eyes.

‘I’ve solved your liquid problem. You know that huge equipment we put into number seven warehouse last year?’

‘Yeah, what about... oh-h!’ Dieter remembered. The machinery

wasn't much more than a large freeze-drying system, not really made for the task but it might just do. 'Well done, Nigel, you get a gold star. Now keep it under your hat, this is going to be a big breakthrough and miss McKenzie wants to surprise Mrs English.'

'Safe with me, sir.'

The expression of pride on the young man's face was evidence enough for Dieter that Nigel would guard the secret and he closed the link. *It's all coming together; I'll tell Em, the pressure's off a bit.* He made the call immediately.

'Hi, Em, can you talk?'

Emerald looked across the table at Martha.

'Hi, babe, can I call you back? I'm at lunch.'

Martha stood. 'No, no, Emerald, you take it. We're done here or I won't make it. Say hi to Dieter and I'll see you on Inoculation day.' She left the table.

'Have fun!' Emerald said sarcastically with a wave. Martha stopped and looked back. Emerald wasn't sure if she had sensed the hatred in her words, but she obviously chose to hear the sarcasm as irony. Emerald smiled a moment after Martha.

'Oh sure, Emerald, fifty bottling plant inspections, heaven!' Martha held up her hand, mouthed bye and left the restaurant.

*Well who'd have thought it; there is a God.* Emerald thought, letting out a tense breath and rejoining Dieter on her PCS, 'Good news?'

'Yes, Nigel's solved that problem. I'm not going to broadcast it but tell the lab to deliver to warehouse seven, unload into bay four and leave the Robolifter. I'll drive it and you meet me there at eight. Okay, love you. Have to get back to this. Talk later.'

'Wait, D, how's it going? Do you need anything?'

'All the bugs are hammering flat very nicely and, no, but I was kind of in the middle of something when Nigel called and I'm still trying to hold onto my train of thought so, see you later?'

'Okay, D, bye!'

## **20:00 hours**

Car pulled to a stop next to Dieter's outside bay four, the door opened and Emerald went inside. She found Dieter at the business end of the Robolifter pouring one of the barrels into a large funnel.

'Dieter! D! Hey, you up there!' he could only just hear her over the hum of the machinery. He waved, powered down the lifter, collected

something from a box and walked to her with a grin.

‘What do you think of that?’ Dieter handed her what appeared to be a bag of pink sugar.

‘You’ve dehydrated the solution!’ Dieter nodded. ‘Who’s a clever boy. That’s the transportation problem sorted. We’re actually going to do it!’ Emerald grinned, remembering their passion, ‘It’s amazing what a good session will do for your luck!’

‘Oh-h yes,’ he grinned back with memories of his own before continuing, ‘It’s going to take all night and most of tomorrow to complete the entire batch but it’ll be in time. Did you set up access to the warehouse?’

‘Yes, no problem. It’s all systems go as soon as we’re ready. It’s an Holisticorp site so I have automatic security clearance for the ACV warehouse. We’ll be able to walk in, do the job and walk straight back out again. And,’ she continued, more self assured and still proud of her reflexive response to the Aerobot that buzzed her in the OGP, ‘if anyone does stop us, I’m Emerald Holisticorp zero-two!’

He smiled at her bravado. ‘Overalls and masks and stuff in that little room, join me up top when you’re changed and I’ll show you the process.’

## **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2075**

They worked solidly through to the evening of the following day and by 20:50 hours, they had packed Dieter’s Transport-4 with fifty individual one-kilo bags of pink powder.

Even with overalls and masks, they both looked like labourers after hours of hard work. Emerald wiped the remnants of the last batch from her thighs.

‘Let’s go, I need some food and a shower.’

‘Good idea, I have to collect the seal breaker anyway.’

### **23:00 hours**

Eating had helped to fill the butterfly caverns in their respective stomachs as Dieter’s Transport approached the gates of the complex. It stopped for the autoscan, first Emerald then Dieter. A fat gatehouse guard leaned forward prompted to inspection by the sensor. He peered a moment, then waved his half eaten sandwich at them by way of a welcome and Dieter raised a hand in response. The gates opened and,

as they drove through, they glanced at each other; both feeling the same surge of adrenaline, the same anticipation, with the same thought. *So far so good.* ‘It’s lucky these scanners only read the synaptic pattern of the code! If it could really read minds we’d be finished, D.’

A short distance further and they turned onto the road leading to the ACV warehouse. The site seemed deserted and by the time they reached it, they had seen at least six securicams show an interest and then ignore them.

‘The plants A.I. must have cleared us for the whole route to the warehouse,’ Emerald said with a sigh of relief as Dieter parked, with the Transport’s rear to a fire door, halfway along the side of the building.

‘Only one camera can see us here and that tree obscures the door,’ he said chirpily, as Emerald started her short walk to the main doors.

Security scanned her, then after a heart stopping moment, cleared her and she made her way through the building to the fire door. She hit the *door open for ventilation* button on the alarm panel, and holding her breath pushed the door. No alarm.

Dieter had unloaded the bags into a neat stack and as soon as it opened, he started passing them, one at a time, to Emerald. In under a minute all the bags, Dieter and Emerald were inside.

‘Clockwork, Em, clockwork, told you it was all in hand!’ Dieter closed and reset the fire door and they took stock of their surroundings. The fifty brand new gleaming Holisticorp tankers stretched out in front of them. Dieter scanned the walls and roof.

‘No securicams in here?’

‘No, not considered necessary, it’s only a store most of the time.’

‘Let’s get started!’ Dieter took a bag of powder, climbed onto the first tanker and manoeuvred himself into a position next to the seal, as Emerald started ferrying a bag to each tanker in readiness.

Dieter pulled the bundle of electronics from his bag and laid out the various components of the kit. Three carefully placed crocodile clips hooked the seal breaker to the vat and Dieter sighed at the device’s first real test. He flipped the switch and watched as in turn the eight hydraulic clamps which locked the vat slid back around the lid’s circumference. Grinning broadly, he turned the chromed handle through ninety degrees and lifted the lid as Emerald returned.

‘One down, D?’

He nodded, emptying the first bag into the first tanker. The powder

effervesced as it mixed with the liquid inside. Dieter closed the lid and changed the polarity of the device before flipping the switch again. Moments after the last clamp slotted home, he was on his way to the second tanker.

‘Under a minute! If it all goes this smoothly we’ll be out of here and clear in less than an hour. Only forty-nine to go!’

Emerald was pleased but didn’t share his confidence, ‘Don’t get cocky, we’ve only just started!’

‘It’ll be forty-eight in a minute!’ he retorted even more cockily, forcing an incredulous laugh from her as he leapt onto the ladder of the second tanker; play-acting like some pirate.

Dieter was on top and placing the seal breaker for the second time when a slow growl filled the warehouse. It was followed closely by Emerald’s similarly slow, ‘Oh Shit!’ as she walked steadily backwards. Dieter slid down the ladder fire-fighter style and as his feet hit the ground she added, ‘If you haven’t got any Bonios’, I think we’re in trouble!’

He stuck his head gingerly around the end of the tanker to see two guard dogs with heads atilt sitting side by side at the far end of the warehouse, looking back at him.

‘I thought you said this place was going to be deserted?’ He wasn’t so much accusing her, more questioning his memory of what she had said.

‘There was nothing in the roster about dogs!’ Emerald’s answer mingled with the distant sound of claws against concrete as the two powerful animals launched themselves. Emerald was rooted. Dieter grabbed her, dragging her at first, for the exit with the two slavering beasts gaining on them with every stride.

Running for their lives with the dogs only metres behind, Emerald overtook Dieter and ploughed through the fire exit. The alarm sounded instantly.

A furious scraping and scratching as the hounds struggled for grip rounding the corner was closely followed by a crash and two yelps as they collided with some chairs and a desk. Their misfortune gave Emerald and Dieter the extra second they needed to dive into the Transport but the dogs were now only part of the problem. The whole site was lighting up. The fire alarm and their hurried exit had attracted the attentions of the previously uninterested securicams.

The relative safety of the Transport was short lived as two pulses from a security laser flashed across the bonnet. The Transport’s tyres

attained traction after a short screech as Dieter piled on the power and their vehicle shot forward just as the dogs jumped at the doors. Their flashing teeth and spittle burnt an unforgettable image into Emerald's memory.

Tearing along the road to the gate, more laser-fire creased Emerald's door and wing; the gatehouse barrage was becoming intense.

'We'll never make it to the gate,' Dieter said, his intention dawning on Emerald as the Transport veered away and made straight for the fence. 'Hold tight!'

The vehicle obliterated a section of the compound's perimeter, releasing them into the street beyond. For the next few kilometres Emerald found herself constantly turning to check behind them. Eventually, when she was sure that no one was following, she turned to Dieter, 'We must be on every securicam in the complex. We're finished! What are we going to do now?'

'Go to Wales, Em, it's all arranged.'

'Wales?'

Dieter smiled at the bewilderment in her voice, 'I asked Thomas to stock the cottage, in case we needed it and I've transferred cash to alternative accounts so we have funds too.'

'The Cottage?' Remembering as she spoke, 'Oh yeah, I'd forgotten you had that place. But won't they come looking for us there?'

'Why should they? It's nothing to do with me. It's still registered to Granny Davis! She wasn't really my grandma's inseparable sister you know! Come to that, my Gran wasn't actually my Gran.'

'No? But she raised you didn't she?'

'Yeah, after mum died she cared for me as if I was her own until I left for Uni'. Some of my stuff's still there but there's no connection to me, they'll never find us!'