

Ethereal - Chapter 10

Edard led Cameron and Helgis to his office. He stood by the door as they both entered and then closed it behind them.

“Please take a seat.”

He indicated the small meeting table in the centre of the room then joined them as they sat. The table had the interpreter device installed and the three donned their headphones.

“Cameron, as I said, I haven’t told Helgis of your recent tragedy, just that you may wish to consider taking a further step onto the astral plane. It’s of no consequence if you don’t wish to elaborate.; Helgis can advise you in any case. The decision to proceed will always be yours.”

An unconvincing smile crossed Cameron’s face as he addressed Helgis.

“You see Helgis, my family and I were recently involved in a devastating car accident. I was the only one to survive. It’s fair to say that the tragedy was responsible for my discovery of astral projection and consequently led to our current collaboration. While the excitement and the prodigious nature of the mission have served to distract me from my, at times, overwhelming grief, I continue to have periods of deep depression, times when I go to a very dark place and question my ability to go on without my family. In short, I think about trying to join them every day. Now if you have some way that can diminish this pain I feel, I would be grateful for your help.”

Helgis smiled sadly at Cameron.

“Cameron, you would be aware of the theories among your scientists, of parallel universes, or the theory of many worlds?”

Cameron nodded wondering where she may be leading with this.

“Yes, Mathematicians, physicists and quantum physicists from Newton to Einstein and more recently Doctor Stephen Hawking, have pondered this theory and agree, to a certain extent, that the phenomenon is at least possible. In fact, Australian scientists are suggesting, from their research, that infinite universes may not only exist in parallel, but also occupy the same space and time without ever intersecting.”

Helgis nodded.

“Yes, and your Australian physicists are very close to the truth. However, what they will eventually discover is that although these infinite universes can’t intersect, we can cross over and interact with them. We discovered this in our early days of exploring the limits of astral projection. We’ve kept the facts confined to very few of our people; you will understand why once we reveal the secret to you. The consequences of such knowledge being released publicly would be chaotic.

You see, because these infinite universes occupy the same time and space as the one you are in and if you know how, you can transcend the fabric between universes and observe the others, as you do other destination when in your astral state. In fact, if you have the knowledge, you can enter them at any point along your time line, however, only if you exist in that other universe.”

Cameron was shaking his head.

“This is incredible. How do these other universes develop and how are we in them?”

“They are not actually different universes; they are versions of the same universe on a different time line. You see, to explain it simply, each time there is a decision taken or an incident which changes your life significantly, a new timeline is created. Infinite timelines with infinite forks and infinite outcomes.”

Cameron was confused.

“So I can theoretically cross over and observe my old time line as if the accident never happened.”

Helgis shook her head.

“No not exactly. That timeline was truncated and the timeline you are on now was created. You can visit the old timeline before the accident but not after it.”

Cameron pondered this for a moment then spoke to Helgis.

“I can see how observing my old life could possibly be rewarding, but it would also enhance my longing for my family. Thank you, both of you, but I think that actually observing how happy we were would be too much to bear.”

Edard smiled at his friend.

“No Cameron, this is not what we are suggesting. Even though there are infinite universes, there is only one you, well, one astral you anyway. If you re-enter your old timeline at the right time, you can take over your old body and hopefully alter that timeline, so that the accident doesn’t occur.”

“Does this mean that my physical bodies on other timelines are soulless until I re-join with them?”

“No. In your astral state your essence is omnipresent, everywhere at once. However, your astral consciousness only resides where you wish to be.”

Cameron stared at Edard for a long moment. Then back across at Helgis.

“OK I’m in. Let’s do it now.”

Edard put his hand on Cameron’s arm.

“There are many considerations my friend, before jumping into this. If you were to do this, none of what has happened since would come to pass as it has. This timeline after you re-join your old one would vanish. Your knowledge of astral travel, your connection with Mahajan, with us, the progress we have made with our mission. All of it would cease to exist, and there is no guarantee that you would be successful in avoiding the accident, as you would not retain any of the knowledge you have gained since.

Now, although we would prefer to have you on this project, we will get it off the ground one way or the other. We had been observing you for your interest in our planet and Mahajan for his work in astral projection, well before your accident. Your tragedy only bought our timing forward due to your discovery of the astral world. So if you really want to do this we will assist. Once you change the timeline we won’t be any the wiser anyway.”

Cameron had a puzzled expression on his face as he looked across at his friend.

“You mean to say you and your team would have no knowledge of what we have achieved.”

Edard shook his head.

“None. However, we have waited this long, we will achieve it again. It is better to have you happy in your work than distracted by your grief.”

Edard paused for a moment and looked across to Helgis as if to ask her permission for something. Helgis nodded her head almost imperceptibly and Edard continued.

“There is something you are not yet aware of. We had another contact on Earth about a year ago. He was a geneticist. He helped us develop a clone and equipment for preserving it on your planet, using our specifications. Unfortunately, he died not long after we completed that project. We suspect he was killed, possibly by the Russians. The clone, which is of me, is still viable in a secret location on Earth. We abandoned that project because we became convinced that the best and safest way to recruit you would be through the astral plane. Besides, although I speak passible English through my clone, It’s not that convincing. So you see we are making progress anyway. We can contact you again.”

“But I may decide not to go ahead, I mean, if I hadn’t experienced what I did at the accident site, I may not have been as open minded about astral travel as I was.”

“It will be up to me to convince you. If I can’t, we will keep looking for someone suitable. Think of what is best for you my friend. Take the night we can talk tomorrow. Agreed?”

Cameron agreed reluctantly. He tracked down Mahajan and they travelled back to Earth for the night. When they regained their physical bodies, Cameron decided to confide in Mahajan regarding his meeting with Edard and Helgis. He related all that they had told him and when he finished he invited Mahajan's comment.

"Have you ever heard of this before?"

"I've heard of the theory of parallel universes of course, but I hadn't heard that it was possible to visit them on the astral plane, although it does not surprise me that it is possible. This is amazing."

Cameron hung his head for a moment then looked back at Mahajan.

"Every fibre of my being wants to take their offer and re-join my family. But when I think about this monumental undertaking of ours, I hesitate to let the rest of you down."

They were seated in the lounge chairs in Mahajan's office. The Doctor leaned back in his chair and thought for a moment before speaking.

"Cameron, I cannot tell you what to do. All I can say is that if I was in your position I would find it very difficult not to go back to my family.

This project will proceed with or without you, and from what you tell me, there is a good chance that it will happen with you. It is your decision my friend, and don't feel that you are letting anyone down. We are learning new realities and we should embrace the benefits of those realities. It would be a harder decision to make if you had learned of this possibility when the project was nearing completion, but really we have not yet begun."

Cameron rose from his chair and shook Mahajan's hand.

"Thank you my friend. I'll go check on my house and sleep on it. See you back here at 7am?"

Mahajan stood as well and escorted Cameron to the door.

"Yes, come straight through to here, I'll be waiting."

When he got home, Cameron undressed, showered and went to bed. It wasn't long before he was in a deep sleep.

He found himself standing beside his wrecked car, smoke and steam venting from the crumpled mess. He could see the broken bodies of his family covered by sheets on the ground and the paramedics working on his body to save his life.

As he stood witness to the tragedy, mired in his paralysing misery, a familiar voice entered his thoughts and he turned to see Edard standing beside him.

"You see my friend; you know what your heart is telling you to do. Take the opportunity to be happy once more. No one will blame you, or for that matter no one will even know."

And then he was gone and Cameron awoke in his bed.

At 7am precisely he met Mahajan in the Doctor's office. After greeting each other they went to the ward room in preparation for their projection to Gi. As Savrethee prepared their bodies for hibernation, Cameron apprised them of his decision.

"I've decided to go back and be with my family. Something Edard said to me last night convinced me."

"You met with Edard again last night?"

"Well no, not exactly. He came to me in a dream and pointed out to me, as have you, that we haven't yet began this thing and that I must follow my heart. No one will be hurt by my decision, in fact no one will know. Whereas, many people will benefit by my going back."

Mahajan placed his hand on Cameron's shoulder and smiled at his friend.

"This is good my friend. I look forward to reintroducing myself to you in the future. As I am sure we will work together again."

They projected to the cloning room and then made their way to Edard's office, where they found Helgis alone. Cameron looked around the office and then back to her.

"Good morning Helgis. Is Edard not here?"

Helgis smiled as she shook her head.

"No he had urgent business off world. He asked me to bid you a fond farewell if indeed you chose to re-join your family, and that he felt sure you would meet again."

Cameron thought it odd that Edard would not have visited him to say their farewells, even if only for a moment, but he was anxious to give Helgis his decision and get on with his journey back, so he thought no more of it.

"I've decided to re-join my family Helgis. I'm sorry if this sets the mission back, but given the opportunity to save my family from such an end and myself from such misery, it's something I must do. I saw Edard in a dream last night and our connection convinced me that I am doing the right thing."

"Ahh! Was it a dream Cameron or was it your first lesson in time travel? Did you dream of Edard or did he call in on his way to his current destination?"

Travelling the astral plane back in time is not all that different to how you travel now. You can only travel along your own timeline, but all you have to do, once you are in your astral state, is think back to yourself at the time of your re-entry. However, if you wish to re-enter your physical state, you must choose a time when you are on the astral plane. When you are asleep."

"Will I know what to do once I re-enter my body?"

"No, this is the risk. You will have no memory of this time line. It will be as if nothing has happened yet. It is all up to chance as to what happens in your new future. However, you won't be completely without assistance. We have put some actions into play which may assist to create a slightly different timeline to your tragic one."

Cameron had a moment of indecision but then remembered what Mahajan and Edard had said and what had bought him to his final decision.

"OK let's do this Helgis."

"It's all up to you Cameron. Once in your astral state just do as I said. Timing is flexible, you can try as many times as you wish. Once you are at the right time and place, go to your physical body and your new life begins."

"Thank you Helgis. Please convey my best wishes to Edard and his family. I hope to meet you all again."

"I will if I can Cameron. You may well have changed the timeline before I see them again, and I won't remember our meeting."

He smiled and shook her hand. He then turned to Mahajan.

"Goodbye my friend, I hope we meet again. It has been my great pleasure to travel this journey with you."

They shook hands and Cameron went through to the lab and prepared for what could be his last conscious transfer.

Cameron hovered above Gi, and look back with some regret, for perhaps the last time, at a scene which he could only have dreamed of a few weeks ago. He then returned to the business at hand, feeling nervous about the next part of his journey. He had decided to project to his bedside in the early hours of the morning of the accident. He hesitated for just a second, but then took the plunge.

When he arrived he was almost overwhelmed by the site of his sleeping wife. He stood for a few moments watching her sleep, with her astral essence floating half within and half without her physical body.

It was strange to see her lying beside him. He noticed his body was without an astral presence. He guessed that this was because he was actually there and had arrived at exactly the right time.

He turned and transferred to his son's room and observed as he snored gently in his bed.

He experienced a great feeling of joy and knew that he had made the right decision. He went quickly back to his room and entered his physical form.

Cameron wheeled his Calais around to the front steps of Nudgee College. Zane opened the back door and threw his backpack onto the back seat before piling in himself, pushing his head through between the front bucket seats and kissing his mother on the cheek.

"Here he is, hard running, crash tackling Zany-Boy Gates."

Cameron ribbed his son, and then made a noise with his mouth like a crowd cheering.

Zane punched his father playfully on the shoulder, as a man tapped on Cameron's driver's side window.

Cameron hit the button to lower the window.

"Can I help you mate?"

The gentleman spoke with a thick accent, maybe Scandinavian, Cameron wasn't sure.

"Good afternoon sir, my name is Edard. I was just admiring your car. What kind of car is it if you don't mind my asking?"

Cameron thought it a bit strange but humoured the odd man.

"It a Holden Calais sir, a 2015 model with a V8 under the hood. My pride and joy, apart from these two of course."

The odd fellow stepped back from the car and saluted.

"Yes a very nice car, thank you."

Cameron gave him a wink and rolled his eyes at Sally and Zane before turning the car around and driving down to the front gate at the lights on Sandgate road. The arrow was still green as he approached and proceeded across the intersection, however as he was about to venture across the road, a concrete truck came hurtling down the side of a bus which was stationary at the lights, and careered through the red light at eighty kilometres per hour.

Cameron hit the brakes and they watched as truck sped on up Sandgate road.

"Will you look at that idiot. A few seconds earlier and he would have cleaned us up."

Zane sat back in his seat.

"Lucky that odd dude held us up."

At the next change of lights, they crossed and headed up Zillmere road, onward to the great football boots purchasing expedition, discussing rugby and the upcoming weekend.

THE END