

The Interview
by Cebo Campbell

“Mr. Pascal, this will not be time travel as you’d expect.”

Dr. Andrews leaned his weight onto the desk and adjusted his glasses. “At least, not by the near silly standards set by television and science fiction movies. That distinction needs to be clear if you wish to move forward in this trial.” The doctor waited for Amos to respond. Amos nodded and Dr. Andrews sighed breath recently brushed, masking traces of cigar tobacco. From a drawer within his desk, Dr. Andrews removed a metal tube, an inch or so in diameter, the length of wine bottle. He placed it before Amos, less a demonstration as a matter of course.

“Imagine that at this end of the tube is the moment you were conceived. At the opposite end is where you now stand. This tube will continue to extend until the moment your brain stops processing time.” He held the tube up close the Amos’ face, evenly, and smiled with his eyes. “In this tube, Mr. Pascal, is your entire life.”

Amos nodded. His life’s montage reeled behind his eyes in a miscellany of firsts and lasts. First cut. First kiss. First fuck. Last look. Last chance.

“Presently, you can only move forward within this tube. It grows by your every decision, action, thought—extending in a singular direction every second you breath. On and on. You live, always, at the edge of this tube facing forward and never back. But, imagine if you could go back. Imagine if you had free reign of this tube; if you could move from one end to the other, stopping at any point to re-experience any moment as authentically as if were happening in real time. A memory, of sorts,

but real." Dr. Andrews sat the tube down and on a sticky note pinned to his desk drew two overlapping circles. "You see, Mr. Pascal, your mind is as vast and as paradoxical as the universe itself. Which, by that, I mean we are simultaneously active in and observing the universe around us. A notion difficult to comprehend, I'm sure. But it is in that regard we observe ourselves and our lives within the same time-space that we live it." His head tilted forward forcing his glasses to the edge of his nose. "Are you able to follow, Mr. Pascal?"

"I am."

"Good then. In this, the second of a three phase interview, to get an accurate sense of your mental state, I will ask you a series of questions. These questions will be probing and obtrusive. If at any point you lie or the questions make you too uncomfortable to answer you will be disqualified from this clinical trial. Understood?"

"Yes, sir."

From a drawer within his desk, Dr. Andrews revealed a wooden box. A deep, polished brown, the box was the size and shape of a religious book. A latch on its side opened the box, releasing the sweetly metallic scent of a machine well made. Amos shifted in his seat. From the box, Dr. Andrews removed and placed on the desk a perfectly square device, silver and smooth, with a slit on its flat surface to print small documents. A thin wire protruded from the machine and at the wire's end a thimble-shaped mechanism dangled. Amos placed his index finger inside the mechanism and the machine fired to life, clicking once then humming softly.

"What is your full name and age?"

"Amos Pemberton Pascal. Thirty-four years old."

"And your family, mother and father, how would you describe your relationship?"

"Past."

"Do you believe in god or have a religious preference?"

"I believe god exists. Religion...is the business of men."

"Are you married or have a significant other?"

"No."

The doctor waited a moment, expecting Amos to go into detail, but Amos looked forward, unfazed. "When was the last time you had a sexual experience?"

"Two nights ago."

"Did you orgasm?"

"No sir, I did not."

"And the last time you did...reach climax, I mean?"

"Two years ago."

"Our written interview states that you have no children. Is this correct?"

"It is."

"And your job? Previous, of course?"

"Handiman."

"How much did you make annually?"

"Not enough."

"So, no relationships, no real job, no connection with immediate family and no desire to do either?"

"Yes."

"And did you not think the lack of virtually any connection to the world would affect your acceptance into our clinical trial?"

"I made it this far."

Amos watched Dr. Andrews' left eyebrow rise to an angle that cut into the frame of his glasses. "I see," Dr. Andrews said. He stood from his desk and strode to a closet on the other side of the office. Amos observed the man's gait, one smooth and showing no signs of age nor the physical discomfort of having been overused.

His shoes, dark, glistening leather, were of some fantastic brand and extraordinary cost beyond Amos. He could hardly imagine a man keen to the echelons of footwear; what type of man would allow footwear to indicate a lesser use of his foot.

Dr. Andrews returned with a sealed cup and a white pill small in his hand. He sat them on the desk in front of Amos. "Do you know why you are here, Mr. Pascal?"
"To be among the first to travel through time." Amos answered.

"Technically, yes, but please, go on."

Amos shifted in his chair, "...to, I guess, go back...to relive moments that are gone." Memory spilled through him. Ana. He imagined her. He imagined a silhouette in a room of smoke, drawing closer into the light. He imagined a crack in the world. The machine beeped loudly. Amos took a slow breath that expelled his imagination. Expelled her memory.

The doctor put a calming hand on Amos' shoulder. "Overcoming the rules of time has been the desire of man since the beginning; to go back, to relive it all again. What we offer here is the opportunity. We do not answer prayers, Mr. Pascal. We provide a vessel through which one can travel the terrain of the mind. You see, it is not time travel, as it is mind travel..." He pointed to the tube. "...to go back to moments in the timeline, or tube, of your life and observe fully. You will essentially be a passenger in your own mind, experiencing everything as you did originally. Do you understand what this means, Mr. Pascal?"

"I believe do."

"No, you do not. Your mind is a truly miraculous instrument. It stores every sensation you've ever encountered, every twist of the wind through your hair, every blade of grass or grain of sand beneath your feet, every single smell, taste or feeling you've ever experienced. What treasures so many books speak of as heaven can be no greater than the bounty that waits within your mind." The doctor's eyes seemed to gaze outward, beyond the walls of his office to some place Amos would never know. "Not every man is ready for such treasures. Some are not meant to see the world twice."

"Why?"

"What you will learn, Mr. Pascal, is that time exists in layers. The highest of these layers consists of all possible decisions of all things in all the universe. Incomprehensible. We cannot, nor anything known to man, come close to that degree of computation." He reached into his desk and retrieved another tube, a third, a fourth, a fifth, and on until seven were nestled together before Amos. "But time lives in many places. Time lives in memory. Our DNA stocks time like a capsule, a whole life from end to end. Imagine living as JFK, or Shakespeare, Da Vinci, or Jesus? Time travel through the corridors of perception...life accessible through the bounty of memories--all lives, all history, and thus all known time."

“Can you... change it? Can you change time?”

“I observe time.” He said, “I cannot modify time.”

“But, is it possible?”

Dr. Andrews said nothing and offered Amos the sealed cup and pill. “The last phase of our interview allows you to experience the procedure. In this test, you will be placed at three different and random moments in your life. A passenger in your own mind and no more. You will not be able to affect any changes. Should you try to push the limit of your visits, you will be disqualified from the trial. Each destination will last roughly one minute in real-time, twenty-five minutes in the past. A series of chimes in your inner ear...” Dr. Andrews knocked the wooden table three times, “...three chimes, will precede the transition to the next destination. Again, if you try to push the limit of your visit you will fail this interview. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you ready?”

“Yes.”

Amos took the cup and pill. He peeled the plastic lid from the top of the cup and peered down at what looked like milk. He thought he might be nervous, but experienced only a low voltage excitement. Dr. Andrews nodded silently.

Amos imagined time as an arc. He imagined time bending across the sky unseen, the force of nature graceful enough to hold all things together. He imagined time as the mother of light and gravity, as a sentinel at the edges of the universe, as the sole ruler of the living. But not the dead. Not Ana. For all it's power, time could not reach into the dark nor rouse the dead but as the seedlings of dreams.

Amos tossed the pill back and gulped down the gritty liquid. He took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and dropped into the darkness.

I am here and I am not. I know what is going to happen:

The house is hot. Summer heats the wood walls until everything smells a nature wild and caged. I am building a radio. In my hand are colorful capacitors taken from

a dryer panel abandoned on the road. I am imagining how free it must feel to be a frequency—energy fundamental, surfacing the plane of time across impossible distances. I am imagining the radio as the bridge to eternity. Forever and everywhere. Then Briefne comes in. He is panting and excitement is white in his eyes.

“Amos, she’s dead, mate! Let’s go.”

He has been waiting for this day for as long as I have known him. Delight makes beautiful his Irish accent. Thrill curls his red hair. I am imagining Mrs. Munt dead in her house. All the candy corn, knitted blankets, and pecans that make up the wholeness of her being sealed in a black bag and offered to the wasteland of space. He has been waiting for this day for as long as I have known him.

He says, “We have to go. Ain’t a crack of time. Mam is going to call the cops in 10 minutes. It’s the law.”

I put down my capacitors. I stare at him. I want to tell him no. I do now and I do then. He sees it in my expression and, perhaps sees, across the blur of years, the hesitation behind my eyes.

“You promised me.” He says. “Besides, your mam still owes my mam two month’s rent. And she’s been sick weeks now, so I know she ain’t got the cash. You don’t want to be evicted d’ya? No? Good, then. Let’s go, mate.”

I want to tell him no. I stand. I try to stop. But I walk on, without control from the inside and seemingly no control on the out. I follow Breifne and leave the smell of summer in my house.

He uses the key to open Mrs. Munt’s apartment. There is sweetness in the air. I wonder if this is what death smells like. Honey and melting candy. Her apartment is a storm of color. From the cheap paintings and soaps and shawls, to trinkets and frames and silk flowers, nothing matched or assigned into collections. It made its own collection. A mess of a life kaleidoscopic. I saw her body straightaway. Face down between the couch and the coffee table. I feel sadness, both now and then. She is still in her nightgown. A bowl of cereal is soaked to mush. Tea still bears steam. She died halfway through her cereal. Died robotic. Died doing a thing she did every morning, unconcerned with the erosion of days or hours or minutes or any measure of life seeping away from her. Like warmth from the edges of a teacup.

“C’mon, Amos. My mam has seen the box wit’her own two eyes. Says it has all the old bitch’s savings in it.”

Don't follow. Don't go. I follow. Breifne skips into the bedroom. He turns the mattress.

Dust rises in a plume shaped like a dancer, dazzling in the rays of sun. I think of Ana, blurred in the mythical shimmer of future and present like daydreams of eventual memory.

"Nothing", Breifne mumbles. He goes to the closet. Tosses out bras and stockings and silky gowns. Suddenly, he goes still and the entire apartment is draped in silence. Death restored but wary. I wait. I know what comes next. Breifne appears in the closet doorway. His smile is so wide it nearly splits his face in half. In hands are two large cash knots. "Jackpot, motherfucker!"

I try not to smile, but I do. Leave. Leave now.

"What else can we find?" He asks, stuffing a knot into his pockets and tossing one to me. "Jewels, maybe? Maybe a big black dildo?" His laughter is like oil. Like a car starting. Like a car running idle and dripping oil on the pavement. Leave. Leave now. I laugh along with him.

A sudden boom shakes the apartment. The front door opens and someone comes inside. A voice follows, "Oh god, oh no. Mom. God, mom, no." Glass breaks.

Quickly, Breifne drags me into the closet and closes the door. "Her queer son is here." He says. "Fecking-hell, too much lingerin'."

I hear muffled crying. I hear pain as clear as birds in the day. As clear as the sea. Breifne hands me a stocking. "Here, put this on." He slides one on his face and mashes his features. I imagine a chicken wrapped in plastic. "We can't stay. The cops'll be here. And then we'll be shit outta luck." I slide the stocking over my face. It smells of boiled egg. This is the moment. This is the mistake. The first of them. This is when the trajectory of my life alters from a sound arc to an angle. An angle with intention, headed straight down. Everything will change. Don't leave the closet. Breifne pulls a knife from his pocket. "Ready?"

I watch what happens next with no memory of it; mountains pushing through mist. His mother is cradled in his arms. Milk is whipped across the floor and the bowl is in shards. He does not look to see us until Breifne has already lashed a fist to his face. He crashes to the floor and looks up at us. His expression is an indecipherable disbelief, detached almost, as though witnessing something alien, something lacking any semblance in nature or man. His mother's corpse now rests in his lap. Blood from his nose anoints her forehead. Breifne fumbles the knife, "hold'em" he says.

Don't do this, Amos. Don't. You can leave. You can keep your arc. You can be the radio frequency that skims above it all. Please don't. I grab the man's arms and hold them back. He does not fight. A chime sparkles in my mind. Someone else is here. Another chime as Briefne plunges a knife into the meat of the man's ribs and the man screams.

Who are you? Why are you here?

Chime

It is dim in this room.

Candles burn richness in the air. Like something savory baking. I am excited and I am nervous. Whiskey shifts in a glass of ice. Jazz unwinds, trailing a sultriness in the way the record ripples. I imagine lips peeling away from lips.

A shadow glides across the room. The silhouette shapeshifts as it moves to the music and candlelight dances with the curves of its frame, maturing the light. Smoke curls from the shape in wondrous blue spirals. She steps through the darkness and smoke to reveal herself. My Ana.

My blood surges. I can see her face clear in the low light. It burns to see. Across all the time of my life. Beauty transcendent.

Symmetry in her features wed number and poetry, like parables for theorem—eyes, nose, mouth declaring identical proportions. Identical mystery. Identical magic. I imagine her as Eve. As the secret of Eden.

She kisses me and pushes me back onto the couch. I am speechless. Now and then. She slides on top of me. I can feel the curves of her body. Soft in some places. Hard in others. Her hands curl warmth around my face. Her breathing is sweet. And then, I feel it. Her sweetness is gravity. A power and force capable of changing the trajectory of a life astray. My life. With her I am good. With her I am better than I was. With her I am a frequency spread across a sky where mistakes are but white clouds of no matter. With her I am infinite.

"Amos," she says, "I am so happy you are here with me."

I am here. Now and then. But. There is someone else. An Other is here with us. I feel the Other reading through the lines of my memory like a biography, skimming the

froth sweet at it's surface. Never knowing the toil it took to surface at all. "Who are you? You should not be here."

In a singular, graceful movement she unzips my jeans and drapes her warmth around me. It is as familiar to me as sunlight. As birth. It shudders an astonishing vibration across the spectrum of my life, felt heretofore at every interval of my age. It feels good. My body loosens into her.

Anger, rage, tension all melting into that warmth. And we become a pulse of flesh. Of breathing. Of heat. Of an entire language minimized to moans.

I feel her gravity.

The Other feels it too. It's salivation spills cold down the back of my consciousness. You should not be here. This is mine. As personal a thing as ever created by God, impenetrable even by the hands that made it. Leave. Leave this place.

She kisses my neck. I can smell her blend of flower and cigarette. I am yours, Ana. Yes, I say. Yes, she says. "Yes", the Other responds. Deeper, it says. I can no longer distinguish its longing from my own. Or hers. We are, the three of us, bewildered in an vile triumvirate. Lovers with a thief between them. I want this to stop. I want to keep the Other from taking what is most mine in all the world. She pulses as she begins to rise. I hear a chime.

The Other laughs. I want this to stop. His laughter is as clear as birds in the day. As clear as the sea. Chime. I feel my emotions consolidate into an exceptional passion. And from it a power grows. Somehow, someway the Other will pay for what it has taken from me. I smell mint, masking hints of tobacco.

Chime

It is dark outside. Rain's aftermath slickens the city, offering shimmer to otherwise dull roads and painting the corners of things with light. Ana's apartment is on the 10th floor. I do not buzz myself and take the stairs. The day's wetness fills the stairwell with varying smells of mildew and urine. I know this day. I know what is going to happen.

The Other is with me still. He is observing silently, a current of nerves vibrating in my consciousness. I know he knows what will happen.

I am terrified. Now and then. I imagine OJ Simpson. His motive. He did it. I knew it then and I know it now. I know because I am going to do the same.

I step all ten floors and stand shaking at Ana's door. The gun is no longer in my pocket, but in my hand. The safety is off. 102938. The door opens and I can smell sex in the air, see it almost, like black ribbons in the sky. Now and then, rage burns hot inside me. I hear the grunt of a man's voice. It reminds me of Briefne. Reminds me of the moment that changed the trajectory of my life. As I step towards the bedroom a feeling staggers me. I cannot tell time. I cannot tell what is happening or has happened. A man is with my Ana. I know I am going to kill that man. Now and then. That I will kill her too feels to break me apart; two minds, one knowing and one oblivious, seeing time unfold from unwonted vantages. Two forces, righteous in meaning and fierce in purpose, towards calculated collision. Time exists solely on the side of the victor and I know I will lose. I know she will die.

Stop. Please. You must not do this Amos. I grip the gun and move closer to the bedroom. You will regret this day for all the time left in your life.

The door opens and I don't care to see his face. The gun fires in a flashing boom. I hear him scream. I hear his voice lose masculinity. I hear him stumble back into the darkness and I imagine the crumble of a mountain. I don't feel my fingers pull the trigger twice more. But the room buzzes with the zoom of the bullets and the sound of flesh punctured. You've gone too far to come back. I imagine a ship at sea and no birds in sight.

Ana is screaming. I turn to her and watch her see me. Watch her face iterate emotion; shock, anger, sadness, fear—all of these revealed through infinitesimal quivers. I see her and in turn see me. I am terror to her. The greatest terror. A love turned hate. A beginning expired. She is naked. Smoke from the gun swirls up my arm. She tries to run and I grab her.

Don't Amos. Don't do this.

She is screaming, "Please, Amos, please" and I hear that voice in the echoes of time. My hand is on her neck. I am saying words I do not remember saying. I am crying. I am losing myself. I know what is going to happen and I cannot stop it.

The Other is watching. I can hear him, "You don't have to do this." He says. "You can stop this from happening. You can change your past."

I pin Ana to the ground and put the gun to her chest.

The Other's voice is loud in my mind. "You can stop this."

I can't. You should not be here. Go away. Go away, I say.

Ana fights to free herself. I try to keep her from moving. I don't want her to die. I want her to be mine. Mine alone, for all time. I strain to keep her down. The bang of the gun scares me. I know what has happened and I don't. Blood spreads across the floor in all directions. She is no longer fighting. This is the moment. This is the end. Chime.

"This isn't the end." The Other says. "You can still change it. You can change it all."

Stop. Stop talking to me. Go away.

"You can change it all, Amos."

I am looking at life separate from Ana. She is becoming a memory, transitioning from something I held to something that can never be held again. A frequency. I transition into something hard. Even now she is beautiful. Even now I am a monster.

"Stand." The Other says. "Stand and leave now."

But I don't want to leave her. Now and then. Go away. I say. "Stand." He replies. Go away. "Stand".

My voice erupts, "Go away!"

The sound of my voice booms out of me like a dispatch from another time and place—distinctively now and not then. It boomed so powerfully it felt to break something resolute in the world; a crack that drew its line back to the origins of time. I stand. I feel the control over myself. I am here. I look at the blood on my hands. I look around at the room. This is what I've done. This is not who I am. I lift Ana from the floor. There is blood everywhere. I kiss her forehead.

"I will change this. I will change it all."

Time shifts. Time wiggles out of my control.

Chime. I run down the hall. Just before I turn to the stairwell, I hear a door shutting and turn to see the eye in a peephole staring back at me.

Chime.

Before Amos opened his eyes, he knew he was handcuffed to the chair. The prison warden stood at the door with his gun unholstered, watching. Amos sat up. The past latched onto him like something unholy.

“Welcome back.” Dr. Andrews sat behind his desk. A smirk warped his expression. “What the fuck just happened?” Amos tried to move and the handcuffs kept his hands from rising more than an inch. In equal share, the warden stepped closer to him.

“Settle down, Amos.” he said. “All will be revealed.”

“Indeed it shall.” Dr. Andrews leaned his weight onto his desk. “But first, let me congratulate you, Mr. Pascal. You proved successful in your interview. You passed. Job well done.”

Amos said nothing. He fought to shake free of time. He felt it still, clinging as a dream so great of proportion it spilled into nightmare. He felt sickened by it. Exhausted.

“I feel,” Dr. Andrews continued, “That I owe you a more thorough explanation.” He nodded for the warden to release Amos and the warden did so, quickly, but keep a striking distance. Dr. Andrews strode towards the door. “Follow me.”

From the third floor, Dr. Andrews’ office topped the prison, overlooking the yard through a wide window. His was the the east corner, separating the general population from an adjacent building used as offices for those managing the nearly two thousand inmates. As a psych, Dr. Andrews boarded any assembly determining a prisoner’s release. His signature equaled freedom papers.

Dr. Andrews led them out of his office with Amos behind and the warden tailing alert. They took the stairs and descended to the ground floor where Dr. Andrews used his swipe card to exit. Two armed guards greeted him with serious nods and Amos with leashed ferocity. They took the long hall that led to a metal door governed by another armed guard of uniform seriousness. Dr. Andrews walked straight through showing the power, Amos observed, to maneuver freely in a place designed to choke liberties into submissions. The door exited to a holding area enclosed in glass and then an outdoor walkway that separated the population from the office building. Sunshine blazed above them and they walked a strip of grass that went on fifty yards towards the office building. Amos could see the yard and, visible from that distance, the men in orange. The same orange he wore. They moved about, playing basketball and smoking cigarettes. Felons of the highest order. Murderers, rapists, crooks. All his equal. The worst kind of family. He knew by name which ones to avoid, which ones to respect and never eye, and which ones who’d offer their bodies as currency. He knew the men who would never see freedom again and

accepted prison as a way of being. Amos knew them all as one knows an uncle or cousin. That information, he felt, cut the deepest. Knowing men of astonishing evil and himself equivalent.

They walked the strip until they reached the wall surrounding the office and its narrow entry gate. The building looked to be cut of a single gray stone, smooth, showing no lines or mortar, carved perfectly out of a mountain. No guard protected the door. It occurred to Amos that he had never witnessed a single person coming or going from the building. As Dr. Andrews approached, the building's door opened on its own, blasting cold, clean air to welcome them. "Follow me." Andrews said.

A foyer expanded into a large open space, around which, people in suits and lab coats buzzed about shuffling from one place to another. None of them glanced at Amos. None of them seemed at all surprised to have a murderer among them. Amos followed Dr. Andrews into a narrow corridor walled on both sides with many floors of walkways and door stacked atop one another like filing cabinets. People moved in and out, busy-busy. Amos scanned it all, confused to a very unexpected scene. "What is this place?"

"It is a laboratory, Mr. Pascal. Come, I will show you."

Across the corridor, they stairs two flights underground leading to a double door marked with the words: Level 7 Access. The door, like the every other door they approached, opened as Dr. Andrews neared. Inside Amos witnessed a large square room of two floors. In the center of the room a huge, circular control panel kept half a dozen white coats busy tinkering and typing. Along the walls of both floors, partitions separated 5 meters apart broke the floors into equal spaces. Like human sized shelves. In each of those spaces stood an upright pod, or coffin, closed, with a clear window to see inside. Amos recognized some of the faces. Each pod on each floor, nearly a hundred in all, contained a man in orange. They were asleep inside the pods. Amos imagined a scene from an alien abduction movie. Except instead of abducting upstanding citizens, they abducted the worst of the kind.

"On the bottom floor," Dr. Andrews said, pointing to the prisoners sleeping in pods, "We have what we call Miners. They spend 15 hours a day searching through millenniums of time and memory. The team at the control uploads the the string of time from history's best lives—Shakespeare, Hitler, Alexander the Great, Elizabeth of England and countless others to find the most valuable memories. Miners of gold, is what we like to call it." He pointed to the top floor. "Up here we have who we call the Horsemen. It would shock you how much someone would pay to know what it feels like to slit a throat or punch a man to death." He glanced at Amos and hid a proud smile.

"I don't understand. You... steal memories and sell them?"

"Wouldn't you? Who would not want to go back and experience your first kiss again or a game winning touchdown? And that is only one's own memories. The value of the memories of others is a new currency all its own. Now you can fight as Ali, perform on a stage for thousands, fuck Marilyn Monroe or as Marilyn Monroe—whatever one's desire. The discovery of time travel has revealed a completely new form of entertainment. The purest form of imagination. Because it is real. In this facility, and a dozen others just like it, we canvas, collect, test, and store time and memory." Dr. Andrews watched the disbelief in Amos' expression morph into understanding. "But that is merely the nose of the beast."

Amos' eyes danced about, imagining all the scenarios. He pictured Ana and being able to live with her again and again and again. He looked around at the room. Prisoners, social exiles, whose waking lives are asleep in someone else's to collect what may very well be the most valuable resource in the world. "You use prisoners", Amos said, "For free labor."

"You're chipping away at it." Dr. Andrews glanced then straight ahead to a door on the other side of the room. "How long are you sentenced for murdering your wife and her lover?"

The questing stung somewhere deep inside his stomach. "Twenty years to life."

"Who would want to change history more than someone in prison for life?"

"But you said you could not change history."

"I said I am in the business observing time. I cannot change it. What I can do is analyze time. I calculate, down to the the finest of details, minor adjustments that modify the arc of outcomes. Like a train headed west. I know how and where to switch the track. What I do in this place is predict how changes in history affect the current state. Which, Mr. Pascal, is why you're here."

"I don't understand. You're talking about changing the past to shape the future."

"Precisely."

"Impossible."

"That door..." He pointed to the door on the other side of the room. "That is where the impossible happens. We found in our tests that roughly 1 in every fifty thousand subjects could generate enough force, enough power in their memory that they

could bend time entirely. They could exist in any time and change it as they see fit, in doing so, changing the future. You, Mr. Pascal, are one of those people. Studies suggest that the same will of self that frees you from adjusting to the laws of man, laws like murder, is the same power that frees you of the laws of time. When you asked earlier about changing time, I told you that I cannot. It was true. But you can. You can change history.”

Amos imagined himself as a frequency. He imagined himself moving free through time and space.

Dr. Andrews continued, “What we do here, above all else, Mr. Pascal, is shape the now by modifying the past. This is not done by grand changes, no, else we would likely erase ourselves from the current universe as though it never existed. Instead, change happens finely, minute changes to the arc of time. A left turn instead of a right turn, eat lunch at this place or that, whether to wear a red shirt or blue. Every life has a trajectory that parallels the flow of time, history, and dimension. That trajectory can be altered and then reformatted. Do you understand?” Amos nodded, imagining the type of person who could afford an alteration to history. He glanced down at Dr. Andrew’s shoes and back up at the man, smiling. “If one has the appropriate resources, we can work time equations to give them the outcomes they desire. Businessmen erasing huge mistakes, politicians seeking sure elections, warlords looking to wipeout adversaries. That is who we serve.”

“The rich? You actually think I would change history for billions of people to make life better for a rich cocksucker?”

“I believe you will. See, a large enough modification in history does not merely alter the future, but creates an alternate universe entirely. A completely new branch of time—different, but parallel to the one we exist in at this moment. I tell you this so you know Ana does not have to be dead. You don’t have to be in prison. You can change it all. If you accept. There are other lives in other dimensions, Mr. Pascal. Somewhere you are happy. Somewhere you are successful. Somewhere you’re the ruler of the free world. If you give me twenty years of service in this place, I will give you a new life. At the end of your time with us, the last history you will change is your own. I am offering you a new dimension where you can right the errors of your past and live free. Ana can still be with you. You’re life can be fulfilled. Serve your sentence with me instead of in that yard with the wolves and I will give you the treasure of time.” He watched Amos’s reaction. Watched his mind drift away, back into the darkness, back where he ruled over time. Amos imagined rising. Amos imagined nothing. Nothing at all. “You’ve completed the interview, Mr. Pascal, and the job is yours. Do you accept?”