

# BLACK WATER JOURNALS



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## **Blackwater Journals.**

### **Episode 1**

“Sir, I’ve found something... Alive.” Jefferies, with some considerable effort, moved the rubble that concealed the body. “No, this can’t be real.”

A voice from the other side of the intercom, in a makeshift control room, three point five miles away answered:

“Well, don’t keep me in guessing Jefferies. What is it?”

“He’s old.” Jefferies replied. “Impossibly old. We Need to get him back, now!”

“Quarantine lad, quarantine. He still could be one of them.” His commander answered.

“I don’t think so sir. He’s too – human.”

One automated stretcher, four men wearing bio hazard suits and specialised breathing equipment later, and Jefferies sat looking through a glass window at his extraordinary find, wondering if he would ever regain consciousness.

Wired electrodes placed at strategic parts of the sleeping man’s body fed real time information back to the control panel. His pulse rate and brain activity consistent with a coma patient. But this did not explain how a man who was over three hundred years old, lay before him, still breathing, with no apparent internal or external signs of aging past the age of forty-three.

The EEG monitor died.

Jefferies shook his head. “Third time today” he said to himself. And started tapping away at the keyboard to find out what the problem was.

It seemed that something in the sleeping man’s brain was trying to evade detection and simply disconnected the EEG anytime it got too close. Jefferies cracked his knuckles and got to work. It was time to justify his reputation as a bio tech genius.

Six hours of tireless work later, Jefferies clicked on the intercom: “Sir, you’d better come down here. I’ve found something.”

“Well, what is it?”

“Our guest has an active ZenTec chip fused to his brain. I almost missed it. They were designed to be undetectable, not to mention indestructible.”

“Then get him out of here!” boomed the commander. “Now! I’m surprised we’re not all turned already!”

“Sir, this is a mark **one** chip.”

Silence.

“Sir, are you receiving?” Jefferies said. “Sir?”

“I’m on my way.” The commander eventually said. “Don’t touch anything.”

The commander stared through the glass, then at Jefferies. “Thoughts?”

“I could burn the body, render the chip useless very easily, but...”

“If we did then all the information stored on it would be lost too.” The commander concluded.

Jefferies nodded. “This was the original chip. The last mark one found was over two hundred years ago and damaged. The technology didn’t exist, outside the anonymous creator of course, to do anything with it.”

“I still think we should destroy it.” Said the commander.

“Consider sir” Jefferies reasoned “Aside from killing a three-hundred-year-old man with a remarkable beauty regiment, we’d be disposing of a very rare opportunity to learn how this whole thing started... From someone who was actually there in the beginning! It may even offer a clue as to how to save the remaining human factions. It’s a chance to rebuild our species.”

The commander grunted “Don’t oversell it soldier.”

“Thing is sir,” Jefferies said “I think I can access the chip from here. We don’t even need to wake him up.”

“Really?”

Jefferies nodded. “At the slightest sign of trouble, I can hit the abort switch. Kill the whole thing. At least let me try.”

The commander sighed, then half shrugged his shoulders. “Okay. But the slightest sign of anything out of the ordinary and we dispose of...”

“Yes sir!” Jefferies responded and tapped a few keys.

The internal structure of the ZenTec chip was displayed on the screen.

“Most of these are encrypted,” Jefferies said. “As for our guest’s internal memories, I found this.”

The commander sat next to him to see the folder he was pointing at.

“The Black Water Journals?” The commander said and thought for a moment. “Perhaps pertaining to the Black Water Institute.”

Jefferies smiled. “The Black Water Institute didn’t actually exist sir, it was just a story.”

“And you know this, how?” queried the commander.

Jefferies regarded him quizzically. He knew his commander to be more spiritual than scientific, but all records that allegedly originated from the Blackwater Institute were proven to be forgeries, some more convincing than others. The Black Water Institute was - if legend held true - more than a safe haven. It was a type of utopia, a gateway to a better life – a perfect existence. The stuff of fairy tales.

He had always dismissed it as a story his parents would tell, a glimpse, all be it fictional at something better than the decay and deprivation that typified life as a human being, living day to day, struggling to survive.

He shrugged and clicked on the folder:

An audio file played:

*You have accessed the ZenTec memory journal of John Melek. Birth date: April five 2029. Installed and uploaded February nine 2060 4.32pm GMT.*

The voice sounded human. Jefferies wondered if it was modelled on that of his host. He turned his attention from the screen to his sleeping friend. “Well, at least we have a name for you now, John Melek.” He clicked an icon on the screen. “Let’s see who you really are shall we?”

Audio once again filled the room. Jefferies and his commanding officer sat back.

### ***John Melek. File one – Initialising.***

The first voice I heard was that of Dr Scebane. “Okay John.” She said “Open your eyes and tell me what you see.”

I sat up and scanned the ward. Literally scanned - I couldn’t believe it. There were five people, well three if you exclude Dr Scebane and myself. With a single thought I could access a basic history of the other doctor in the room as well as the other patient and his female visitor.

Name, age, occupation and criminal record was displayed above each of their heads.

I turned to Dr Scebane and read the notes above her head:

*Name: Andrea Scebane*

*Age: 38*

*Profession: Doctor*

*All other data: Classified level 1 clearance needed.*

“John, did you hear me?” Doctor Scebane said.

“Your first name is Andrea?” I said. “It suits you.”

The doctor smiled at me. “Well that answers my question.” She then cleared her throat and in a more serious tone said: “ZenTec login, voice ident Dr Scebane, passcode alpha one zero beta nine. Report.”

That meant nothing to me but it seemed to activate something in my brain. Like a dormant part had been awakened. You know when there’s a background noise that you don’t notice till it stops, then you are overwhelmed with a sudden sensation of peace and tranquillity? That’s how I felt. My brain was somehow refreshed.

I found myself speaking words that were alien, at least to me; complete gibberish, on and on I went. Dr Scebane seemed to understand them though; she was furiously scribbling away as I babbled on, unable to stop, not that I had any desire to.

When eventually I did cease talking the good doctor patted me on the head like I was a well behaved k9 and grinned.

Dr Scebane stared into my eyes as though she was looking for something.

“In three days, you can resume your position as acting head of my security detail. You have a ZenTec level two clearance, which is certainly above the norm. We have one more test to run; nothing intrusive, then you can go home to your wife and child. Lucy was it?”

I nodded.

She was asking the question but I sensed it to be rhetorical as she was consulting her notes and checking the digital readout attached to my bed whilst asking it.

Dominic Kinser was the real head of Dr Scebane's security, a real hard ass and a bit of a dick; he's been 'missing' for a couple of weeks. Probably a prolonged bender turned holiday, but I'm glad of the extra cash while he skives.

Dr Scebane isn't like a normal doctor she's the chairperson and lead scientist of ZenTec industries. You've all heard the radio commercial:

***OTT gameshow host voice***

*You've heard of hands free, now how about voice free?*

*With the ZenTec chip implanted in your head just think, and technology will be your slave.*

***Girl***

*what does it do Mr?*

***Man***

*Well I'm glad you asked little Girl. Why you can control any electronic device, have the entire power of the internet in your head. Hell, you can even go to sleep and let ZenTec take over your body and perform your daily duties for you. Can't be bothered to go to school?*

***Girl***

*No*

***Man***

*I thought not. No problem, ZenTec will simply download the information directly into your head.*

***Girl***

*I want one I want one*

***Man***

*Of course you do. And you know the best bit? No?*

*It's absolutely freeee!*

*ZenTec - Get yours today!*

Okay, first day back at work. I had one hell of a post op rest. This ZenTec chip is something else!

There's this book I've been trying to get through for ages, but could never read a page without feeling like I want to sleep for a week. I normally end up reading the same passage around twenty times before I have any comprehension of what the author's rambling on about. Not yesterday though; I sat outside and flicked through the pages so fast they created a draft and kept me cool in the blistering heat. You know what? I understood every word - I saw it like a movie in my head. Ask me any question on Crime and Punishment I dare you!

After that I picked up *The Stand*. My wife is a big King fan, she's half way through. Same again, I completed it in seconds. I can't wait for her to finish, so I can talk to her about it. I also understood all of Lucy's maths homework and helped her with that. Then again, she's only ten, so I could do that before, mostly.

I've been given Dom Kinser's full work rota today, together with *a get through today with no hitches and this job is yours* talk.

I guess Dom's couldn't-give-a-shit attitude to his job has finally paid off, welcome to the unemployment line fella, oh, and thanks for the job.

Dr Scebane has me following her around like some sort of bodyguard whilst she travels from the lab, to a board meeting and then a press conference. A bit overkill if you ask me, she's a scientist not the President of the United States.

Around midday, we pulled up outside an old warehouse. It used to be a shoe factory years ago, way before my time. It's been a regular eye sore ever since I was a kid. Good to hide out in though when I skipped school.

The second I stopped the car, my head instantly felt like it was going to explode. A searing stabbing pain; My brain was like a nerve being probed by one of my wife's kitchen knives. It sent electric shockwaves round my body as it twisted round and round, burrowing deeper and deeper.

I started convulsing and furiously lashing out and, according to Dr Scebane, I cried blood tears before eventually passing out.

When I woke the following morning, the doctor seemed more interested in the warehouse than my wellbeing. She wanted to know why I had an attack there, if I'd been there recently, if the ZenTec chip in my head had shown me any images, if so, what were they?

I still had a splitting headache and I asked why I was being made to feel guilty. I'm fine by the way! ...except I'm not. This chip needs to be removed.

"Take it out of me." I said.

She sighed and shook her head. “I can’t,” she said flatly “believe me, we tried. It’s fused itself to your brain. To remove it would kill you and I still need a chief of security.”

She didn’t smile, but I assumed she was joking. At least I hope so.

“From now on, stay away from that building, understood?”

I nodded, though unconvinced as to her intentions. “Take the day off tomorrow.” She said and walked from the ward.

I closed my eyes and an image of Dom Kinser lying unconscious, his face stained with dried blood tears, raced through my mind, with it a stabbing reminder of yesterday’s headache. I made to get up when a voice spoke my name.

“Mr Melek sir.”

The ward was empty.

“Mr Melek sir.” The voice repeated.

“Someone there?” I said. “Don’t fancy coming out where I can see you, do you?”

“I really don’t think you’d want me to do that.” It replied.

“And why is that?” I said, slowly looking around the room for some sign of an intercom or speaker.

“You’d die.” The voice said.

“Is that a threat?” I asked, getting mildly irritated.

“No.” the voice sounded defensive. “You heard the doctor. If I came out, you’d die.”

A nurse walked into the room to check my chart.

I laughed. “Are you trying to tell me that **you’re** the chip inside my head?” I blurted out, ignoring the nurse in the room.

“Beg your pardon?” The nurse said politely.

I shooed away her comment with a dismissive wave of the hand.

The voice spoke again: “I really must talk with you Mr Melek sir.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong but you’re not supposed to have your own personality are you!?” I answered.



The nurse, who was on her way out of the room, turned to face me. She looked offended and angry. "I beg your pardon!" she said again, this time she was more direct.

"Nothing" I said, still with too much of a headache to explain anything to her. "Can I go now?"

She told me I could leave whenever I was ready. I sensed the sooner the better as far as she was concerned.

Once the ZenTec chip was out of the talking closet there was no shutting it up. I imagined it was like having an annoying younger brother, constantly following me around. Made me glad that I grew up an only child.

After half an hour of trying to convince the ZenTec chip that silence was closer to Godliness, or even threatening to hack off my own head just to get a bit of peace and quiet; I conceded to sit in a remote part of the local park and communicate with it rationally. I felt sure that any passers-by would just assume I was a regular drunk in need of company and give me a wide berth.

"Why?" I asked.

"You will have to be more specific." Answered the ZenTec chip. "Why what, Mr Melek?"

I shrugged. Where to start? "Okay, why did I come close to dying earlier? Why are you fused to my brain? Why do you have your own personality? And why am I frequently seeing rather disturbing images of Dom Kinser in my head? I took his job not his mind. Oh, and why do I still have this damned headache?"

"I'm afraid I don't know sir." Came the simple response.

"Oh good," I said "I'm pleased I have the finest cutting-edge tech in my brain. Makes me feel so guilty that no one else has access to the enormous wealth of information that I do."

"Though I can cure your headache if you don't want it." The ZenTec chip added.

If I could have lashed out at the ZenTec chip I would have done at that point.

"If I don't want it?" I shouted, not caring who was walking past. "Well, let me see. No, actually I've changed my mind. Having a headache is tremendous fun. Any chance you can ramp up the pain though, and maybe cut the blood supply to my brain too while you're at it?"

“If you wish sir” said the ZenTec chip “Though it is rather an unusual request if you don’t mind my saying.”

“I was in fact being sarcastic Zen” I replied. “Can we assume from now on that I want to be in perfect health and, no headaches at any point ever.”

“Sarcasm, the use of irony to mock or convey contempt.” It paused before adding: “You called me Zen.”

“Yes, well as I’m stuck with you, I may as well give you a name. Zen seems as good as any, though a tad ironic as you never seem to shut up.”

“Thank you, sir,” Zen replied. “I’m sure if I had the emotional capacity to, I’d like it.”

The next day I was supposed to be resting at home. Though, I wasn’t tired nor was I in the mood for sitting around the house. I had too many unanswered questions and a suspicion that my answers lay in the disused warehouse that Dr Scebane was so interested in.

I drove close the building with an impending sense of dread. I didn’t want a repeat of the previous days blood tears and convulsions. I placed the car in park and looked across the street, building the courage to get out and have a snoop.

“Well, all the windows are boarded up Zen,” I said “there goes the ‘see what’s in there whilst we are safe on the outside’ plan.”

“Initial scans indicate there is no one in the building sir, though...” Zen paused “...there is a lower level that is not on the original blueprints. I am reading one life sign, unconscious.”

“You knew I was nervous about going in and you could do that scan thing all along?” I asked.

“Yes sir.” He answered. If he were capable of it, I’d swear there was smugness in his voice.”

“Do you have any other skills that might come in useful right now?” I asked.

“I can break the digital code on the front door sir.” Zen said.

Locked doors, no problem – I was practically writing a new radio ad for him. I told him to keep me informed anytime he felt he could make my daily life easier.

Side note, I seem to have given Zen a gender. He’s a voice in my head and I’m male, therefore so is he. Makes sense I think - as much as anything can.

The door clicked and with very little effort I pushed it open and stepped inside.

The expansive open space was littered with disused machinery, mechanical parts, cobwebs and layers of dust and dirt. A huge conveyor belt that looked like it had seen better days stretched the entire length of the hall. Several wooden desks lay upturned covering one corner of the room looking like a bonfire waiting to happen.

I laughed to myself, momentarily forgetting my fear. Those desks are just as I had left them many years ago – a makeshift den in which, as a kid, I could plan my many journeys to different planets and galaxies and fantasize about the strange and wonderful creatures I would befriend.

“You dreamt of interstellar travel as a child?”

Zen’s voice sent me crashing right back to Earth.

“Among other things I said.” “Okay, how do we get the lower level?”

“You can’t” said Zen. “Only I can.”

“No need to show off” I said.

“That’s not what I meant sir.” Zen replied “The entrance was designed specifically only to be receptive to ZenTec technology.

“So, this is Andrea Scebane’s secret base?” I shook my head, realising the grandiose ‘super villain’ way my last question sounded could have transported me back into my childhood if the situation had afforded it.

“You might say that” Zen replied.

I felt a sudden stab of pain in my temple.

“I miscalculated earlier sir.” Zen said. “I advise we leave. I cannot guarantee your safety, or mine.”

“Not scared, are you?” I asked.

“Not in the way you understand it,” Zen replied. “But having experienced what it is like to be sentient, I feel it foolish to deliberately place myself in the path of something that could easily extinguish life.”

“I’m scared too” I said “But that is part of life.”

“Dying?” queried Zen.

“I hope not” I said, hoping Zen was overdramatizing. “Now, let’s move to this lower level.”

“The doorway to your right leads to the lower level sir.” Zen said.

Looking to my right, I saw a dirty brick wall near a boarded-up window; a few shards of light breaking through to form an accidental floral pattern on the floor - but no door.

“Do I need to ask?” I said.

“To enter you must walk through, the entrance is there. I urge you to reconsider sir. It is very likely that this doorway being active was what caused your earlier encounter.”

I stayed silent to consider. At the very least Zen is wrong and the worst that can happen is a sore nose when I walk full force into a brick wall. On the other hand, is my curiosity worth another near-death experience?

“I don’t know Zen. Perhaps you’re right.” I said eventually. “What of the life form that is already down there. Is he friend or foe?”

“I’ve been attempting to ascertain just that sir. He is aware of our presence. Though it seems his life signs are fading. There is an unknown signal emanating from him. Not unlike my own carrier signal.”

“Someone else with a ZenTec chip installed?” I said. “I thought I was the first.”

“There was one before you sir. Official records list him among the dead” said Zen.

“He might well be if we don’t help” I said.

“His condition may be due to stress incurred whilst travelling to the lower level.” Zen said. “I don’t see how us suffering the same fate will be of any assistance to him.”

I thought of my wife and Lucy. Risking my life would impact more than me.

“Can we take it one step at a time Zen, move slowly. If things get too much then I back away, go home, drink tea?”

“We can try sir but you must listen to me very closely,” Zen said. “If I say stop then we stop.”

I nodded and took a deep breath.

I estimated that there were seven steps between me and to door entrance, then Zen corrected my calculation, telling me it was closer to six.

Step one and two were uneventful, as I thought step three to be. It was only when I scratched my nose to find it had become a dripping blood tap that I stopped.

“We can stop now if you want sir,” Zen said.

“No,” I said wiping the blood stains on my trouser leg and taking step four. I began to feel a little faint and stumbled forward. What felt like a heartbeat in my head began to pound harder and harder. Every nerve in my body sent pain messages back to my brain. I started crying. It was involuntary. I also started shivering.

“Sir stop, sir stop” The words echoed but they sounded more like a distant cry, than the familiar voice in my head.

My breathing was laboured. I wiped the tears from my eyes onto the back of my hand. The image was blurred but looking at the back of my hand, my tears were blood.

“Sir you must st...”

The voice stopped and part of my brain closed down. My vision left me, alongside the strength to stand upright. I fell, crashing to the ground, my body half way through the doorway. I lay, consciousness fading, staring into the eternal darkness.

The last image I saw before I blacked out was that of my daughter Lucy. She was reaching for me pleading with me not to go.

“I’m sorry, baby girl,” I said “I’m sorry.”

The End.

Episode 2 coming soon.