

BLACK WATER JOURNALS



PJ GREYSTOKE

Black water Journals

Episode 3

Previously in the Black Water Journals:

John Melek, after a near brush with death had been transported thirty feet below ground, only to discover the charred remains of the former security chief Dom Kinser. Although Dom was registered deceased, and his body was burned beyond recognition he seemed, to John at least, to still be alive - all be it in perpetual pain. The experimental ZenTec chip that had been placed in Dom's head, kept his bodily functions operational.

John learned that Dr. Andrea Scebane was using Dom as a lab rat in order to perfect the ZenTec chip before it was released to the eagerly waiting population.

Forced into obedience, Dom turned John Melek over to Dr. Andrea Scebane who ordered the ZenTec Chip in his head to extinguish his life.

Zen had no choice but to cooperate.

And now, episode three of The Black Water Journals...

Commander Steve Gibson sat in the control room waiting on word from his scouts. There had been unconfirmed reports of mechanically infected in the area and he needed to make sure that his base was still undiscovered – especially considering the vulnerability of his three-hundred-year-old sleeping guest, John Melek.

The mechanically infected had no reason to suspect that there was any human life in the area. This was a dead zone. Dead zone, rather morbidly, referred to an expanse of land in which all humanity had been removed – either by killing or converting.

The hive mind had never learned of the underground bunker, which should mean that the infected would have no logical reason to rescan and search the zone.

And if nothing else, those bastards are logical, thought Commander Gibson.

He picked up the communicator, pressed a button on the side and spoke:

“What’s happening over there Private?”

Static and white noise was his only response. He wondered if there was an electrical storm interfering with the coms signal.

“Private, report!” He said, not holding out much hope for a reply any time soon.

The communicator remained silent. This time not even the static was polite enough to put in an appearance.

He pressed a button on his computer and a live feed of Jefferies tapping furiously into a panel was displayed. “Jefferies, how’s our guest?”

“Not the most talkative sir,” Jefferies replied, turning to look into the camera and salute his commander. “but what do you expect from a three-hundred-year comatose patient?”

“Well, let me know if there are any changes.” The commander said.

“Oh, I managed to repair that file in the ZenTec chip, sir.”

They had tried to play the third memory file in John Melek’s head, only to find that it had been corrupted. After six straight hours of decrypting, Jefferies seemed to have hit a brick wall, that was until in a moment of inspiration he used Andrea Scebane’s passcode, delivered using her own voice ident which he had lifted from the first two files.

“Well done Sargent.” The commander said.

“Thank you, sir.” Jefferies replied. “I’ll wait on you before playing the third file.”

The commander laughed “Damn right you will Sargent.” He pondered for a moment before continuing. “May as well do it now. Can’t do too much till I hear from the scouts. On my way down.”

“I’ll have it ready sir.” Jefferies said, and turned away from the camera.

“Well, let’s hear it!” Commander Gibson said to Jefferies from behind as he entered the room. Startled, Jefferies fell from his seat, then stumbled to his feet.

“Sorry sir,” he said. “File three is ready to be played.

The Commander nodded and sat down, beckoning Jefferies with a simple gesture of the hand to start the audio file then do the same.

A few clicks of the mouse and both Jefferies and his Commanding officer could hear the audio file:

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

John Melek. File Three – Initialising.

Another glorious day.

My daughter Lucy has had word that very soon she’ll be eligible for her very own ZenTec chip. It won’t be as advanced as mine (obviously), but Dr. Scebane has used

her influence to make sure my family will be the first to benefit from enhanced knowledge, as well as superior healing and cutting-edge communication skills.

According to Zen, there are exactly six thousand nine hundred and thirty-two active languages in the world today and the ZenTec chip has eliminated the need to learn a single foreign syllable in order for us to communicate with our fellow human. Words are translated in our mind the moment our senses, sight or sound, pick them up. Wherever you come from, your words will always read or be heard – to me at least – as English. It's remarkable.

My wife has been offered a job as Dr. Scebane's personal assistant too. It's her first day today.

Maybe it's because I'm the new head of security at ZenTec industries that I'm being offered these perks, but I like it.

I must remember to thank my predecessor Dom Kinser for abandoning his post, if I ever get the chance that is. No one has seen him in a while.

"Good morning sir." Zen said.

I must say, for some reason I do think of it as an exceptional morning. It's like I don't have a single care in the world. I love my family, friends and of course my job. For without this job I never would have had the privilege of having Zen implanted in my brain.

"Good morning Zen." I said "And isn't it a glorious one at that?"

"My frame of reference is limited sir," Zen replied "but if it will please you then I can certainly agree."

"It does please me Zen," I said as I jumped out of bed and right into the comfort of my open top slippers.

Still stirring in her sleep, my wife groaned and hugged my pillow. That'll have to do as a replacement me till I return with her breakfast in bed and a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice, I thought.

"Sir, Dr. Scebane is approaching your front door." Zen said

"Oh, really?" I exclaimed then dashed downstairs in my dressing gown to greet her.

"Hello John" Dr Scebane said. "How are you feeling? I've come to pick your lady wife up."

"Couldn't be better" I replied. "Would you care to come in?"

Doctor Scebane waited in the living room while I woke my wife, who was less than impressed that her new employer had seen fit to come and collect her personally, two hours and seventeen minutes before she had to be in.

“Keep her busy will you?” she said “I’ll be down in a minute.”

With that, she dragged herself out of bed and into the shower room to wake up properly.

The doctor was in the kitchen, searching my cupboards when I came down.

“Can I help you with something?” I asked.

“Coffee?” she asked. “Or, would you prefer tea?”

I was rather taken back. Is it normal for someone to walk into a stranger’s house and help themselves to tea and coffee?

I smiled.

“Tea” I replied, more to be polite than because I was thirsty. I took the tea container from a cupboard and handed it to her. “But I can do that.”

“Nonsense,” she said. “Now go and sit down and I’ll bring this in presently. Do you take sugar?”

“Two please, just a little milk.” I said as I walked from the kitchen to sit in the dining room.

Less than a minute later Dr. Scebane came through with a big mugful of tea and placed it carefully on the table in front of me. She sat opposite and waited for me to drink.

“Aren’t you having one?” I asked.

“No, never touch the stuff” she snapped. Then in a patronizing ‘parent speaking down to her child’ sort of tone said: “Now, don’t insult me Mr. Melek, especially after my having gone to all that effort on your behalf. Drink up.” She pushed the mug closer and grinned, fixing her eyes on mine.

I looked down at the steaming, cloudy white liquid.

“Very milky” I said. “I’ll just wait for it to cool down a bit.”

“Nonsense” Dr. Scebane said. “Drink.”

I lifted the mug to my lips and took a sip, grimacing as the liquid went down.

“There, that wasn’t so hard was it?” she said.

“Tastes funny,” I said.

“Give it a moment” she replied.

“Sir,” Zen interjected “That tea has a high concentration of...”

“Zen?” I said.

“Gone quiet has he?” Dr. Scebane asked, whilst taking a small handheld electronic device from her pocket and turning a dial on its face.

“I feel strange.” I said.

“Yes,” she replied, concentrating more on the digital readout on her device “predominantly dizziness and nausea, I imagine.”

“Yes” I said. “my head feels...”

“Look into this” she said, and pointed the device at me.

A great flash of light and any ill feelings I had simply faded away, unfortunately so did every other sensation. I found it difficult to construct even a single coherent thought.

“Can you hear me John?” The doctor said.

Her voice was somehow soothing.

“Yes” I replied.

“Good” said the doctor. “Now, as your ZenTec chip has seen fit to attempt suicide rather than kill you, I have no choice but to keep you alive, sedate you both and wipe your collective memory of the events of three nights ago.”

I heard her words, but could make no real sense of them.

“One more dose should do the trick.” She said.

“Yes.” I said.

“Now John,” the doctor said “When I tell you to, drink all of the liquid in your mug. It will taste wonderful, the best cup of tea you have ever had in fact. You will then place your mug back on the table and wake. All memories of the warehouse, on Bertram street and the laboratory within including Dominic Kinser’s presence therein over the past seventy-two hours will be gone. You are very happy and very grateful for your family and your position at ZenTec industries.”

“Yes” I agreed.

“Good, drink your tea now John.”

I drained the mug and have to say it was possibly the best cup of tea I’ve ever had. With beverages like that she is welcome back here anytime. Rather fortunate, as she told me that she will be accompanying her driver tomorrow morning too just to make sure my wife settles into her new job properly.

It’s nice to have such a considerate employer.

My wife hurried into the dining room, fixing the collar on her jacket.

“Dr. Scebane,” she said “So sorry I didn’t expect you so soon. Actually, I thought it would just be your driver.”

“Quite alright Mrs. Melek,” the doctor said, rising to her feet and walking toward the front door. “Come along, you have an extremely challenging day ahead, and your husband has to transport your daughter to school before his shift. Isn’t that right John?”

“Yes, absolutely” I said. “She’s still in bed. I’ll wake her when you’re on your way.”

“Not a moment to lose then.” She said, and marched my wife out of the door, leaving it open for me to close behind her.

Lucy was dressed and ready for school inside of ten minutes. She asked me to fix her breakfast rather than using the HandyChef. She always said I can cook better than any silly machine. I may not have Chef Julian Ramsay’s entire culinary knowledge implanted in my brain but I can make toast and orange juice like the best of them.

Actually, with Zen in my head I probably could replicate Chef Ramsay’s envied talents but I prefer to do this on my own. It’s a father / daughter thing.

I initiated self-drive on the way to school as Lucy wanted me to look over her homework to make sure it was all correct.

“When I get my ZenTec chip in I won’t need to ask for help with homework any more, will I?” Lucy asked.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“You know, like the advert?” she said “the entire power of the internet in my head. I can get the ZenTec chip to do it for me.”

“It’s there to make your life easier” I said “not to take it over. You’ll do your homework the normal way.”

“You mean with you helping me?” she asked.

I smiled “Yes, that’s what I meant. Off you go.”

The car stopped and she ran off toward a small group of girls who embraced her as though they were distant siblings that hadn’t seen each other for several years. They did the same every morning. What it is to be a child, every day is an adventure waiting to happen.

ZenTec commercials filled the airwaves as the car drove me to work.

The radio DJ was interviewing Dr. Scebane:

“And joining me here now is Dr. Scebane, head honcho of ZenTec industries” said the DJ “The countdown begins tonight. Officially thirty days before people of Earth can have a ZenTec chip implanted in their brain.”

“That’s right radio man” said the doctor.

“Just call me Phil” laughed the DJ. “Can you confirm or deny the extraordinary rumours of what it can do? I mean I’ve heard it can translate languages, even those of animals, pull any information from the internet and put it in your head, as well as run a 24/7 physical on you and repair any damage done to your body, meaning you are also impervious to disease.”

“That and so much more, radio man Phil.” Answered the doctor. “Do you have your fitting appointment booked in yet?”

“Just Phil, please. I have a six month wait before I can get mine” the DJ answered. “And I called in the moment they were released this morning.”

“Well, Phil please” Dr Scebane said “You’ll find it worth the wait.”

There was a crowd of protestors outside ZenTec industries when the car pulled into the gate security.

“What’s all this?” I asked the uniformed man whilst lowering my car window.

“And you are?” He replied rather abruptly.

“Your boss, actually.” I said. “Chief of security.”

“Oh, I’m sorry.” He said, flicking through a list of names on his ZenTecPDA. “You Dominic Kinser?”

The very mention of Dominic Kinser seemed to cause a sharp stabbing pain in my head.

“No,” I replied, whilst closing my eyes, putting one hand on my forehead and passing my ID to the guard with my free hand. “John Melek. Your PDA needs updating.”

“Sorry sir,” he said and handed me back my ID tag “To answer your earlier question – not everyone thinks the ZenTec chip is a good idea. They say it’s putting people out of work and taking away freedom at the same time. ZenTec industries are giving the chip away. what more do they want? Me mother’s even getting it done. She’s hoping it can cure her arthritis.

Still in pain I shrugged, not really listening and he waved me through the gate.

“Have a good day Mr Kinser, I mean Mr Melek” he shouted after the car.

Is this guy serious? I thought. At the mention of his name the pain in my head increased, this time it was accompanied by a disturbing image of a man, badly burned yet alive and screaming in pain.

“Zen” I yelled, needing help from the chip in **my** head.

“I’m working on it, sir” Zen said. “It’s most curious. You are displaying all the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, but your memories of this charred gentleman are imagined.”

“That’s wonderful.” I replied sarcastically “Do you think we can discuss my psychosis after you get rid of the sodding headache?”

“Without knowing the cause, I can’t promise the pain and visions won’t return” Zen said.

“Get rid of it now and we’ll work on a longer-term plan after!” I shouted.

“Yes sir.” Zen said “you should feel better now.”

“The pain is gone but I don’t feel better” I said “Who was that man?”

“As your head pain was precipitated by the mention of...”

“Don’t say his name!” I interrupted.

Zen continued “it would seem, you believe your imagined figure to be that of your predecessor.”

“Why?” I asked “I didn’t know him outside of work. We never socialised. From what I saw he was a loud-mouthed self-opinionated prat. Why would he be in my thoughts at all?”

“Doesn’t sound like you like him sir,” Zen said “Perhaps you wanted to burn him alive?”

“No Zen,” I grunted “that’s not it.”

“Your wife is waving at you sir” Zen said.

Dr. Scebane and my wife were standing by the entrance of the building. My wife beckoned me come over.

“You look excited” I said as I approached them.

“As well she might,” Dr Scebane said. “She is going to have the honour of being the very first person to have the commercial ZenTec chip fitted.”

“Well, what do you think?” my wife said.

“Oh, congratulations” I said. “Sorry my mind was elsewhere. When are you having the fitting?”

Dr. Scebane looked at me curiously “What do you mean your mind was elsewhere?”

“Nothing,” I said “Just some weird visions of a burned man on a bed and ... you know what, it’s nothing.”

Dr Scebane smiled. “Wait in my office for me John, would you? Your wife is going now to have the chip fitted, after which we need to chat.”

“Can’t I stay with her while she has it done?” I asked.

Doctor Scebane shook her head and sighed. “In my office.” She quietly commanded.

My wife and I exchanged a worried glance, each wondering what I’d done wrong. I shrugged, nodded then entered the building and took the lift to the top floor. Once there, I was greeted by a man in a black suit who ushered me into Dr. Scebane’s office.

He closed the door behind me and I heard it lock.

“What’s going on Zen?” I asked.

“I’m not sure” Zen replied “Your presence seems to be causing an unusual level of alarm. I’m detecting three more men being posted outside this room, all armed.”

“What have I done?” I said.

I buried my head in my hands, trying to make sense of why I was being treated like this.

“I’m picking up a transmission from another ZenTec chip sir.” Zen said.

“My wife probably” I said.

“No sir. This is impossible. It is the man from your vision - Dominic Kinser. He is warning you to leave the building immediately.”

“Dominic Kinser?” I said, with increasing head pain “but how?”

“He messages: Get out now. Andrea Scebane is going to have the chip forcibly removed from your brain. That will surely kill you.”

