

Dr. Auglize has found a miracle to end cancer but can he survive "The Cure?"

The Cure

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It was like an unfortunate but not unfamiliar scene played out in back alleys in large, metropolitan areas all over the world. It was like that but that was not what it was. The amorphous shaped object in the middle of the screen looked somewhat similar to the three blob-like objects surrounding it. There were, however, obvious differences that made it just different enough to be a target. The three identical objects moved ever so slowly closer together, squeezing the unfortunate outsider into a trap from which there was no escape. The actual climactic act was anything but that. In fact it was more anticlimactic. As the three objects made contact with the outer edge of their prey, the defining edge disappeared, leaving only what used to be the inside matter to float free. Quickly, the three moved forward to engulf the remainder into themselves.

The silence was disturbed by a long, slow release of breath and immediately followed by a quiet chuckle. Dr. Douglas Auglize lifted his head from the microscope he had been studying and half-sat, half-collapsed backwards against the back of his chair. He felt his relief wash over him again and cleanse him of the tension he placed himself in every time he watched a new sample. He didn't know why, since the result was always the same. No matter what sample he put in contact with this cellular miracle he always saw the same outcome. Each time several of the cells would identify and surround the cancer cells. It seemed like it should take much more time as each individual cancer cell was destroyed, completely deprived of its special existence. In reality, though, it all happened so fast that it was a wonder that Dr. Auglize could even observe it. Over one thousand cancerous cells could be completely neutralized in less than a minute.

As he leaned back to stretch his legs, Doug wiped his brow with the towel on his shoulder. He was a long way from the sterile lab environment of Harvard where the temperature was kept perfectly at seventy two degrees so everyone could wear their pristine white lab coats. Now, he stood in the middle of this tiny hut in the middle of the rainforest wearing a tank top and shorts, still sweating like he was dressed in a full length fur coat. Shaking his head, Doug leaned over again to the best show in the house, not to mention the only one.

Sometimes he wondered if he continued with the trials more for his sake than for that of science. He was just trying to wrap his head around the whole thing. After all, Dr. Auglize had started his journey with a curiosity about disease resistant trees. Dr. Mepple, the gentleman who ran the main

research facility at the edge of the rainforest had come across these unique specimens and offered Doug the chance to study them before anyone else found out about them. A biochemist by degree, Douglas had never even felt much interest in oncology save for the normal curiosity of every person in how to keep it away from himself and his loved ones.

He had introduced diseases from similar trees to the samples he took from these trees, isolated the microbes that protected them and watched them “guard the fort” every time. Eventually, after hearing about a colleague at the university being diagnosed with skin cancer he had tried some skin cancer cells from the lab. It stood to reason that, since cancer was just normal cells that were dangerously changed that it should introduce a similar challenge to the microbes. Then Doug moved to other cancers. No matter what type of cancer was placed in the vicinity of the “guards” they quickly surrounded them, destroyed the cell wall and engulfed the contents, rendering them ineffective.

Now, Doug was sitting on the cure for cancer. What was more, it was completely natural so there were no unnecessary worries about developing drugs, getting them tested over years of trials and fighting to get FDA approval. On top of that, there were no limits of prescriptions, limited manufacturers, or unfair distribution. It was something, he felt, that could be sold in health food stores. How great was that? It could help people get off the expensive medicines, chemotherapy, and radiation. There was absolutely no downside, Doug thought.

Doug sat for a moment listening to the “quiet” that surrounded him. Of course, life was rarely quiet here. The sound of insects, birds and frogs serenaded him constantly but when he was focused on that lens and what it revealed he felt like he was in another world entirely. All his other senses seemed to dull and fade away as he took in the wonder with his eyes. Sound melted away, leaving him in a quiet of his own making that was both absolute and comfortable. He was familiar with the difficulties of the human mind with silence in this day and age and he could recount instances from his own life. On a long drive, for example, if the radio went out the miles seemed to stretch endlessly. This lack of sound, though, was not one of those uncomfortable silences. It wrapped him in his own little cocoon that both insulated him from the outside world and ensured that he would not overlook important details within the shell.

Similarly, common smells that he expected to be around all the time seemed to find someplace better to be. Even the physical sensation of the chair in which he sat, the breeze against his skin and

the pressure of the eyepiece against his face faded away until all that remained was what was important, the scene in front of him. Now, his focus released, he welcomed all those sensations back again.

Taking one more long breath, Douglas pulled himself back, physically and figuratively, turning his chair to face his open laptop. He had to record his results before doing anything else. The human mind, though powerful and amazing, has a tendency to blur details as the amount of time between observation and recording increases. It was not a difficult assessment to record since he could have simply used ditto marks. The result was always the same but never uninteresting, though he suspected that it would become so after the big C word was no longer intimidating.

Closing the computer he picked up the satellite phone to call his wife and let her know what was going on. The world was definitely getting smaller when you could stay in the middle of the rain forest in a small one room hut and use your laptop, without internet access still, and call anyone in the world. That had made the time apart from his wife and kids much easier for all of them. While he still agonized over the time apart, he could at least call them regularly and it was only for a few weeks.

He had never enjoyed spending time apart from them. Certainly, he thought, nobody liked to be separated from their loved ones but there were a lot of truck drivers, sales people, high-ranking executives, etc. that did it all the time and seemed to cope all right. He didn't know how, though. A large factor in his decision to seek a professorship at the college was to have a stable, close job. With rare exceptions like this or the occasional conference he knew that each morning of the week he would go to the same office, teach the same classes and come home each evening and weekend. Now, his exile was finally over and he would do whatever he could to get back to them as quickly as possible.

He walked outside and climbed into the Jeep, pulling himself up to sit on the top of the bars of the cab's frame. This was where he made every call because he felt most confident sitting here that he would get a clear connection. He had walked all over the hut and the small clearing around it during his first call. Listening to the reception fade in and out as he tried to make the personal connection he desired he finally leaned against the side of the vehicle in weariness. The signal had stabilized though it was not perfectly clear. He had determined to stay near the vehicle and eventually taken one of the seats in the Jeep to sit while he talked.

Shortly after that, something had screamed from the surrounding rain forest and startled Douglas. He stood up in the Jeep to look for the source of the sound. At that exact position the signal had become crystal clear and he found his body refused to move. Now, with every call, he simply went back to that exact spot. Even though he had plenty of opportunities to try other spots for similar success, he had found what worked and would stick with it. That was his nature. While others worried about finding themselves in a rut in life he reveled in it and sought out patterns and situations that were familiar and comfortable.

On the third ring the other end was picked up by a disinterested young female voice. “Yeah?” was the succinct reply. He smiled to himself at the attitude and the recognition.

“Is that how I taught you to answer a phone?” he joked with his daughter.

“No, it's not. Luckily, I managed to correct the mistakes you made with that,” she replied. He could hear the smile in her voice and it warmed his heart.

“Hi, Belly Button. I miss you.”

“I miss you too, Dad, but not that silly nickname. I'm sixteen now, not five. It's Belinda.”

“I know the world thinks you're sixteen but you're still five to me, Belly Button. How's school?”

“It's good, Dad. I have a game to go to and Danny isn't home. I'll get Mom for you, though. You coming home yet?”

“Yes, finally. I can't wait to see you no matter what age you are. I love you, Belly Button.”

“Good, Dad. Take care and I'll see you soon. Hold on for Mom.” In the background he heard her yell loud enough to be heard anywhere in the house to let his wife know to pick up the phone. After about two minutes that felt like months, the voice of his beautiful wife came on the line.

“Douglas, are you there?”

“Unfortunately, I am here, Amy, but I plan to be there very soon.”

“Oh, Honey, that's great to hear. Does that mean good news or bad news?”

“Neither, it's great news. All the tests came out positive. Nothing can stop this stuff. It's nature's most recent miracle for mankind. I just wanted to let you know that after I tie up a few loose ends down here I'll make my way to the airport. Then I can get myself back to you and the kids and normal life.”

“I miss you so much, Honey. Hurry back to me.”

“You know I always do. All the happiness I feel for what I have found is always clouded by having to leave you to find it. I'll call you after I get a flight and let you know when I'll be in. I love you.”

“I love you too, Honey. Be safe. I want you back just the way you left, in one piece.”

“Oh, one other thing...” His voice trailed off as he heard the line drop. There was no static, no sign they were losing the signal, just abrupt silence as if someone had cut the line.

Dr. Auglize slid back into the seat of the Jeep and stared at the phone as if he could look into it and find why he had been cut off. He knew it was not out of the ordinary. It had happened numerous times while he had been here but that never made it seem okay to have his connection to the outside world disappear.

He felt certain that it was merely an effect of being in a remote area. His friend, Dr. Mepple, had found it quite odd when he had mentioned it to him. Dr. Mepple had been running the larger, permanent lab at the edge of the rain forest for years and said that he had not seen those sort of problems in a long time. Douglas suspected, though, that Dr. Mepple simply didn't go into the rain forest much anymore and had no firsthand knowledge.

Returning to the hut, Douglas was quickly reminded of how spartan a lifestyle he had been leading here. It only took him ten minutes to gather all his things. That included all the leftover food, clothes, personal items and his equipment. The microscope, computer and files actually took more space than

his personal items. He secured them in the Jeep for the bumpy ride. With one last look around the small hut he slid into the driver's seat to start the first leg of his journey back to the sleepy life of a college professor.

2

“One more thing...” A thick, well manicured finger stabbed the button on the phone, not only hanging up his end but severing the entire call. He was frustrated, no, that wasn't it, at least not all of it. He was worried, concerned, and angry. He had been patient, hoping the results would be different. This moron had stumbled onto something he should have never found and he, a biochemist of all things! The man was helping to fund several large research facilities to find what Dr. Auglize had tripped over! He needed to be the first to find it, to destroy it before it managed to inflict its harmful repercussions.

Pushing himself back from the large oak desk, the man took a deep breath and stood. Turning, he took several measured steps to stand in front of the window. As he stared at the view, his mind raced with the calculations of the damage that Dr. Auglize's little discovery would cause. There was an entire system set up for the purpose of seeking a cure for cancer and it could all be toppled by this little weasel.

He had prepared contingency plans, of course. He was just hoping to not need to use them. There were some roads he didn't want to travel, but sometimes the ends justified the means. He began to pace around the spacious office. He was normally so busy he did not take time to appreciate the luxury surrounding him. He had forgotten just how large this room was.

As he neared the outer door he gently closed it. Without even the sound of the latch clicking as he gently put the door in its final place he silently shut himself in and the prying ears and eyes out. They tried to be subtle, he knew. Still, he was always aware of the multitude of eyes and ears straining to pick up any little bit of information from him that he might not feel inclined to share intentionally.

With any luck, he wouldn't need much to push this Dr. Auglize to the right decision for everyone concerned. Everyone had their hot button. He just had to find it. What was important to this guy? Was he after the money? Perhaps he was looking for his fifteen minutes of fame. Was he trying to better the life of his family or gather the resources and opportunities to escape them?

As he continued his pacing and fretting, the man came upon a folder containing information about a new cancer drug that had just been approved by the FDA. Sure, it didn't cure cancer. Nothing did, well, so far. But it made it slow its progress and extended the life of the patient. What good was this

now? What were all the sacrifices for? What about the money invested in testing and gaining approval? That didn't come cheap.

Some of these scientists had dedicated their lives to this quest. Now they were going to be rendered obsolete by some tree? The futility and the unfair nature of the whole idea sank in as the man started wringing his hands, still studying the report. This drug had taken ten years of research and development. These three scientists listed in the report, not to mention the scientists that helped without credit, the lab assistants and the third party comparisons would have wasted their time and energy. All those people and all the effort were for naught. Who knew how many marriages were destroyed over the individuals' single-minded focus on this drug? How many kids grew up not knowing their father or mother because that person thought it was important enough to sacrifice to save the world from cancer?

What about the money spent by the company and the tax payers for subsidies and grants? That money might as well have been flushed down the toilet for all it was worth now. He could not let that tree destroy all this. What about the money the company had paid to him over the years? Letting Dr. Auglize and his tree cure succeed would be like a slap in the face after that trust was broken. Sure, if the company could manufacture the cure it would be secure and that would help the company as a whole. Still, all the individuals employed to seek the cure and/or medications of relief would be out of jobs. The bigger problem with this line of thought was that the natural cure could not be copyrighted, even if they could make a synthetic version. With it existing outside the United States, people could simply fly to another country and get the natural version.

Still wringing his hands, the man found himself in front of the window again. This time, though, he was actually seeing what was out there. Specifically, the people hurrying back and forth. How many of them were affected by cancer, in themselves or someone they knew? How many would be affected negatively by the discovery of a cure? The scientists were just the beginning. Their families, of course, would feel the struggle when they lost their jobs.

There were all the people that depended on folks like them to stay in business, for some of the labs were major establishments and served as business hubs in their own right. All the people that serviced the lab would be potential targets for loss of work if there was not a ready target to switch the focus to quickly. That was everyone from the folks who delivered supplies and disposed of waste to the support

staff that worked in the cafeteria, kept the place clean and serviced the equipment and facilities. How many small businesses had opened and stayed in business around these labs strictly because of those working in the lab and the money they spent? This could actually destroy some smaller towns that depended on these labs.

Who was he to allow the destruction of an entire town so Dr. Auglize could say that he found the cure for cancer? He had the information and the means to put a stop to this madness. It was the right thing to do for the greater good. The man was convinced of that.

How many suppliers of equipment would be adversely affected? There were amazing machines developed for the purpose of serving this cause and he knew how much they cost. He had seen the numbers, though the numbers meant more to him than the actual equipment. That was outside his realm of expertise.

How many of those machines would become obsolete with the search for a cancer cure finished? Even if they had viable uses elsewhere, how many were really needed? What about all the people involved in creating and developing that equipment? Would they be unemployed as well? And what of the people manufacturing, selling, and distributing the equipment? Could the economy handle all the people that were about to become unemployed and how many would have skills that could be immediately transferred to a new vocation? Who would be willing to foot the cost of retraining? This could well destroy the American economy and it certainly didn't need any more negative push these days.

The man felt the heat rising in his face. His collar seemed to be getting tighter with each labored breath. His upper lip was perspiring and running its salty production into his mouth. He reached for the chair to sit and take the pressure off his increasingly feeble legs. He grabbed the arm, but as he tried to lean into the new hand hold the chair turned, sending him forward toward the desk. Somehow, he managed to get the other hand under him and catch the edge of that oak desk without sliding too much on the freshly polished surface.

The strain on his wrist was almost unbearable, but he stifled a shout. What, after all, would he tell someone who came in to find him suffering in such a way? He could not possibly tell them the truth. That was what he was trying to hide from them, from the entire world. No wonder he was feeling such

tension. Quietly, he slid himself into the well-worn leather chair and loosened his collar.

With great focus, he managed to regain control and take several slow, deep breaths. His heartbeat began to slow and he could already feel the heat lowering in his head and face. It had hit him so suddenly. The weight of the responsibility that had somehow been placed on his shoulders could be overwhelming if he let it. How he came to be in this unenviable position he was not sure. What gods or alignment of the stars or cruel joke of the fates gave him the responsibility of keeping intact the stability and integrity of the economy and the workforce he did not know. What he did know, though, was that he took that burden very seriously. Even if he thought he could, he had no intention of passing the responsibility to another. This was one of those things that someone must do with no expectation of credit or acknowledgement. His reward would be watching as the world went on normally with no idea of what he had done.

Reaching for his handkerchief he patted his face and head for a few moments to soak up the sweat before reaching for the intercom. "Gloria, can you get me a glass of ice water, please?" After receiving confirmation from Gloria he took a few more deep breaths to try and compose himself for his sake and for hers before she entered the room. The less there was to explain, the better. Gloria had been with him for over twenty years here. He could not begin to count the young men and women who had come and gone from his staff over the years. There were some exceptional minds that had moved up and some feeble ones that he was happy had just moved on. Through it all there was Gloria.

He had found early on in this organization that Gloria was a keeper. She was not the fastest typist, though she seemed to do fairly well. She didn't know the business any better than he did, but she was a great asset with respect to a lot of things. It was not merely sexual attraction, either. He would be the first to admit that twenty years ago she had looked amazing and had aged well since. Somehow, though, the thought of having that sort of relationship with her had never crossed his mind and within the first year he knew how lucky he was to have not gone down that road, even if she would have been interested. Gloria's most endearing quality was her professionalism. To him, that meant she did not see what she was not supposed to see. She did not know anything she was not supposed to know. Most importantly, she did not need him or anyone to tell her what she should or should not know. She was amazingly adept at playing stupid without acting like an idiot.

More than a gatekeeper for the outside world, Gloria set herself up to formulate and keep up the

entire facade that was necessary to keep those wide-eyed college graduates coming in, working for next to nothing in a thankless job and move on still believing that he was this wonderful person making the world a better place. No matter what he was really doing, important or not, she made sure the world believed the former.

Now, where to start? He just needed to get access to that research to know what he was up against and how best to fight it. He had just the man for the job. After gratefully taking the water from Gloria he asked her to shut the door again as she left the room. Once he was alone he pulled out his briefcase and opened a small pocket that was completely invisible unless you knew to look for it. He retrieved a small cell phone and glanced about to be sure he had not been seen.

Rafe Tarwen is a ghost in this world as much as he is a man. In many ways he does not exist. Truth be told, short of physically seeing him you would find no proof of his existence at all. After an extensive career with the Special Forces under his original name he had simply ceased to exist. Whether he had died or just disappeared was anyone's guess and nobody really cared to guess. Most of his assignments had been of the sort that were neither officially sanctioned or acknowledged. Therefore, if he had been discovered, the government would have simply stated that he must be working on a personal agenda and nobody would come to his aid. He had never had a problem with that approach and was quite all right with where he was now. Since he had always worked alone, the results of the final mission from which he had never returned were for him alone to know and they would go to the grave with him.

Rafe worked as an independent contractor now, you might say. There were some deep pockets that were familiar with his work and someone always seemed to have a need he could fill. When they needed something done quickly and cleanly with no proof that anyone had been involved or even at the scene they called Rafe.

He had already been told there might be a need for his services soon so he had already made himself at home in the surrounding rainforest. When the phone rang it was not a cute bird call or a catchy tune. A simple vibration on his left hip was the only alert he needed and he picked up and listened. There was nothing for him to say. He just needed his goal. Rafe watched in silence as Dr. Auglize loaded the Jeep. His client had said he believed that he was going to the permanent lab and would be back to gather his things. What Rafe saw told a different story, though. If this was the doctor's final trek out, though, it did not change Rafe's job. It simply lowered the odds of success.

Had anyone been near enough to see it they would have sworn that Rafe had simply materialized at the edge of the clearing. There were no moving leaves or branches to indicate he had come down from the canopy overhead. There was no gentle bounce in the grasses and ground cover to lead one to believe he had stepped out from a hidden place on the ground. One instant the clearing from which Dr. Auglize had just left was devoid of human life and the next Rafe was standing there, motionless. With almost imperceptible eye and head movements he scanned the entire area before moving across the clearing.

Rafe's shoes had a completely smooth sole to avoid leaving a print. The thin rubber sole was just thick enough to ensure that the weight of his foot could leave its own outline in the dusty environment. Each careful step was gentle, definite and soundless. He applied the pressure smoothly and with enough care to not even stir a small amount of the loose dirt underfoot. Reaching the front door, Rafe cast one last furtive glance about before using one rubber gloved clad hand to turn the knob. There were no locks even in place from the outside and he had not expected any. Save for the equipment and personal effects brought out by various researchers there was really nothing of value to be had inside. The dead bolt on the inside of the door was more for the peace of mind of the residents against the denizens of the rainforest than it was for the security of their possessions or their little abode.

Rafe stepped through the door and posted himself inside the threshold as he surveyed his surroundings. He was here to find information, specifically the results of all of the Dr.'s research. It took only a quick glance to confirm that any obvious sources like paper documentation or computer hardware were not visible. There were plenty of places they might have been hidden, some more obvious and simple than others, but Rafe was methodical. After convincing himself that Dr. Auglize had not inadvertently left behind some files in plain site, Rafe started looking in the more hidden places where someone in a hurry to get back to their comfortable home might have overlooked things.

Making quick work of the drawers and shelves in the nightstand near the bed and in the kitchen area, Rafe was satisfied that anything remaining had been purposely hidden. If he found what he was looking for it would be questionable at this level whether it was left intentionally or not. Fortunately for Rafe, those questions were neither his to answer nor his to even ask. Just as in his former career, his job was direct and well defined, find any information, in any form, about what the doctor had been working on and deliver it to his employer and leave no obvious clues that anyone had been there.

With a backward tilt of his head, Rafe studied the rough, unfinished roof of the hut. He would approach this level of investigation with a top to bottom approach. Rafe realized that the interior of the roof was the least likely area for the good professor to have hidden anything, but he wanted to be thorough. By starting somewhere at random, moving about without pattern and hoping to deduce rather than simply search there was more risk of overlooking some small spot. He spent twenty minutes searching the beams and thatch of the roof before moving his feet back down to the floor again. In days past, Rafe could have ascertained whether anything was above him in a matter of minutes since there was only so much you could do with a sheaf of papers. With CD's, zip drives and

stick drives in greater use, though, it took very little camouflage to hide their smaller size.

Rafe now shifted his attention to the walls. The hut was small, resembling the open layout of a studio apartment. Since it was generally inhabited by one person at a time just as it had been by Dr. Auglize there was not even so much as a curtain to separate the bath area from the rest of the home. A thin shower curtain represented the only dividing barrier in the entire structure. The layout would make it easier for his search. There were only four walls and he started with the front.

The hasty, haphazard nature of the construction was made obvious again when Rafe found no threshold over the door or frames around the two windows. This meant there were no small ledges that might hold a small memory device. There were, however, ledges where the top of the wall met the roof structure but he had investigated those when he was high enough to see them. Still, Rafe took the time to run expert fingers along the outlines to search for imperfections in the edges that might indicate small hiding places. Once again, he came up empty. Declaring the wall finished, he moved clockwise to the first side wall.

There was only one window here and, of course, no door. The window was small and set about a third of the way back from the front of the hut. It gave an off center look to the wall, Rafe thought, though he was no interior designer. Still, it puzzled him and someone must have agreed since they had placed a large picture of the shoreline another third of the way along the wall, thereby evening out the wall. Though Rafe could see that potential benefit of the picture for someone who was concerned about things being even, something about that picture bothered him. He walked quickly to the wall and removed the picture. Sure enough, he found it hiding a large hole in the wall. Rafe removed a small penlight from his pocket to investigate. Ultimately, he knew, the search would require a blind grope with his hand but he wanted to make sure the picture was not concealing the home of some creature that might respond negatively to his search of its home. Seeing no wildlife or abandoned nests he used his right hand and ran his fingers along all the surfaces reachable with his arm. He had studied Dr. Auglize enough to know he was several inches shorter and had shorter arms than Rafe. If Dr. Auglize had tried to reach a point further than Rafe's reach he would have done more obvious damage to the outer dimensions of the hole and it seemed intact. Half of his search now complete on the walls, Rafe moved to the back wall.

This wall held the few drawers and cabinets of the kitchen area as well as the refrigerator and stove.

There would be plenty of potential hiding spots here, of course. More importantly, Rafe knew, these would represent some of the more likely spaces to find what he sought. While there was rarely a time in his thirty year career when he had overlooked a possibility, it had happened. Still, the rarity of that occurrence, not to mention the fact that few if any people knew about those slips in his meticulous nature, was what kept him in demand without the need to resort to phone book ads and billboards. What Rafe had found over the years, though, was that what he considered a fairly obvious choice, as with these potential hiding spots, most people thought fairly brilliant. He was always amazed, for example, that everyone who hid a spare key under the mat or in a magnetic tin under the frame of the car thought themselves the most clever individuals ever. If they are selling millions of those holders in the giant retail stores then just how clever and unique can you be?

One in each hand, he pulled out two of the drawers completely from the cabinet and flipped them over. Each had paper stuck to the bottom. The left drawer held the remainder of the original installation instructions. The right, however, was three handwritten pages folded in half twice and jammed under the rolling track of the drawer. Rafe placed them delicately on the counter before returning the drawers to their original spots. Drawing out a plastic bag he placed the sheets inside as if he were working in a crime scene. The similarities were intentional for a reason. Just like a forensics expert he was trying to avoid contaminating the findings. Several different scientists had used this hut and the random sketches and data written there might not tell them who wrote it but fingerprint analysis would. The analysis was not his part, merely the collection of information.

Rafe checked the remainder of the drawers and cabinets with no further success. He checked the stove inside and out before physically pulling it out from the wall to check underneath and behind. He made no more success there. When Rafe pulled out the refrigerator and found a stick drive jammed in the coils behind it he decided he was more impressed with the man who had hidden it there than the half-hearted attempt to hide papers under the drawer.

Forcing himself to stay focused, Rafe continued his search in the same exacting manner. Just because he had found something did not mean that he had found what he was looking for or found everything there was to find. Rafe completed his search of the kitchen area by checking visually and tactilely every surface of the area underneath the sink including but not limited to removing and inspecting the faucet assemblies and the drain pipe. Water tight containers wedged in an area of heavy water flow would be less suspicious since the paper or computer files themselves would not fare well

there. Most people, then, would dismiss the idea as outlandish. That's why he looked. Still, he came up empty.

In the bathroom, the sparse fixtures and lack of walls limited the possibilities but Rafe was confident that his mind would give him far more places to suspect and check than any other person would come up with to use. Rafe repeated his detailed dissection of the sink. He checked the tank, bowl and underneath the toilet itself, though the condition of the bolts holding it to the floor told him it had not been moved in quite some time. That's how he would want it to look if he had hidden something underneath, though, Rafe thought.

Rafe worked his way down the last wall fairly rapidly. He was not hurrying. There just was not much there to conceal anything. With no windows, pictures or shelves it was pretty bare. He finished his search by looking for loose boards in the floor where it might be easy for someone to lift one up and tuck something underneath. When it was all said and done, his findings consisted of the folded papers and the stick drive. Working his way back out of the hut, Rafe made numerous corrections to remove evidence of his presence and when he was gone, it was as if he had never been there.

4

The man was starting to feel a little better about the whole situation, but not much. After draining the entire glass of water from Gloria and making his phone call to put things in motion, he drew a long, deep breath and sank back into the chair. Rafe was an asset to be trusted, he knew. Still, it was entirely possible, even likely, that the information he had sent him to find was not there.

Things were not as settled and immobile as they were in his youth. You didn't have to write or type everything on paper and keep it somewhere, usually not with you. He had no illusions that times were still that simple. From paper notes to reminders on large home computers to laptops to small phones and/or personal organizers, it was just easier to take everything with you any time you needed to do so. Still, he wanted to try the easiest methods first. If Rafe could find what they needed then, with luck, he could undo anything Dr. Auglize had done already and prevent any further damage without anyone, including the good doctor, being the wiser. If not, there were other ways to accomplish what needed to be done.

Flipping open his planner he chuckled at himself. With all this thought about the modern conveniences and methods of keeping track of things it was ironic that he was the dinosaur still using the old-fashioned method of pen and paper. It was never easy to realize you had changed in the eyes of the world. He still remembered the sting of the first time someone called him sir out of respect, not bitterness. Now, here he was, the oldest man in his field trying to keep up with the youth and, more importantly, keep them in their places, figuratively and literally.

This young doctor was out saving the world and didn't have any clue just how much damage he was causing it in the process. These goody two shoes people never saw the big picture. They succeeded in destroying a company or, at least, running them out of town because they don't like their product, their service, their track record of safety. Only then do they realize they have eliminated the town's major employer, for example. They have ended up putting their friends and neighbors out of jobs for their noble cause and destroying all the people and businesses that depended on those people being employed.

What this doctor was going to do was monumentally worse. Apparently, through the lens of his fancy microscope all he could see was how great things were in the small world of the tiny creatures he

studied. He knew it was his job to help the doctor lift his head and remember the world around him. He had to show him it was not just one town he was damaging as in the case of the company going out of business but a large part of our country's economy if not the world's. While Rafe worked in the shadows the man would take the direct approach. Picking up the phone once more the man dialed the number and braced himself to give the speech of his life.

* * * * *

Bouncing along the rough road leading out of the rainforest Dr. Douglas Auglize was on top of the world. He wanted to drive faster but didn't dare. If he could, he would have his foot pushing the gas pedal to the floor. If Doug wanted to make it to the main research facility with his equipment intact and still in the Jeep, he was going to have to stay calmer. His excitement over his findings was overwhelming. Doug had finally come to terms with what he had found and his mind swam with the possibilities of the good it could do. Just as exciting was the proximity of returning to his wife, kids and quiet suburban life. So he pushed as fast as he dared, holding on to the steering wheel tightly and trying to avoid filling his smiling mouth with bugs and dirt.

Doug would have also preferred to have some music to accompany his ride but there were no radio stations broadcasting this far out and he would not have been able to hear it anyways. It was for this reason that he barely heard the satellite phone. In fact, before he noticed it, the phone had already rung eight times. Douglas picked it up and stared at the device for a minute like it was brand new to him. He had always used it for calling out and didn't even recognize the incoming ring at first.

Slowing to a stop, Dr. Auglize hit the button to answer the phone. He didn't believe in talking on the phone while driving on flat paved roads where he believed he could still keep control so there was no way he wanted to risk it on this unpredictable and precarious stretch. "Hello?" he answered, the surprise clear in his voice. Only his colleague, Dr. Mepple, at the main research facility and his family had this number and none of them had ever used it, so he was concerned.

"Dr. Douglas Auglize?" asked the deep, resonant voice of the male on the other end.

"Yes, who is this?" replied Dr. Auglize, both relieved it was not bad news from his friend or his family and skeptical of who else had the number.

"Dr. Auglize, we need to talk," the man continued, ignoring the question.

"Alright," Doug was forcing himself to swallow the unwanted lump that had formed in his throat. "What do we need to talk about?"

"I hear you have made an important discovery." The man's voice betrayed no emotion. He was not mad, sad, excited, or happy. He was not anything. Doug doubted he could actually know anything if that was his emotional response. The man sounded like he was reading a script. In fact, if he had been saying anything remotely close to credit card offers, winning prizes, or something about politics, Doug would have sworn he was talking to a telemarketer.

Keeping a firm grasp on his suspicious nature, Doug continued apprehensively. "What could you have possibly heard and from whom? I've been living alone in the middle of the rainforest." That was the exact type of thing Dr. Auglize was always warning his kids about, giving out too much information. He could have made himself a target if the person went searching for the hut he had occupied. Since he knew he was leaving anyway, though, he allowed the passion of the moment and the absurdity of the man's claim to carry him away.

"Dr. Auglize, I have my sources and I trust them. Did I not trust them, we would not be speaking. I have plenty of things to occupy my time without wasting it chasing after rumors. You believe you have found something that will change the course of life as we know it, have you not?"

"Philosophically, everything changes the course of life, just on a smaller or larger scale." Doug chuckled to himself at his little intellectual joke.

"Don't be coy with me, Dr. Auglize. We are not speaking philosophically and your education is not in philosophy. In fact, you never even took a philosophy course, despite it being a requirement. You managed to find a loophole that let you count an English literature course in its place."

Dr. Auglize was stunned. It was not that it was any great feat to find out what courses he had taken but it took some doing to know why he took certain courses. Who was this guy and why did he know

so much about him? "Yes, I have found some interesting results." Doug was determined to keep it cryptic. He didn't even discuss details with his family over the phone. There was never any telling who was listening and, perhaps, this was one of those listeners.

"Understandable, Dr. Auglize. I respect your attempts at secrecy. I also would like to keep this quiet. You see, Doctor, I agree that, if you have found what we think you have, it will make a significant impact in the world. That, though, is the point at which we cease to agree. You think it will be a great thing for the world and I think it could be one of the worst things since the Ice Age wiped out the dinosaurs."

"Are you out of your ever loving mind?" roared Dr. Auglize, "what could possibly be bad with this kind of finding? There are huge amount of resources and people devoted to finding just what I have found. It's the best thing to happen to the world in who knows how long."

"Thank you, Doug. You make my point exactly."

"WHAT?!"

"Doug, pull your head out of the Petri dish for a minute. Yes, it's great to see the good guys win when you look at whatever is happening on those slides. I'm not denying that, but you said it yourself, there has been a lot of money and human effort focused on finding the cure."

"Yeah, and...?"

"The focus is on the search, not the goal. There is no benefit for the majority of the people in your discovery. If one of them found it, there would be a benefit for them like there is for you but that is it. All the medicines, the jobs, the support, it's all useless when you break the news to the world. I'm asking you to think about it first. Do the right thing, Dr. Auglize, and keep this to yourself. Get rid of the documentation and just keep it as a proud spot in your heart. Tell nobody else about it. Nothing good can come from it, relatively speaking."

"You're crazy and I will not keep this quiet. It's far too important."

"Look, Doug, here's the thing. The first time was a request. Now, I am warning you. Keep your mouth shut. You don't know who you're dealing with."

"You're right about one thing. I don't know who you are. More importantly, I don't care. This is going to make the world so much better. You'll see."

"Doug!" the voice screamed, even as Dr. Auglize pulled the phone away and hung up. He had to take a couple of deep breaths to calm himself before resuming his journey. You always expect some loons to come out when this stuff is found, he figured. You didn't expect them to come out before anyone knew, though.

Dr. Auglize has found a miracle to end cancer but can he survive "The Cure?"

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