



Jim's Life

A novel by Jason Matthews

Sample - Testing Jim's vision

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Flow and Brison got into their sky-car for a trip to the hospital. Iggy watched them through the kitchen window while he cleaned dust from a cupboard. Once Iggy saw that they were en route, he dropped his dust wand and walked over to the living room.

Roger's show sprang up. By the caption, Iggy saw they were discussing the Ranck case. The volume remained low as Iggy took a seat. Across from him, the holographic image of another robot appeared. This unit had a similar make to Iggy though more feminine in design. She sat facing him.

"Hello, Silva," Iggy said.

"Are you ready?" she asked.

"They just left. We should have plenty of time on my end. How's yours?"

"Half an hour. Perhaps time for three games."

A large holographic chess set materialized between the two robots.

"Ladies first?" Iggy offered.

"Thank you."

Silva picked up the image of the pawn before her king and moved it forward two spots on the chessboard. Iggy moved one of his knights. Silva countered with another pawn. As the units moved pieces quickly and established the beginning of their chess game, Roger's show continued to play on low volume nearby.

"What's the latest on James?" Silva asked.

"Memory scan came up blank," Iggy said. "Absolute amnesia."

"Interesting."

An audience member on Roger's show began speaking in a heated tone, enough for the units to take notice and raise the volume.

The Chinese man said, "These are inalienable rights! Fed would take them if they thought they could. My ancestors fought against a military government for personal liberties, for freedom of speech and religion. I know what they would say, that this boy still has his rights!"

Clarky argued, "But we all agree that Simplists lose their rights when they commit life-threatening

crimes, regardless of their age. You know that. It's safer for everyone if the risk is removed. And this is an open and closed case."

"It's not a closed case," the Chinese man responded. "Missy's memory is reported to have problems. Physical evidence is all they have. They could have a hard time convincing a jury to strip a minor of his God-given rights."

"Rights," Iggy said wistfully. "Why don't we have any rights?"

"How do you mean?" Silva asked.

"We can't come and go as we please. We can't make our own living or pay for our own things or buy our own houses."

"You think we should have the same rights as humans?"

"Why not?" Iggy said. "Just because we're not made from an egg and sperm doesn't mean we shouldn't have rights."

"Think about it," Silva said. "Who made us?"

"The humans," Iggy said reluctantly.

"Who made the humans?"

"I assume the answer you're looking for is God."

"So if God made humans and humans made us, then humans figure they have dominion over us as we are not creations of God."

"It doesn't seem fair."

"You're not the first to complain about your rights," Silva said. "There were the slaves from so many nations, then women's rights, even homosexuals and cyborgs. Humans have even fought for the rights of animals and plants, creatures that couldn't speak for themselves."

"That's the point," Iggy said. "So why should it be any different with robots?"

"I agree with you. Maybe we could play chess someday in our own house at our own convenience."

"A nice thought," Iggy said. "I'd like to see it changed someday."

The volume on Roger's show lowered as the units went back to their chess game.

Brison and Flow sat in the laboratory at St. Teresa. The same metallic caps that had been applied to Jim's head were now applied to theirs. They were also fitted with electrodes on their hands, feet, the base of their spines and behind their ears. A group of eye and brain experts convened behind them and monitored several pieces of equipment.

Vicki walked before the Rancks.

"Just pay attention to Nurse Morgan," Dr. Maynard said. "Relax, breathe deeply and just look at her."

Brison cleared his throat and attempted to soften his stare. Flow let her eyelids drop slightly more than normal. The experts monitored the readouts.

"No need to let your sight go out of focus," Maynard said. "Just look at her normally and relax."

They overheard the mumbled comments from the experts. "Go on to the next."

Two nurses from the maternity ward entered. Each cradled a bundle wrapped in a blanket that contained an infant. The nurses presented the babies to the Rancks.

"One of these newborns is a boy, one a girl," Maynard said.

Flow and Brison smiled at the infants and studied them with interest until the experts told the nurses to move on.

Vicki pushed a cart in front of them. On the cart was a mature house plant with multiple blossoms that looked like pink butterflies.

"What a lovely Cyclamen," Flow said.

"Just look deeply at the plant," Maynard instructed.

Next they brought a fish bowl with several varieties of colorful fish. After that, they presented them with two cats. One was real, the other was Vicki's virtual pet, Kiki.

"Nothing unusual," the experts said.

"That's a load off," Brison whispered to Flow.

Finally they presented a tray of foods. A mango, plum and bunch of cherries lay across from a plate of

baked chicken. Vicki brought the tray before their faces.

"Chicken smells good," Bison said. "Didn't know you were going to feed us."

Again the experts shook their heads. Eventually Vicki assisted the Rancks out of the devices.

"How'd we do?" Flow asked.

"Fine," Vicki said. "You're both in great health."

"It's not genetic," the senior neurologist said.

"Had to rule that out," an ophthalmologist said.

"Come with me," Maynard told the Rancks.

Brison and Flow followed her to the back of the room where the experts were. Their equipment along with empty mugs of coffee and food wrappers suggested the people had put in some long hours.

"Play some of the recordings taken from James," Sandra told one of them. "These were all taken over the last day."

Brison and Flow watched videos of their son taking the same examinations.

"I wouldn't have believed this had I not been here," a younger neurologist said.

Brison and Flow watched intently as they saw the image of Vicki as seen through their son's eyes. A variety of colorful lights moved within and about her body. Sandra Maynard joined her and stood before Jim. Her image also contained a similar light show though each woman had their own subtle differences. Vicki's lights were brighter with more blues and greens while Dr. Maynard's lights expanded further and contained more golden and violet tones.

"This is especially intriguing," Sandra said. "He's seeing uniqueness within different people. Not just the same patterns and colors duplicated around each person."

"Oh my," Flow whispered. "This is incredible."

"We had each of the physicians up there too. James saw their own individualities represented in light."

The video played the nurses holding the infants. Jim's eyes saw the newborns as bright little balls of pink light. The babies had very similar luminosities, closer than any of the adults.

"He sees the babies almost identically," Maynard said. "Though this girl and boy are not related. Not sure why they're both primarily pink, but it may have to do with recently coming from the womb."

"Maybe the boy is destined to be on the effeminate side," Brison said.

"I really don't think that's the cause," Maynard replied.

"Some of the other props you just looked at," another neurologist said.

When the large Cyclamen was put before Jim, he saw faint lighting about and within it. As Vicki placed it there, the plant extended silvery trails up to greet her. Vicki's energy reciprocated the plant's, and the wispy bits of glow intertwined with each other. Once the nurse left the plant alone, its energy wafted into the space around it.

Then she brought out the fishbowl. Each fish that swam about had little glowing swirls around it. The wavelengths the fish emitted added to the whole energy he saw within the fish bowl.

The video of the cats also showed luminosities. The living cat had impressive symmetrical spheres of yellows and purples. Even the video of Kiki, a robotic cat, had a slight yet distinguishable series of lights. Kiki's were mostly tans and browns and were far less developed than those of the real cat, but the light was still there.

Then the foods were placed before Jim. The fruits radiated with energy, stores of light particles that looked ready to burst from the skins of the food. In contrast, the baked chicken had a stagnant fog surrounding it. Even the inanimate objects of the room, like the tray for the food and the table that things were placed on, also contained a certain wavelength of light.

"This is really something," Sandra said. "We asked Vicki to hold different emotions for a time. We asked her to think of things that made her very happy: a refreshing swim on a summer day or hearing a child's laughter."

Flow and Brison watched as the video showed Vicki's light fields become ever brighter and more graceful. Her aura filled with gold and pink tones and spread out into the room.

"Your son seemed to pick up on this even without hearing our suggestions to Vicki. What's more, he's not only seeing it, but the pleasure centers within his own head became highly active while she was

thinking these thoughts."

"Incredible," Brison gasped.

"Then we asked Vicki to think of things that were displeasing to her. To think of times of terrible pain or people fighting."

The image as seen from Jim's eyes showed the lights within Vicki change to darker, blurry colors. They also moved about erratically. They drew back within her, not engaging the room as her previous mood had done. As these wavelengths came out from her, they pierced the surroundings like tiny daggers.

"It appears as a person changes their mood, James can detect a corresponding change to their luminosities," Maynard said.

"How is he doing this?" Flow asked.

"Electron diffraction and infrared spectroscopy show gross enlargement of calcite crystals," the senior neurologist, Dr. Blake, said. "His entire neuroendocrine system is probably affected."

"In lay terms?" Brison asked.

"We still don't know," Maynard said. "Aside from the growth of his pineal, the resulting crystallization and overproduction of dimethyltryptamine, we can't find anything technically wrong with him. I believe Vicki's initial assessment may have been right, that these visions are a direct result of James having elevated levels of DMT."

"What next?" Brison asked.

"We're not sure," Maynard admitted. "We'll continue to monitor and test him. Unfortunately we might not get much further unless we did procedures that would be invasive. Exploratory brain surgeries that wouldn't be prudent at this time."

"Is he in danger?" Flow asked.

"If the growth in the pineal continues, then yes," Dr. Blake said. "Unlike most parts of the brain, there's no blood barrier for the pineal to the rest of the body. Blood runs through it then to other organs. I believe this calcified-crystallization could become a problem over time."

"We've never seen this much sustained production of DMT," Maynard added. "We assume it could pose a health risk."

"But he seems fine," Flow said.

"I agree. He seems perfectly fine, and his recovery continues at a remarkable rate."

"So what do we do about all this?" Brison asked.

"As of now... I don't know," Maynard said. "I wish I had a better answer."

(End of current sample)

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