

MEMORITE ROGUE

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-- First Three Chapters Only --

A NOVEL BY
DANNY CARLTON

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By
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This novel is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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CHAPTER ONE

YEAR: Event+39

////1//15AM

///FROM//TODD/ENGSTROM

///TO//MEMORITE/PRIME/COUNCIL

///FOLLOW/UP/ON/PREVIOUS/REPORT

///LOCAL/SEARCH/CONFIRMS/SUSPICION

///MAY/POSSIBLY/BE/IN/IMMEDIATE/DANGER

///WILL/REPEAT/CONTACT/AT/1//35AM////

1:32am

They weren't even sure he existed, these Memorites. That didn't stop them from relentlessly hunting for him any time they got the slightest whiff that he might still be alive. He'd used that to his advantage, only occasionally at first, but then came the plan. They proved too predictable, so he decided to use that against them. For six years, he'd carefully laid the plan out, piece by piece. Each time they reacted perfectly, exactly as he knew they would. Now he was close to the end. Only a few more pieces and he could bring their entire world down around

their ears. But he'd gotten careless. No -- he had to be honest -- it was arrogance. He'd danced right beneath their noses for so long, he'd assumed too much and slipped up. Now one of them knew, or at least suspected. If he knew, then all was lost. For what one Memorite knows, they all know. Like nasty vermin ants, he thought. A hive of mindless robots all duped into the lie that they were helping humanity. It was only through an accident that he himself had escaped. He again thanked whatever force or power there was that brought him to the truth as he tightened his grip on the rifle.

“Thank you so much for staying late to help me.”

The girl's voice drifted across the grounds and echoed slightly from the surrounding buildings. The intervening bushes and trees as well as the distance muffled it even more. The cool of the night air brought goose bumps to his skin, but he remained motionless. He couldn't see the girl or the person she was speaking to, but he knew exactly where they were, down to the inch. He could hear the girl's heels scuff the bricks in the walkway and the almost imperceptible ruffle of her jacket as she drew it closer. The person she spoke to made no sound. His steps were carefully placed to minimize any noise. It didn't matter, the girl provided more than ample clues to their position.

“I really hated to ask you, but this was the only time I could think of and I knew you didn't mind awkward hours. I didn't mess up your evening did I?”

They were walking from the east entrance of the building that housed the faculty offices to the parking lot on the other side of the next building. Their path would take them across a

space of 75 yards that provided only three visual openings through the bushes and trees. The man listened, crouching unseen, hidden by the mass of brambles and briars. He probably could have done the job with one opening. In fact, the challenge of it piqued his interest, but he subdued his zeal and chose to be cautious. One opening to verify their position, another to take the shot, and a third in case something interfered with either of the other two.

“No, I have a habit of keeping odd hours,” the professor said to his student.

Finally he spoke. That allowed him to further pinpoint their position. The professor was walking directly abreast of the girl, on this side. By the rhythm of the girl’s steps and the sound her voice made, she was walking slightly sideways in order to turn toward him as she walked. Their pace was even, perfectly even, which would be expected. They should pass the first opening in just under three seconds, or about six and a half steps. The bushes were thick but the branches separated just enough for a small peek of the side of the building at that point. It would barely be enough to see more than six or seven inches of their chests. That was more than enough for what he needed.

Two seconds to go and the he could now hear other voices coming from the breezeway halfway between the first opening and the second. The girl’s steps changed rhythm as she angled her body in the direction she was walking. The continued scuffing and clicking of her heels confirmed that their pace remained the same.

They passed the opening and he locked onto their position. He calculated the time it would take for them to reach the next

opening, almost instantaneously. The internal rhythm he kept going in the back of his mind, a continuous mental humming of rapid beats, so ingrained in his training that it had long since become instinct, allowed him to time their movement as accurately as if he'd had a stopwatch. His confidence in his next move was such that after making sure the silencer was secure he took aim at the bricks opposite the second opening and closed his eyes. At the precise time, they would pass the opening, and he would squeeze the trigger. He even took the effort to add the speed of the bullet to his equation.

“Janie! Hi!”

The steps halted.

“Kristy! Gary! What are you two doing out so late? Professor Engstrom, you know Kristy and . . .? What am I saying, of course you know them.”

The three students shared a burst of nervous giggling.

“Uh, we were just coming back from Terry’s party, which you blew off, by the way.”

“Well, I had some studying to do, and Professor Engstrom offered to help tutor me for the mid-terms.”

“This late?!”

“Well, Professor Engstrom’s really busy most of the time.”

“Hey, you wanna go with us back to the dorms?”

“Sure . . . Uh, thank again Professor, you really helped me a lot’

“Think nothing of it, Janie. I’ll see you tomorrow in class.”

The chorus of byes was accompanied by the sounds of several feet scuffing and clumping back across the walkway. The three students made enough noise that, had he needed to,

the man wouldn't have been able to lock onto the Professor's position. But he didn't need to. He had two openings remaining. Focusing on the second opening he waited. There, quickly, but with enough of him visible to calculate the target, the Professor passed the opening. While he couldn't hear the footsteps, he had observed the Professor long enough to know the pace at which he always walked. But there was another problem. The position of the Professor's arm was such that, given the number of steps between the second and third openings, when he reached the third opening his arm would be swung back, blocking a clean body shot. The odds were that the bullet would still do its work, but he didn't like playing odds. He raised the gun barrel enough to point to where the Professor's head would be in a few seconds. A headshot would be harder, but still not a problem.

Again, he closed his eyes. He focused on the math. His internal rhythm feeling like a giant hand that grasped all the elements together, slowly squeezing tighter. In his mind, he could see the Professor just as sure as if his eyes were open and the bushes and trees had been removed.

Four seconds. He let his mind soar and looked down at the Professor. He'd watched him walk this same route at least a dozen times -- each time keeping exactly the same distance between the wall of the building and the edge of the walkway.

Three seconds. Holding the gun completely still he lowered his head. His eyes not needed, he relaxed and focused on where he knew the Professor was and where he knew he would be in exactly . . .

Two seconds. The intense concentration was exhilarating. The focus needed relaxation. The relaxation caused peacefulness and the combination produced a blissful euphoria that swept him from head to toe.

One second. His mind in an almost trancelike state, the gun, the opening in the branches, the Professor became one object, one fluid continuum encompassing time and space.

The bullet struck the Professor at the base of the skull and traveled slightly upwards. It expanded upon contact with the skull, and thus ripped a wide path of destruction as it pushed through. Normally such a wound would leave virtually no time for the victim to even realize anything had happened. But this was not an ordinary victim. While his thoughts grew incoherent, the Professor had a quick realization that he'd been shot, followed by a hazy curiosity of why, followed by a dimming idea that it was some mistake. He was dead before his body had had time to even fall.

Still holding the trigger in, the shooter shook himself alert. He slowly released the trigger, then turned, and slipped away along the edge of the bushes, being extremely careful to make no noise.

“God bless you” Kristy shouted.

“Who are you God blessing?” Janie asked.

“Whoever sneezed over there by the bushes.” Kristy stumbled and grabbed Gary’s arm.

“Who is it? I can make him out in the dark.”

“Isn’t that uh . . . oh what’s his name . . . Waltzer, Washer?”

“Walser, yeah, I think you’re right.”

The three continued to walk as they peered through the dark at the figure of another of their professors, sitting on a bench near the bushes. They could just see him well enough to see him drumming the fingers of his right hand on his left forearm. Janie, for a second, thought she saw something move near the bushes, but she dismissed it as her imagination, and caught up with her friends.

1:36am

The file set like a depressing island in the sea of clutter that overflowed the top of Kevin Gould's desk. Kevin stared at it intently as he thumbed the edge, as a sort of symbolic balancing on the precipice between tossing it back into the nether reaches of his desk, and actually getting to work on it. The indecisive teetering was relaxing in that he could make himself think he was beginning to work, while not actually doing any. He'd played this game too many times before, and he always made the same decision. He leaned forward in his chair, set his half empty coffee cup to the side, and opened the file.

He had short dark hair, a masculine face with somewhat boyish eyes. At just over six foot, he was too short to be considered like a basketball player, but he was built like one nonetheless. His suit jacket was tossed over the back of his chair. His sleeves were partly rolled up and he leaned his head on one hand as he flipped through the file with the other.

His desk sat in a small sea of desks of various officers and detectives. While the chief had his own office, anyone else that needed a desk, got one wherever one was available. To Kevin's

left was a desk shared by four officers, two from the day shift, two from the night. Behind him was Ben Tucker's desk, the other detective currently assigned to the night shift. He would be in, in a couple of hours. The chief liked to stagger the shifts of the detectives so there would be some continuity to their work.

So far, Kevin had spent two weeks gathering all the bits of evidence contained in this file, and he still hadn't been able to solve the case. Most of it he was very familiar with, but he needed to run through the evidence again to see if he'd missed anything. Almost always he had missed something, and after a few times running through it, he would catch what he'd missed and the pieces would fit together.

The evidence gathering had consumed most of the past few days, or what hadn't been taken up by other things he couldn't get out of doing. Since the work had taken place away from the station and Kevin was salaried, no one noticed all the extra hours he'd put in. Kevin certainly wasn't going to mention it. Someone higher up might think he was going too hard and pull some of his cases. Kevin had found that the work didn't really tire him out, and over the past three years he'd began to lean on it to fill his time.

Kevin had thoroughly enjoyed most of his first year on the force, especially since it made his parents proud to tell people their son was a police officer. Those first months had been full of the dullness of the routine at work, intermixed with the occasionally spurt of excitement, enjoying the camaraderie of his fellow officers and also enjoying the attention women gave him now that he was in uniform. That all ended abruptly. On a

stormy night, two years and ten months earlier his parents' truck had slipped off the road, killing both of them. Kevin had been very close with his parents, almost to the point of continuing to live with them, something they really wanted, but he felt it might look like he hadn't become his own person. His younger brother, Bill, was in college, and they both still saw their parents almost daily, and so Kevin had felt he'd never really left the warm coziness of the home they'd built. When he scored touchdowns in high school, it was to make them happy. When he worked hard in college, joined the ROTC and finally decided on a criminal justice major, it was with their approval in mind. He'd had no real idea about the direction he wanted his life to go, but his father had always told him that a man can be happy doing almost anything, as long as he does it the best he can. So far, those words had proven to be true, except that the primary source of happiness in Kevin's life, his parents, had been taken away from him.

After the funeral, Kevin and Bill had had a long talk about their lives, and how they would handle things. There had still been quite a bit of insurance money after the funeral expenses. Their parents had long paid off the mortgage on their house, and there was even a tidy sum in the bank. They kept the house and Bill moved in to it. Kevin insisted that before they split the insurance money, enough be taken out for Bill's tuition and college expenses. Bill protested that it wasn't fair to Kevin, but Kevin won out. Even then, Bill still stayed out of school for a semester while he dealt with the emotional impact of the loss of his parents

Rather than grieve, Kevin worked. He applied himself to his chosen field with an earnestness that amazed his coworkers and superiors. For almost three years, he'd fended away the anguish of grief by focusing on his job. It had resulted a surprisingly early promotion to detective, and the respect of the entire department.

Meanwhile Bill had returned to college, met a girl, and got married. He talked Kevin into selling him his half of the house. Bill and his wife, Karen, settled in, finished college and Karen landed a nice job in the Human Resources department of a local company. Bill went to law school. They had Kevin over on a regular basis, sometimes causally, and fruitlessly, dropping hint about someone Karen thought Kevin might like to date.

Grief or not, Kevin had slowly come to accept what had happened, but he'd also developed a pattern of hard work and focus. While his police buddies were laughing it up at off duty hangouts, Kevin worked. In spite of ample opportunities to meet and get to know women over the past few years, for some reason Kevin avoided any kind of romantic entanglement. The few dates that he'd been pressured into going on, flopped due to his absentminded concentration on whatever case he was currently working on. Work or not, Kevin was beginning to feel that he was leaving an important part of his life behind. He just couldn't bring himself to jump back into the dating market. It was too easy to dive into his work. Too easy to push away anything else to the exclusion of whatever case he was focused on at the time.

He opened the file and looked at the face of Hernando Sanchez. He was 19 and either was in a gang or was trying his hardest to look like he was. The current fad, especially among Hispanic teenagers was to try to dress like gang members. This left the good kids looking like bad kids. Hernando had a job as a stocker at a local electronics store. The owner had been reporting items being stolen for almost a month when he'd caught Hernando leaving one day with about \$5,000 worth of VCR's in the back of his car.

The police were called and Hernando claimed he had no idea how the stuff got there, and pointed out that the lock on his car was broken. The owner insisted on pressing charges, and claimed over \$100,000 worth of merchandise had been stolen during the month. By the time the police had arrived Hernando was angry. His demeanor had been cooperative before, but by now, he presented himself now as a very angry, young man. He was arrested and brought to the station. His father had died when he was little so it was his mother that came down to try to get him out, but the judge set the bail pretty high. She couldn't even afford what the bail bondsmen were asking. So, Hernando remained in lock-up.

The problem was that while his fingerprints were on the boxes, so were at least a dozen other store employees'. Unless Kevin could find some more evidence to link him to the series of thefts, he could very well go free. The DA was pressuring the chief to make a stronger case. The chief had dumped the whole problem on Kevin. And Kevin hadn't had time to process the case like he wanted to. And there was Hernando, staring back at Kevin from the picture. The angry defiant face

Kevin saw at the scene and later when he questioned him was there in the mug shot, but next to it was a picture Hernando's mother had pushed into Kevin's hand that day she came in to beg for his release. This photo was of a conservatively dressed, smiling boy who looked anything but a thief. Kevin stared at the two photos intently. Which was the real Hernando?

"Hey, You busy?"

The interruption burst loudly into his train of thought, made worse by the loud scrape of a chair being dragged to his desk.

"You see that thing from the chief on the Memorites?"

It was Dan Redmond, his old partner. They'd worked together for 3 years until Kevin's promotion to detective. Dan didn't seem to harbor any resentment, but he did have a habit of being overly casual, as if Kevin was still an officer. Dan obviously wanted to chat.

"You gonna work with one uh them Memorite freaks?"

"Freaks? I don't think you can call them freaks." Kevin said, closing the case file, and sitting back.

"Yeah, well, what else call lobotomized robots from some cult?"

Kevin closed his eyes and sighed.

"Okay, they aren't lobotomized. They aren't robots and it's not a cult. My aunt happens to go to the same church as the one over at the University, and the last I heard Baptists weren't a cult." Kevin chuckled, "And I'd sure like to see you tell my aunt she belongs to a cult." Kevin laughed more at the thought of Dan trying such a suicide stunt.

"They just go to regular churches to throw people off. And if they aren't lobotomized, then how do you explain how they

do all that stuff they do. And have you ever seen one of 'em? They act like robots. C'mon, open your eyes, man."

For years, Kevin had tolerated Dan's constant suspicions of everything from the CIA to what the pulp in the orange juice was really made of. He'd learned to dismiss it as mildly humorous eccentricities. But sometimes it did grow tiring.

"Well, all I know is," Kevin said, letting the case file thump against the desk, "they've not bothered me any, which makes them one up on you."

"Ha, ha, laugh it off smart guy, but when they take over, you remember who warned you first."

With that, Dan swung the chair back to where it had been and walked away.

Watching him, Kevin slowly shook his head, and then grinned. He picked the file back up and laid it open in front of him. His train of thought broken, he started all over again reviewing the case.

1:46am

Brad felt good. Really good. The night was still, with just the rustling of the wind, but the rhythm of the music from the party still beat in his head. Wendy leaned against him as they walked/stumbled back to the dorms. Both were almost numb with a combination of alcohol and exhaustion and just plain feeling good. Brad knew their path was erratic, and he didn't care. He felt good and Wendy felt nice and soft against him and who cared anyway.

The party had started at around seven. Brad picked Wendy up at her dorm and they walked off campus to the house of the

guys throwing it. Lots of people had heard about the party and the crowd overflowed out of the house into the front yard. The three guys that shared the house had planned the party well. The neighbors to the north and across the street were both away for the night, and the old lady who lived to the south was fairly hard of hearing, and never complained of noise. They still kept the noise down enough that the police never came. There was lots of music, lots of beer and Brad and Wendy danced until they got tired, and drank until they felt like dancing again. Wendy had to work the following afternoon and didn't want to be too tired, so they finally left about half past one in the morning.

They'd actually left with a small crowd, but Wendy insisted on trying to help someone who'd passed out on the driveway. After several minutes, some of his friends showed up and Brad and Wendy continued their slow and erratic way back to the dorms.

Once on campus, they made their way toward the administration building. Brad always liked looking at the building at night because there was such a contrast to the imposing bustle of seriousness that swarmed them during the day. It was his way of feeling he could conquer the authority they represented, walking past them when they were empty and impotent. He'd joined, with relish, the protest that had been organized the week before. He had no idea what, specifically they were protesting, but he yelled and screamed along with the other students who marched in front of the administration building. He figured any authority is bad, so why not protest

them. He smiled at the impotence he imagined the buildings now showed -- dark, and empty.

His eyesight was fuzzy and things seemed to swim a little, but it looked like someone had spray painted something on the wall up ahead. He gave a short, involuntary giggle as he thought of the stuffy uppity-ups getting all uptight when they came into work in the morning.

As they came closer Brad could see that it wasn't words but just a spray of what looked like red paint across the off white brick wall. Cool, he thought. Someone's pulling a prank, making it look like the wall's been sprayed with blood. "Someone shoulda thought at that for the protests, but hey, it's still a cool joke. All that's missing is a body."

Brad laughed out loud the next moment as the body came into view. He wondered what they used to make it. It really did look realistic. Wendy had had her eyes closed and was letting Brad lead up to that point, but his laughter made her look up. She sobered a bit at what she saw. Then it dawned on her that Brad was laughing. He must know it's a joke. So she relaxed.

"That's gross," she said up at Brad as they walked closer, "why would someone pull something like . . ."

Both she and Brad stopped. They were now close enough to clearly see that this was no prank. Wendy closed her eyes and tried to bury her head in the folds of Brad's jacket, but she felt his stomach tightening with spasms. He jerked away from her, doubled over and loudly threw-up.

1:55am

“Nine-one-one, police, fire, or ambulance?”

“Oh . . . please . . . there’s a . . . there’s a dead guy at the college!”

“Okay, Ma’am, please calm down and tell me where you are.”

“We’re at . . . Brad are you going to be okay?”

“Ma’am! Ma’am! Can you tell me where you’re at?”

“We’re near the administration building, on the north side of the main quad. Brad! Where are you going?!?”

“Ma’am, please stay with me here. Are you there?”

“Yes, I’m here. My boyfriend just fell into some bushes. But the other guy’s dead.”

“Okay, Ma’am we’re sending the police and an ambulance to your location. Are you injured?”

“Me? No . . . I’m okay. But my boyfriend threw up when we found the dead guy, and then he fell into the bushes.”

“Is he injured?”

“He’s dead, isn’t that injured enough?!?”

“I mean your boyfriend.”

“Oh, I don’t think so, he’s mostly drunk.”

“Have you been drinking, too, ma’am?”

“Yes, some, but there really is a dead guy here. There’s blood all over the wall and gloppy stuff on the side walk that looks like it might be his brains.”

“Okay, Ma’am, I get the picture. The police should be there any minute, but I need you to stay on the line with me, okay?”

“Okay.”

“Can you see your boyfriend?”

“I can see his feet. I think he passed out. Wait, I can hear sirens.”

“Okay, ma’am that will be the ambulance. They should be able to help you and the police will be arriving soon, too.”

“Thank you so much . . . I’ve never seen . . .”

“That’s okay, Ma’am. You’ll be okay. Has the ambulance arrived yet?”

“Yes, they just stopped.”

“Okay, I’m going to hang up now, the paramedics will take care of you now, okay?”

“Okay, uh . . . bye.”

“Good bye.”

2:01am

Pulling into the parking lot behind the college administration building, the officer could see the flash of the ambulance lights against the wall of the breezeway that passed through the middle of the building. He couldn’t see how the ambulance got to the other side, so he swung his patrol car into the grass on the side of the building and circled around to the wide, brick walkway.

The ambulance was up next to the bushes that lined the walkways on the side furthest from the building. One EMT was helping a disheveled looking kid in the bushes to sit up, while a girl watched. The other EMT was leaning over a body on the walkway near the wall of the administration building.

A small crowd of students had gathered on the walkway several yards past the body. They were straining to see what was going on. Those in the front were trying to keep back but those in the back were inching them closer. More students were

coming from the direction of the dorms. The flashing lights had obviously brought out some curious insomniacs.

John Levin opened the door to his patrol car and stepped out. Leaving the flashing lights on, he stood between the open car door and the patrol car and pulled out his radio. He glared at the crowd as he radioed in his location. He was pleased to see their reaction. The front of the crowd began pushing back in earnest, not wanting to face the possibility of interfering with the police. Soon the line stopped moving forward.

He knew how incredibly stupid individuals could get when in a crowd. This not his first time to have to single handedly control a group like this. The previous week he'd had to deal with a group of protestors who had assembled in almost the same spot. What they were protesting wasn't clear, and it didn't appear that many in the crowd cared. He saw some of the same faces, now.

Replacing the radio, he shut the car door, hiked up his gun belt, and walked toward the crowd. Most of them were intimidated, and were either backing up from the scene or trying to leave. A few had overconfident smirks and were actually pushing forward. The officer let his hand rest on his gun, but left the snap closed. He stepped around the body and approached the crowd of students. A few left. Some of the faces lost their smirks.

"I'm gonna have to ask all of you to step back past this line." He gestured to the strip of concrete that ran across the brick walkway, still keeping his other hand resting on his gun. More smirks disappeared and the crowd inched back to where he'd motioned. More students were also approaching from the

direction of the dorms. He gave the crowd one last stern look and turned to retrieve his crime scene tape from the trunk of his patrol car.

“This guy’s gone.” The EMT told him as he walked past. “You wanna look ‘im over or anything?”

“No, right now I just need to secure the scene and locate witnesses.”

“Quit pushing me!” someone whispered loudly from the crowd.

“Aw, quit bein’ a baby. It’s just one cop. What’s he gonna do?”

“Then you get in front.”

“Right, like one cop can do anything. Look how many people are already here. We don’t need to let him push us around.”

“Hey, moron, loaded gun, big stick, that not mean anything to you?”

“So what, he’s not gonna use ‘em, he’d start a riot.”

The officer had reached the patrol car and had retrieved the tape. The crowd had again surged forward past the point he’d specified. Several of those with smirks were in the second and third rows, egging the first row forward. Some of the ones who’d lost their smirks had regained them. The crowd mentality was beginning to build up as several troublemakers played them along. All for the fun of causing trouble. The mood was beginning to approach a pivotal point.

Walking back calmly, posture confident, Levin again approached the crowd.

“You, you, and you, up against the wall.”

Two smirks disappeared instantaneously. The third remained but looked slightly weakened.

“You can’t . . .”

“Are you resisting an officer?” He flipped the snap open on his gun. Two of them moved to the wall, the third hesitated, his smirk fading.

“I ain’t afraid of . . .”

“You two,” Levin said sharply, cutting the student off and pointing to two other students in the front of the crowd, “I need your help. Can one of you attach this tape to that bush there and the other attach the other end to . . .” He looked at the building, “that column over there?”

Suddenly it wasn’t the cop against the crowd. The troublemakers had been separated and others had been designated helpers. A new line had been drawn.

“You can’t make them do anything,” Said the most stubborn of the troublemakers.

“Shut up, Larry.”

“Yeah, quit being such a jerk.”

“Against the wall, now,” the officer now laid his hand across the top of his billy club. Resisting an officer did give that officer the right to force compliance, and the crowd was suddenly on the officer’s side. Larry’s smirk melted and he grudgingly turned and faced the wall.

The two students the officer had motioned to, took the tape, and did what he asked. One was grinning from ear to ear. The other tried to act more dignified, but couldn’t help the smile that found its way onto his face.

Securing the police line, the two returned the tape to the officer.

“Need us to do anything else?”

“Well, d’you guys think you can watch the crowd and make sure they stay past the line without being bullies about it?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“We wouldn’t bully anyone.”

“Fine then, I appreciate the help.”

Remember the smirk chorus, the officer turned to them, “You three stay exactly where you are.” Turning back to the two temporary ‘deputies’ the officer said, “Oh, and guys, make sure these three idiots don’t go anywhere.”

The crowd laughed at that, and the two helpers smiled and assured the officers they’d make sure the three didn’t leave. Levin approached each of the three, handcuffed them, and sat them down. He then walked to the other end of the walkway and put tape off that side of the crime scene. In the distance, he could see another patrol car heading toward him, and he hid his sigh of relief from the crowd behind him.

2:17am

Kevin was halfway through the case file. He’d written down a time line, and was making a list of people related to the case and their particular relationship to it. He’d used several different sheets all scattered across his desk, so he could see the entire work. At the top were the two pictures of Hernando. He was starting on a list of times to verify alibis against when his phone buzzed.

“Yeah, Gould here.” He paused, listening.

“Hey John, you staying busy?” He slid the case file away a few inches. “Has anyone with the university administration been notified?” he asked. He played with a pencil. “Well, we need to make sure they are.” He looked at his watch, “I need to tidy up some paperwork, and I’ll head right over. Is the scene secure?” he paused. “Good. I’m on my way.” He hung up.

Grabbing his coat off the back of his chair, he threw it on while fishing for his car keys, all while walking toward the door. His hand was on the door when his phone buzzed again.

“Yeah, Gould.” Long pause. His left eyebrow slowly drew upwards. “You’re kidding.” He stared intently at the wall while he listened. “Yeah, I think you should wake up the chief, he’d want to know. In fact he’ll probably want to go to the crime scene.” Kevin shook his head in disbelief. “A Memorite murdered, this’ll make national news. We’d better make sure we cross all our i’s and dot all our t’s hadn’t we.” He paused, then frowned, and let his eyes roll upwards. “Uh, yeah I know I got ‘em backwards, it was a joke.”

CHAPTER TWO

YEAR: Event+32

Newline Magazine

Robots, Fakes or Just Simply Amazing?

By Sarah Cline

What do the following well known people have in common? Senator Les Walkins of Kansas, Governor James Glenwich of Idaho, Rev. Morris Newcoln of the world famous Pensacola Bible Tabernacle and Lou Ellen Toomes, President of the African Children's Relief Fund. They are all alumni of the well-known, yet reclusive Memorite Preparatory School.

The Memorite Preparatory School was established almost 35 years ago, with a generous grant from multi-billionaire William Ezra Scarboro. It was originally intended as a way for underprivileged children to receive a higher quality education, but the initial list of students included the names of children from some fairly prominent members of American society. Scarboro's own son, Kelsey, was in the group. As it later turned out the school was actually an experiment in a novel teaching method and curriculum that subsequently produced some very noteworthy graduates.

Six years later another school, the Memorite Academy was begun under the same auspices as the Preparatory Academy.

All students accepted to the Memorite Academy are selected exclusively from those graduating from Memorite Preparatory School. The students not accepted into the Memorite Academy go on to other public or private schools, or in many cases, simply start college – at age 12.

The entrance requirements of the Memorite Preparatory School have nothing to do with income or social standing. Some of the students admitted are from well to do families, but many are from middle class, and a significant percentage are from low-income, inner-city families. Since there is no tuition, and the school provides books, supplies, as well as transportation, the burden is the same regardless of the family's income.

Senator Walkins, his mother and his 5 brothers and sisters were surviving on government aid 24 years ago when he was accepted at age six. Lou Ellen Toomes family was worth an estimated \$6.5 billion when she was accepted at the same age, two years later.

There are tens of thousands of Memorite Preparatory School graduates all over the country, the vast majority becoming successful leaders in society. They all attribute their success to Memorite Preparatory School.

But what of the mysterious Memorite Academy, which produces the much talked about Memorites?

Roughly a third of each year's Memorite Preparatory School graduates are accepted into the Memorite Academy. The Memorite Preparatory School covers six years, usually from age 6 to 12. The Memorite Academy covers the next six years, ages 13 to 18. Schools that have tested Memorite Preparatory School graduates find that these 12 year old, generally have the equivalent of a high school education and

beyond. Most parents opt to send them on to school for socialization reasons, but a significant numbers go straight to college.

Both the Memorite Preparatory School and the Memorite Academy are funded mainly through private donations, the majority of which are from Memorite Preparatory School alumni and through honorariums earned by Memorites. Memorite Academy graduates, so far, have all remained as a part of the Memorite Society, and work only under it's authority.

Why are the Memorites so mysterious?

So far from what can be learned about them, Memorites have been trained in highly advanced mental abilities. They can read at astounding speeds. They have virtually photographic memories. They are trained in information and data management, all using their own minds for the most part.

Physically Memorites look like you or I except that they keep their appearance fairly conservative, thus the ever-present misconception that the Society is a cult.

While speed-reading and memory are impressive feats, it hardly seems criteria for the kind of rumors that surround the Memorites. Some rumors claim that Memorites are actually human shells for robotic computer implants. And as noted, some rumors claim that the Memorite Society is a cult. Others say they are nothing more than a harmless group of intellectuals.

Five years after the first students graduated from the Memorite Academy, a handful of Memorites were placed outside the two schools in various humanitarian positions. As the years passed a greater number each year could be found working for charities, hospitals, universities, relief agencies, etc. The Memorite Society is been deluged each year with requests from various organizations. As of this writing,

according to official Memorite Society reports, there are about 1,000 Memorites in positions with the government, State and Federal, and about 5,000 Memorites in various private organizations.

There's an old saying that a human is a slow error prone genius, and a computer is a fast accurate moron. While it was frustrating, it did draw the line between people and computers. Memorites blur that line, some say, to a dangerous degree.

Sarah Cline is a contributing writer for Newline Magazine.

2:18am

Kevin opened the car door and reached for his phone in one move. He then sat in the driver's seat and pushed his phone into the charger/handsfree holder. It was instinct; he'd done it so many times. The car started up with one turn of the key, and he stretched his head around to see what was behind. He popped the car in reverse without looking at the gearshift, and backed out. Pulling through the gate to the parking lot, he gave a brief wave to Willy, the gate attendant.

Kevin waited for two cars to pass before he pulled into the street. He was in mid turn when his phone rang.

"Yeah, Gould."

"Kevin, this is Chief Roberts. Where are you right now?"

"Just pulling out from the station, heading to the college."

"Good, I just heard the news. Now, Kevin, I'm putting my faith in you that you'll handle this well."

Kevin stopped at an intersection and waited for the light.

"There are several key elements to this crime that could impact our department very seriously," said the Chief. "For one, this will most likely make national news. We need to

make sure we don't look like a bunch of inept bumbler. Next, we don't want to jeopardize our relationship with the Memorite Society."

The light turned green, so Kevin pulled out and turned.

"I've been trying to get a Memorite for the department for a year now," continued the Chief, "and I really don't want to have this get in the way of that. Okay?"

"Yeah, you know me, I'll be the picture of professionalism."

"Right. Now has anybody called the college President?"

"Not that I'm aware of, sir."

"Since you're the point man on this I think it'd be best coming from you. Go ahead and give him a call, and let him know what's happened. He'll most likely want to come to the scene, so the sooner he's notified the better."

"I'll call him as soon as I get off the line with you."

"Fine, I won't be coming out now. I should be there sometime later on this morning . . . " Kevin could hear the distant sound of a woman's angry voice coming across the line, followed by the muffled sound of the Chief, through his hand as he covered his phone.

"Just make sure things are done right, okay, Kevin?"

"You can count on me Chief."

"Good, I'll see you in a few hours."

Kevin tapped the voice command button on the side of his phone.

"Police Station."

He waited while the phone dialed.

"Limestone Police Department."

“Yeah, Carla, this is Kevin, do you think you could look up the home number for the college President for me?”

“Sure Kevin, hang on a minute . . .”

Carla had been working for the police department for almost three years now. Her husband was an old high school friend of Kevin’s and Kevin had mentioned the opening to them when they had talked about Carla getting a part time job. He was glad she’d answered the phone because most of the other operators could get snotty when asked to look up phone numbers.

“I found it, Kevin, but are you driving?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, let me just connect you through here and you won’t need to be fiddling with your phone.”

“Thanks, Carla, what would I do without you?”

“Here you go, Kevin.”

Kevin could hear the phone ringing several times followed by a sleepy, “Yes, this had better be really important.”

“President Payton? This is detective Gould of the Limestone Police Department, there’s been a . . . uh . . . situation at the college.”

“What!? What’s happened?”

Kevin had reached the next intersection and stopped to wait for a green light.

“There’s been a murder, a shooting.”

“Oh goodness. Do you know who it is?”

“Yes.” The light turned and Kevin accelerated. “The victim is Todd Engstrom.”

Kevin knew that would hit like a ton of bricks. There was a long pause.

“President Payton are you there?”

“Yes. Yes I’m here. I’ll . . . where is . . . I’m on my way. I’ll talk to you there.” The line went dead.

Kevin reached the next intersection and turned right. On up ahead, not six blocks further was the college campus.

2:32am

The college campus was laid out with a quasi-manicured wooded area in front of the clutter of various buildings. The wooded area was the brainchild of some donor who felt that lawns were artificial. Fortunately, the landscape architect had enough foresight to realize the mischief college students can get into in a thick wooded area. He therefore designed it more as a wooded garden than a pure back-to-nature wild place, making sure the thickest parts were choked with briars and thorns. If Kevin ever met that architect, he’d buy him dinner. The design allowed the police to easily monitor the area for troublemakers and amorous couples who wanted more privacy than the dorms afforded.

By the flashing red and blue, it appeared to Kevin that the action was all between the wooded area and the administration building. There were four patrol cars already pulled up on the grass, so Kevin circled around and parked in the parking lot behind the building.

In spite of the early hour, there was quite a large crowd. They were keeping behind the police lines and watching the ‘show’ except for a few students that stood inside the police lines facing out. Interesting tactic, Kevin thought. Had to be

John Levin's work, if there was anybody that could get control of a crowd it was him.

Pushing his way through the crowd, Kevin approached the police line.

"Sorry buddy . . .," The student then saw Kevin's badge hanging from his coat pocket. "Sorry officer, go on in."

"It's detective," said Kevin giving the kid a grin and a pat on the shoulder as he passed. "Keep up the good work."

"Thanks, I will." The kid turned and tried to glare at the crowd but he couldn't get the beaming smile off his face.

Two of the officers were talking over near the trees. A third was on the radio near the body, and the fourth was by the tape at the other side of the crime scene. Kevin could just make out some students hiding in the wooded area trying to get a better view.

When they saw him, the two officers stopped talking and approached Kevin.

"Scene's secure, and the spectators are behaving themselves, sir."

"Any witnesses?" Kevin asked.

"None that we can find, sir. The girl that called 911 is over there," he gestured to a girl near where they had just been talking. Next to her was a rumped looking guy about her own age, with his head between his knees.

"Another girl came forward and told us she'd been walking with the professor just a few feet from here not long before it was called in. She's over there." He gestured to another girl, visibly shaken, sitting on a bench a few yards from the first girl.

“That’s all we’ve got so far.”

“Better’n nothing I guess,” Kevin sighed, “lets take a look at the victim.”

Kevin approached slowly. The victim lay in an awkward position, face down. He apparently had crumpled to the ground; therefore, his legs were pulled up beneath him, lifting his midsection slightly off the ground. Not a very dignified pose, but he couldn’t be moved until the forensic team had finished collecting evidence. One arm was straight out from his body, seeming to gesture toward the blood splatter on the wall. The other arm lay twisted at his side, the hand actually under his chest. His head lay with the exit wound up. His heart must have kept beating for a few seconds after he’d been shot because a pool of blood formed a dark circle around his face.

Squatting down Kevin could just make out the entrance wound. The lighting wasn’t adequate for him to tell the caliber of the bullet from what he could see. The exit wound was no help in that department either. The exit wound seemed higher than the entrance wound, but it was too difficult to visualize things like that in poor lighting and without being able to look at the wounds better.

Kevin stood up and stepped back a little. He turned his head and looked closely at the body. He looked up at the blood splatter, and carefully stepped around the body to look at it more closely. The blood made a fuzzy elliptical pattern on the wall. Kevin held himself straight, looked at the blood splatter, and then looked again at the body. One of the officers was still standing a few feet away.

“Hey, how tall would you say he was?”

“Hmm.” The officer looked at the body a while, “Oh, maybe five ten or so.”

“That’s about what I was thinking.” Kevin put his left hand under his right elbow, and with his right hand began rubbing his chin and playing with his lower lip. He stared at the body, then at the blood splatter.

The sooner Kevin could pinpoint where the shooter had shot from, the sooner they could tape it off and keep spectators from ruining evidence.

Kevin suddenly walked around to stand at the feet of the victim. He looked up at the blood, then turned and looked in the opposite direction. Then he frowned. He backed up to get a different look at the scene but after about five paces, he backed into one of three college students sitting handcuffed on the ground.

“What’s with these guys?” He asked.

Chuckling the officer said, “Those are Levin’s boys. They thought they’d have some fun trying to egg the crowd into making trouble.”

Kevin looked them over, and then chuckled, himself. “There’s always a few every year.”

2:43am

The trees had been a perfect cover, but now they were in the way. The man could see the blood splatter and part of the body, but the topmost leaves of a Bartlett pear blocked the legs and lower abdomen. Unfortunately, this window was his only option for now. The man really wanted to see all of what was

going on, but besides the Bartlett pear, a large sycamore blocked a good portion of what the police had marked off. He could see two of the four officers, and the detective that had just arrived. That would be Kevin Gould. The man knew not only Kevin's name but also much of his life's history. He knew just as much if not more about each of the four officers. There wasn't a single employee of the police department or the college that the man didn't know minute details about.

Pulling himself away from the window, the man began to disassemble the gun. He placed each part in a matching imprint in a foam sheet. Once finished, he positioned a second foam sheet over the first. Both had an aluminum backing which would disguise the shape of the gun parts in a metal detector. He then slid the entire thing in a standard inter-office document pouch. Since the gun parts had been separated and laid out, the document pouch was only an inch at the widest.

The man returned to the window. He watched the scene for a few more minutes, and then noticed he was rubbing his left forearm with the fingers of his right hand. He was amazed that after all this time, he still felt crippled without a TacCom. He'd worn one constantly from when he was 15 to when he was 25. It had become as much a part of him as his hands were. The thought brought bitterness. The bitterness brought anger. He gripped his forearm tightly almost to the point of drawing blood. He looked down at the scene and focused on the blood splatter, and let himself enjoy the very rare luxury of a smile.

2:45am

Kevin studied the victim's feet. The walkway was fairly clean so there really wasn't any dust or debris that could tell how the victim had been standing when he was shot. But the way the were bent suggested that the victim had fallen straight down. More than likely his feet weren't very far from where they had been the moment of the shot. Kevin stepped forward almost to the victim's feet, and again looked at the blood splatter. He turned and looked in the opposite direction, the direction the bullet would have come from. All he could see were trees and bushes -- tall bushes, low leafy trees, and the trunks of some taller trees that overshadowed the area. He was beginning to turn back when he saw something. It was only momentary, but he thought he saw a flash of something slightly lighter than darkness of the trees and bushes. There it was again. This time he could make out the shape of a person. There was a tiny gap or opening in the trees at exactly that place.

"John."

The officer was talking to one of the witnesses, the girl that had been with the victim.

"Yes, sir."

"I need the crime scene widened . . ." Kevin peered into the trees again, "oh about 60 yards in that direction." Kevin motioned towards the trees and bushes. "And make sure you run off any people in there."

"We'll take care of it right now, sir."

John Levin was a good man. He was ten years older than Kevin, and had been on the force for almost 20 years. He had no ambition to rise above where he was now, and held no

animosity towards younger officers who were promoted above him. Kevin also knew that Levin was a valuable resource for just plain practical experience, and held him in great respect.

Kevin then turned toward the first girl. She was sitting on the ground next to the disheveled boy.

“Hi, I’m detective Gould, your name is . . .?”

“Wendy.”

“Wendy. You’re the one that called 911?”

“Yes.” Kevin could see that she was pretty exhausted. She had a hard time focusing her eyes and her attention seemed to drift. Given the hour, and the party he’d known was supposed to take place tonight, he figured she really wouldn’t get much useful information out of her, and she really looked like she needed some sleep.

“Where d’you live, Wendy?”

“In the dorms.”

“You think you can make it there okay?”

“I have some friends here that were gonna walk back with me’n Brad.” She gestured to some students nearby beyond the tape.

“Good.” Kevin stood up and helped Wendy stand. He motioned for her friends and they came under the tape and helped Brad stand as well.

“I may need to ask you some questions later, Wendy,” she stopped and turned to look at Kevin with very tired eyes, “but for now it looks like you and Brad need a good night’s sleep, and the officers have your name and phone number, right?”

“Yeah, they wrote that stuff down.”

“Great, we’ll talk with you later, then.”

Kevin walked over to the other girl. She sat on the bench with her face in her hands. She was sobbing, and another girl sat near her rubbing her back.

“You think you’d be able to answer a few questions?” Kevin asked gently. The girl pulled her face out of her hands and looked up at Kevin. Her eyes were puffy and red streaked her face where tears had flowed freely.

“Yeah, I’m okay.” She looked at the body then closed her eyes and turned her face away, then opened her eyes and stared at the ground, holding her eyes away from anywhere near the body.

“Janie, right? You were walking along here with Mr. Engstrom?”

“It’s Professor . . . I mean it was . . .” she fought to hold back tears.

“I’m sorry, you were walking along here with Professor Engstrom?”

“Yes, about an hour or so ago.”

“Right along through here?” Kevin motioned to the walkway.

“Well,” she sniffed, wiped her nose and focused on the question, “we came out of the office building over there, then walked along there.” She gestured to a point several yards down the walkway. “Then Kristy and Gary came through the breezeway, and I went back that way with them.” She motioned toward the dorms. “That was the last I saw him, I mean . . . saw him . . . you know . . .”

“Yeah, Janie, I understand what you mean. Did you see or hear anything after you walked away?”

Her gaze wandered across the ground as she thought.

“Well . . .”

“There was Professor Walser.” Kristy offered.

“Yeah, that’s right.” Janie remembered, “He was sitting on the bench on the other side of the woods. We didn’t notice him until we heard him sneeze.”

Kevin’s eyebrows went up. “You heard him sneeze?”

“Yes,” Janie said, “he sneezed . . .”

“And you yelled, ‘God bless you.’” Kristy said excitedly.

“That’s right, I forgot about that. We heard him sneeze, I yelled ‘God bless you,’ then we saw Professor Walser sitting on the bench. He kinda seemed nervous, too.”

“Why do you say that?” Kevin asked.

Janie thought awhile, “Well, he was tapping his fingers on his arm kinda like this.” Janie demonstrated showing a nervous, fidgety tapping on her forearm.

“Hm.” Kevin grunted. He furrowed his brow in thought. “Did he get up and leave?”

“No,” Janie looked at Kristy who was frowning as she tried to remember, “he just sat there.”

“Okay.” Kevin looked at the three of them. They looked pretty tired, too. Not as bad as Wendy and Brad, but they definitely needed some rest.

“Janie do you have someone you can stay with for the next few days?” Kevin asked, “I imagine this has been pretty traumatic on you, and it would probably be best if you had someone around.” Janie looked at Kristy then looked back at Kevin.

“My parents live in Russelville. I guess I can call them in the morning, but I don’t want to miss any classes.”

“You should call them now. In fact, I think they’d be pretty upset with you if you didn’t. And President Payton will be here before long, and I’ll let him know you’re a witness and I’ll see if he can speak with your teachers, okay?”

“You don’t think my parents would get mad if I called them now?”

Kevin smiled at her, “They’re your parents, Janie, they’ll want to be there for you. Call them as soon as you get back to the dorm.”

The three stood up and began to leave.

“Oh, but Janie,” Kevin handed her his card, “if you do leave town, I’d appreciate it if you’d call me so I’ll know how to get in touch with you, alright?”

“Sure,” Janie took the card, stared at it a second then looked up at Kevin. "Thank you."

3:02am

The open space Kevin stood in now was on the other side of the patch of trees and bushes. The officers had expanded the crime scene to include most of it, and Kevin now stood a few feet inside the tape, looking back at the administration building. He’d lined the blood splatter up with the top of the building, and he was looking up to see where it should be on the other side of the woods. He’d retrieved his binoculars from his trunk and was looking for the opening he’d seen from the other side. He’d already carefully examined the ground he was standing on for any sign of evidence. Given the crowd of students that

had been run out of here when they'd moved the tape back, and the unlikelihood that anyone would chose such an open position to shoot someone, it seem nothing more than a formality.

Kevin peered into the trees and bushes with the binoculars, and shifted sideways a few inches at a time. Eventually he could make out the wall of the admin building. He shifted again, more wall. Again and there was the blood splatter. He marked the position with a little numbered tag. Shining his flashlight on the ground, he slowly moved forward. The grass had been kept trimmed but it was still thick. He didn't have much hope of finding any footprints here.

After a few steps, he came up to a wrought iron and wood bench. The grass was slightly scragglier beneath it, and his flashlight beam picked up a wadded, paper, soda-pop cup beneath it. He examined the ground in front of and behind it carefully. Hesitating, he looked around. To his left and behind him were more woods. To his right, in the distance was another walk way and the edge of a building, too far for anyone to see what he was doing in the dark. He switched off the flashlight, and leaning down, sniffed the bench.

Grass, dirt, car exhaust, tree pollen, those were all ambient smells from the surrounding area. Kevin dismissed them. The faint odor of pine (the wood from the bench), a sweetish chemical smell (the varnish), there it was, soap. The odor had been fading, and would be gone in a few hours as time passed and more of the night dew settled on the bench, but it was definitely there. He was trying to think of the brand. It was familiar, but he couldn't place it. What was also telling was the

lack of after-shave or perfume. Someone had spent some time on this bench within the past two hours that used soap, but no after-shave or perfume.

Kevin sighted the flag he'd placed, then turned, and looked for the opening. On into the woods the under brush was thick. In the daytime, or with a good light at night someone could see at least half way through the patch of bushes and trees. That left it undesirable as a hideout, but the entire thickness made an effective visual separator between the open area behind him and the clutter of buildings on the other side. Kevin pointed his flashlight onto the ground.

Any movement he made could obliterate evidence, so he walked carefully. The grass was thick, but as the wooded area started, the leafy underbrush had prevented the grass from getting enough sunlight. Therefore, there were bare patches. Careful to walk only on the grass Kevin inched forward. Finally, his search was rewarded. He could make out the imprint of a knee next to the pattern of a shoe, but they appeared to be facing perpendicular to the direction of the opening. Kevin turned and imagined he was holding a gun. He turned his head back toward the opening and as he did his eye caught the light from other gaps in the trees. They weren't very big, but they opened up to spots along the walkway.

Kevin backed up and frowned. This was ridiculous. How would the shooter know the victim would stop at exactly that spot? Kevin watched as a few students walked past the opening. There was a brief change of color and they were past. It would take impossible instincts to get off a shot in that little

time, and even then, it would be impossible to know that you were shooting the right person.

Kevin marked the ground with another label and backed away. Just to satisfy his curiosity he stepped around the prints on the ground and pushed his head into the maze of branches above and further in from them. Yes, there it was, very faint, but unmistakable, burnt gunpowder. Kevin looked into the branches and through the opening he could see the forensic team taking pictures of the body.

3:21am

The forensic team had taken their photos, marked the area, and placed almost every conceivable, microscopic scrap of anything they could find in evidence envelopes. Once satisfied they'd been as thorough as humanly possible, they called for the coroner. Now that the body could be moved, they gently turned it over so they could take more photos.

“Hey, what d’you guys make of this?”

One of the forensic team was gently holding the victim’s left arm and had the coat sleeve pulled up. There on his forearm was some kind of form fitting plate. It looked like someone had melted wax and let it cover the forearm, but there were several oddly placed indentations near the elbow joint. The plate was strapped to the forearm by some sort of smooth elastic, and on the underside of was another plate, this one flat evenly rectangular, about an inch and a half wide and seven or so inches long.

“Leave it there, you may mess something up if you handle it.” Kevin warned.

They lowered the arm and continued with the photos.

“Who’s in charge here?”

Kevin turned to see a shortish, rounded, middle-aged man who held himself with an air of expected authority. He strode into the crime scene, but stopped well back from the body.

“President Payton, I’m detective Gould,” Kevin offered his hand. He took it and returned a quick handshake. His eyes roamed the crime scene taking in everything. Then he looked at the victim and closed his eyes.

“I was hoping you’d made a mistake about who had been shot.” His shoulders seemed to droop and he looked up at Kevin. “When did you call the Memorite Society?”

“The Memorite Society? Uh . . . the only person I’ve called so far is you.”

“Well, they called me shortly after you did asking about Professor Engstrom. They seemed to already know he was dead.”

Kevin stared at the ground with a puzzled look. “I know the Chief wouldn’t have called anyone without telling me so I can’t imagine how they . . . wait a minute.” Kevin strode over to the body and lifted the left arm exposing the strange device for Payton to see. “D’you have any idea what this is?”

“I believe the Professor called it a tack ‘em or something like that. It’s a communication device. All Memorites wear them.”

“What does it communicate? Voice, video?”

Payton gave Kevin an almost patronizing look. “You don’t know a lot about Memorites, do you?”

Growing impatient, Kevin lowered the victim's arm, stood up, folded his arms, and said, "Okay, educate me."

"Memorites can communicate in almost pure data when they want to," pointing to the victim's arm, he continued, "That device allow Professor Engstrom to 'download' massive amounts of data, that he would memorize instantly. He transmitted information by tapping on it in some sort of code. Apparently it's a very complicated code because I watched him once send an entire 12 pages schematic in just a few seconds."

Kevin's left eyebrow slowly rose.

"So it could have been sending biological data which would have alerted whoever's on the other end that the Professor's dead?"

Payton seemed intrigued, "Yes, I supposed it could. That must have been how they knew. I really need to call them back as soon as I can and let them know more details. Is Professor Walser here?"

"Walser?" Kevin looked puzzled, "Why would he be here?"

"He's also a Memorite." Payton told him.

Kevin stared past Payton, frowning, thinking.

"So he's not here?"

Kevin looked back at Payton, "No," He answered, "but, uh . . . we'll definitely be talking with him, soon."

Another car pulled up with a flashing light in the window. That would be Ben Tucker. Kevin had been on duty for quite awhile and the Chief had probably felt that he could use some help.

"I hate to sound . . . well, insensitive detective, but," Payton looked embarrassed, "How soon can we get all this cleaned up?"

I know you need to gather evidence, but I'd really rather the college not be remembered with images of blood splatter and corpses. And the media will be here very soon."

"The media?" Kevin looked puzzled.

"Yes, look at this crowd, you don't think any of these kids called home to tell mommy and daddy about all the excitement? By now every TV and radio station and newspaper in a 50 mile radius has heard about it and are sending an army of reporters and cameras." Payton really looked even more worried.

"How's it goin', Kev?" Ben Tucker approached casually.

"Professor Payton, this is detective Tucker." Kevin said. The two shook hands and exchanged brief greetings.

"Kevin you look beat."

"Yeah, I am. Let me catch you up on things. But first," Kevin made sure Payton could hear, "as soon as we can we need to let President Payton have his cleaning people clean this up."

"Right, I'll make that top priority." Ben said to Payton.

CHAPTER THREE

YEAR: Event+35

From

Dr. Charles Hixson

Site Supervisor

Manua Paleontological Digs

Manua Banu, Manibia

To

Dr. Roger Henson

Peleontological Grant Division

Glennholm Science Foundation

Roger,

I understand your desire in assuring the veracity of the work we are doing, but I must, in the strongest terms, object to being hamstrung with this Memorite you've sent to us. Working with her is absolutely impossible. Since the day she arrived, she has proven to be uncooperative and stubborn.

What is the most frustrating is that the very find we have been working for three years to locate, she disputes. We have uncovered a bone fragment that every single one of our paleontologists confirms is from an, as yet undocumented,

form of homo habilis, yet she claims that the fragment is too small to be classified. We also have uncovered tools obviously used by this species, only 50 yards away from the bone fragment. Again all four of the paleontologists here confirm that they are tools used by this species. Yet, this Memorite claims that, if the bone fragment is what we say, it cannot be concluded that the tools were used by this species, since they were found so far apart. And she also asserts that she won't confirm that they are even tools since they resemble, in her words, any number of rocks strewn about that are obviously not tools.

How in the world can you expect us to conduct any kind of real science under such conditions? The entire dig is virtually suspended, because of her refusal to agree with the rest of us. Since you put the condition that she must verify our finds, you have in essence shut us down.

If you do not recall this woman, you will have a paleontological dig with no paleontologists. We are adamant about that. We emphatically refuse to work under such conditions.

*Sincerely yours,
Dr. Charles Hixson*

5:30am

The hissing static from the alarm gave off a somewhat melodic rhythm. Its volume was somewhere in that margin between barely audible and not quite jolting. It was the first of four stages that would eventually bring Laura Wynn awake. Some people found it odd that Memorites didn't wake up in an instant, fully alert, but decades of testing had shown that while some people could take that kind of regimen, more often than

not it contributed to a higher propensity to seizures. Laura had tested marginal for possible seizure activity, and while this marked a more active brain, it also was a danger flag. So, the Memorite doctors had set her wake up regimen for eight minutes.

The second stage was marked with a slightly higher volume and a more defined melodic rhythm. It had been a long time since she had learned to translate the musical hissing of a Memorite data stream. Now she gave it no thought at all. The data was calculated to be of moderate interest, nothing that would pull the person awake too soon. Today was a treatise on the comparison of aviary and human courtship rituals.

The third stage always gave the illusion of full wakefulness. At this point Laura seemed to be fully aware of her surroundings, but EEGs had shown that her brain was still partially asleep. The volume was higher and the background white noise was almost gone. The treatise took on a more colorful aspect; all designed to usher the mind carefully into the next level.

By the fourth stage, Laura was indeed fully awake. This stage was designed to allow those last few cobwebs of sleep to be swept away. She found it relaxing that, although fully wake, she could enjoy those two additional minutes of mental rest, and to a Memorite a minute is an eternity.

The alarm stopped with a pronounced click exactly eight minutes after it started. Laura pulled the covers away, slid out of bed, and walked gracefully to the bathroom. On her way, she grabbed her TacCom and strapped it into place on her forearm. The oversized jersey she slept in fell loose from her arms and

shoulders, and was pulled to the left, almost off her shoulder. Her long, dark hair cascaded down her back and across her shoulders. She felt the tingle from the TacCom as it activated and the flow of information began immediately. Now, not bound by the one-dimensional limits of the audio Memorite data stream, the gentle blunt pins of the TacCom transmitted information twenty times faster. By the time she emerged from the bathroom, she was halfway through the first of twelve daily newspapers she received each morning. She quietly walked into open area in their living room and began her morning Tai Chi.

She was not quite petit at five foot five, but she worked hard at maintaining enough femininity in her posture and body language to make most people think of her as small and delicate. She had more than enough self-confidence to overcome any assumptions that might be generated in the minds of other people. Her face continued the effect, with a smallish nose, somewhat full lips, and a scattering of freckles across her cheeks and nose. Still wearing the jersey, she moved through the Tai Chi barefoot on the hard wood floor of her living room.

By the end of the Brush Knee form, she had finished the first paper. Laura was 'reading' the papers with full attention. There were several levels in which a Memorite could receive data. Since the Tai Chi took little thought, Laura could process the data and sort it into functional links. She would then be able to recall any specific data via those links. Were she occupied with a task that needed some attention, she would process only those links she'd trained herself to handle with little thought,

the rest of the data she would process later. If she really needed to focus, Laura's training allowed her to receive the data and store it as quickly as it was sent. There was, of course the fourth option of turning the TacCom off. So far, in the seven years Laura had worn a TacCom, she'd never needed to do that, other than to sleep, like all Memorites.

Close to the end of her Tai Chi was a very strenuous form. When she came to it Laura held the position, both arms out straight, palms out and one leg perpendicular to her body. She'd not been able to exercise like she was accustomed to for the past few weeks, and she wished to make up for it. At the end of a ten count, she continued with the forms and repeated the ten second wait on the reverse of the form. It felt good to be home.

5:48am

The place they met in was dark. They had all been alert to the need for such a meeting ever since Todd Engstrom's TacCom transmitted no heartbeat while it still showed that it was attached to his arm. They had waited until enough data had been collected to justify a decision. Now they must decide.

The language they spoke was the primary Memorite language. Had a non-Memorite been listening it would have sounded like some odd game where three people took turns making short fast hisses at each other in a complex, quickly orchestrated pattern.

“You have the data?” asked the first?

“Yes.” answered the second and third.

“Are we agreed at the urgency of Memorite presence at the college?” asked the first

“Walser is there,” noted the third.

“I have information that would conclude that he will be arrested shortly as the prime suspect,” said the first.

“Has he been warned?” asked the second?

“His reaction will be more acceptable if he isn’t,” said the third.

“That will reduce the time available to send any data to him,” said the second.

“Walser is experienced, briefing him at the conclusion will suffice,” said the first.

“Then, yes we will need Memorite presence,” agreed the third.

“To replace Engstrom as well as aid in the investigation?” asked the second.

“Yes, but not necessarily the same Memorite for both tasks,” answered the first.

“We have no precedent for this type of situation,” noted the third.

“What is our priority?” asked the second.

“Protect Walser’s data. Solve the murder by aiding the police. Avoid damage to the reputation of the Memorite Society,” answered the first.

“Is this the Founder’s Warning?” asked the second.

They all hesitated.

“I think not, but we should be cautious,” said the first.

“Do we need a Memorite that will be cleared for Walser’s data?” asked the second.

“Not necessarily,” answered the first, “as long as they will treat it wisely.”

“Has Engstrom’s data been retrieved?” asked the third.

“Most,” replied the first, “an amount of sensitive data was stored elsewhere, our new Memorite will need to retrieve it as well.”

“But his TacCom has been cleaned?” asked the third.

“Yes,” answered the first, “the moment the data was retrieved. It has not been accessed by anyone familiar with its operations.”

“Any suggestion for who we should send?” asked the second.

“One,” replied the first, “a former protégé of mine has just returned from an archeological dig.”

“Laura Wynn?” said the third, “She is young.”

“Four years out of the Academy is not young for this assignment,” said the first.

“Agreed,” said the third.

“She has been awake ten minutes, should we give her more time?” asked the second.

“She *is* my protégé,” noted the first.

“Very well, I will have her notified and supplied with the necessary data, and will make the travel arrangements,” said the second.

5:49am

Laura had finished her Tai Chi, was doing some stretches while braiding her hair, and was on her third newspaper when the transmission altered. Her instruction and the preliminary

data took less than a second. There was enough of a pause to let Laura know that she could reply. Dropping the hair she was braiding and remaining in the stretch, she put her right hand on the top of the TacCom, near the elbow where eight small grooves were laid out. Her fingers fit naturally in five of them, and three of her fingers were a comfortable distance from the remaining three grooves. She began tapping. The grooves responded to the touch of her fingers and the data she tapped out was transmitted. She had tapped for only a moment when she paused, receiving the response, she tapped again for a moment, paused, and continued. The entire conversation lasted five second, but went like this:

“I am to leave immediately?”

“A cab is being instructed to take you to the airport. A more in-depth explanation of your assignment will commence at the conclusion of this dialogue. You should have time to complete your usual ‘reading’ as well as the data needed for the assignment by the time the flight arrives at the destination.”

“I apologize for my last assignment. I should have performed better.”

“No apology is needed, you performed perfectly. You could do no less and still live up to the standards the Memorite Society demands.”

“This new assignment is of extreme importance, shouldn’t a more experienced Memorite be assigned?”

“You underestimate your abilities, we do not. You will be able to complete the assignment.”

“Thank you. I will not disappoint you.”

A flood of data poured through Laura's TacCom. She stored the information and dwelled on the implications of her assignment. This assignment justifiably should have gone to a Memorite with much more experience than she had. She was still feeling the emotional let down of her last assignment. She'd assumed she'd failed, but the Memorite Prime Council disagreed. That made her feel somewhat better. She still struggled with the blow to her self-confidence the last assignment had dealt her. To be faced with such a major task, so soon seemed quite a burden. She focused on the faith the Prime Council expressed in her.

She packed very light, and since she had just returned from her previous assignment, and hadn't bothered to unpack, she only needed to tend to a few things. She began processing the stored data while more data poured in. She was surprised to find that the Prime Council was not notifying Walser about the situation, and would wait until it was resolved to brief him. He most likely would be arrested and his TacCom removed. Laura had no idea how long he would need to spend without his TacCom and she shuddered at the idea. Without a TacCom, a Memorite feels blind, deaf, and naked. To spend, maybe days like that without knowing why, was more than Laura thought she could ever bear.

Laura also noticed the conspicuous absence of the reason Walser had been assigned to the college. There were hundred upon hundred of institutions, organizations and government agencies across the nation that were begging for a Memorite to be assigned to them. For a college to have two was virtually

unheard of. Laura had puzzles before she had even begun the main puzzle.

Now dressed and ready, Laura sat and waited for her transportation while the data continued. She was again storing the data while she took the time to think.

Four years earlier just out of the Academy she had been assigned to the main library in a large city. They wanted to do some innovative work along the lines of a new reference system and modern library collection layouts. The library people felt their ideas deserved more than a Memorite fresh out of the Academy, but any Memorite was better than none, they decided. They also had never worked with a Memorite before and weren't quite sure how to best use Laura when she first arrived. Being a Memorite, she of course already knew how they should use her.

The day she arrived Laura asked for access to the library's computer. Using an attachment for her TacCom, she transmitted the entire database, six million titles, and the corresponding data regarding their current location and status and stored it in 15 minutes. She left the attachment so that any changes to the Library's collection would immediately be sent to her via her TacCom. She then asked for the plans for the new reference system. She studied it quickly and noted that it would be a great improvement over the current system, but was still woefully inadequate when compared to any of the dozen or so Memorite systems. Laura could tell the way the head Librarian beamed as she looked through the plan, that there was quite a bit of personal ego tied up in this project. She tactfully picked

only a half a dozen minor changes that would make the most improvement, and offered those.

Laura stayed two years. At first, she missed the Academy terribly. She quickly discovered that among Memorites outside the Academy, their TacCom became a method of keeping in constant contact. She relied on it heavily those first few weeks, but her Memorite friends encouraged her to reach out to those she worked with, so Memorites would not be seen as distant and unfriendly. She loosened up, and began to enjoy the people she worked with. She found that because she was able to remember an abundance of typically trivial data, they perceived it as genuine interest on her part. She wrestled with the seeming falseness of their assumption, but decided that as long as they were happy, and as long as she wasn't pretending to be any more than she was, everything was fine.

The renovation and the new layout had been completed six months before she was reassigned. The library begged for her to be allowed to stay, but in the end, she was serving as nothing more than a walking card catalog. It pained her as much to leave as it did when she left the Academy, but she knew it was better that she go where she was needed. She still sent cards and notes to her friends from the Library on birthdays and anniversaries.

After that, Laura was assigned to the staff of a US Senator. The Senator's motive was purely prestige. He wanted to be able to brag about having a Memorite on his staff. Laura was a token to wave before his voters as a way to demonstrate his 'hard work'. Unfortunately, he rarely used Laura for anything more than mundane tasks. He didn't trust Memorites, but her

presence did lift his fear and suspicions some. Laura was very attractive, and at that age, she hardly posed a very threatening image. During the year and a half Laura was on the Senator's staff, his voting record in matters pertaining to Memorites changed to reflect his lack of distrust of Memorites. When he lost his re-election in a surprise primary upset, Laura was recalled for a new assignment. The Senator thanked her along with the rest of his staff, but Laura couldn't help but wonder how he would feel had he known the reason his opponent had defeated him, was because the Senator's opponent had chosen to actually use the Memorite assigned to him.

Then came those horrible six months with the archeological team. Laura shuddered involuntarily just thinking about it.

When Laura had been assigned to the Senator's staff the Memorite Society had moved her from her apartment, to a house. She returned to it as often as she could and embraced it as a sort of haven for rest. She looked around with sadness that she hadn't been able to enjoy it longer this time.

A horn honked outside her door. The cab had arrived.

From the Author:

If you're like me, you really hate investing your time and interest, let alone money, in a book that turns out to be a dud. In a bookstore, you can at least browse/skim through the book to decide if you like it. With eBooks you are generally left with what the promotional blurbs claim or word of mouth, unless it's by an author whose work you are familiar with. I've provided these first three chapters free, so that you can at least get an idea of the story, the plot as well as the readability of this novel. If you like it and wish to purchase the entire novel, you can visit <http://www.MemoriteRogue.com> to find out more information. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Danny Carlton