The coastline looked free of any trace of civilization. Years of clearing away the shopping centers and planned neighborhoods were almost complete. One of the things that remained were the roads. They still ran across the landscape. Some lone travelers still used them. Single motorcycles would run up and down these pavements. They were trying to escape the congestion of the city. They would go for short journeys just to escape the crowd. A motorcycle had a range of more than three hundred miles. The roads were in rough shape. A truck would not have any problem, but a small sedan or coupe could not make it far outside the city limits. Large trucks used the road all the time in order to demolish all the housing and commercial structures. A motorcycle was small enough to move around all the potholes. It was planned that the roads would be the last thing to go. And a few would still remain just in case. Small communities dotted the coast. They were used for various purposes. The more remote sites could be reached by air or sea.

The ribbon of freeway wound up the coast to a spot far removed from the city. It was a desolate stretch of unused freeway that used to be busy at all times of the day and night. A lone motorcycle weaved it’s way at high speed up the coast line. He had no idea why he was there. He had a long day of problems. It was a payday Friday, but most of his paycheck went to child support. His employer was sending him to Drug Rehab again because he had failed another random worksite urine test. This would be his third time trying to clean up. His girlfriend went back to her parents to live rent free for a while. So he would be alone to face the rigors of withdrawal. There was little freedom anymore. The city had become a prison. His only escape was the road.

He bought the motorcycle slightly used. It was a sport model. It was much faster than the one he had before. The sun was about to set and it would have been a good time to stop and rest a little. He decided not to. There was something pushing him on and on. The helmet he was wearing had SAM written on it, it was his name and his employer, Ariaritan Aerospace Mfg.. Ari wanted to go really fast, and see how the bike would handle the very slight curves of the disused freeway. Most of the landscape used to be populated, but now was deserted. There were blight removal projects here and there, whose job it was to erase all evidence of the past. Now almost everyone lived in the city. No one could afford to live anywhere else. All the land outside the city was being cleared and returned to nature. The cities were getting less crowded, but they were still choked with garbage and all kinds of decay. A lot of people traveled by air or ship. The motorcycle hummed along. The rpms never got close to red, the engine was air cooled and the outside air was crisp, almost crystalline.

The community was called, Point Blue, and it stretched out for about thirty miles along the coast. It used to be prime real estate, except the beaches were a little small in comparison to the towns further north. The community rolled inland through some hills that were terraced, and had many ranch style dwellings on them. There were orchards of fruit trees that took in the irrigated well water. The farms were completely self sustaining.

The Native people who had been there liked to leave the dead near where the orchards are now. They would lay them in makeshift beds and elevate them. The spot was forested with eucalyptus and aloe. It had a nice view all the way to the sea. Their spirits could reside in peace and take in the offerings that were left there. Some people who stopped there could hear what sounded like voices in the wind. No one ever complained of ghosts or eerie feelings. The people native to the land would always visit the spot, no matter who claimed to own the land. No matter how tight the security members of the tribe would get in and out, usually without being noticed. Everyone who took time to walk the trails and watch the sunrise or sunset always felt relaxed and untroubled.

The town was not developed and looked like an artists colony from back in the day. The place seemed too nice. There were no dead animals by the side of the road, no trash, no homeless people. It seemed like a movie set, or historical park for the nineteen sixties. But that was not the case. The people who lived there were all real. Some of them had been homeless, and lived around trash till they got there. Here in this town everyone gets a chance at life. A chance to kick the habit, or habits for some. Yes it was a rehab community. Originally it had been a Hospice community that remained part of the town. Gradually the Hospice added a rehab clinic, and over time took over the town. Now it was just a place to enjoy life. A life that is free of all the stress and hardship...and substances. Just a really easy place. With all kinds of people living here. The oldest rehab resident was fortytwo. That was the age of one resident on his surfboard enjoying the evening. He was a old timer now going on three years. He sat there just floating on the undulating evening surf. Looking at the distance where he could see the lights of an ambulance approaching. That usually meant a new resident was just arriving. His or Her condition would be a total mystery till morning. They will be admitted by then, and the secret out.

Ari was barely conscious. The EMTs told him that he was some kind of miracle. He had flown off the motorcycle for a distance of fifty three yards. He did not suffer a scratch. He had passed out after hearing that. Now he was in a ER type area. There were people in scrubs moving around and chit chatting. Ari’s girlfriend got worried when he did not answer her angry messages. So she did what she always does, and called the police. It was not the first time. Ari had been in and out of rehab for all kinds of relapses. Since his Honorable Discharge, he had become a collection of bad habits. He could tell the place he was in now was different. A person in a white coat introduce themselves as an MD. This person told him that he had relapsed again, and that his blood screening showed the presence of alcohol above the legal limit. His provider told the EMTs to bring him here. To Point Blue Rehab Community. The MD said that his employer had authorized six months of hot therapy, to start at once. Hot therapy? Ari never heard of that before. His scans and tests were all clear, and he would be admitted right away. Ari was shocked and a little afraid. The last time he got sent to rehab he was in a freshman class of about ten other addicts. At that place you first got your blood test results that show all the substances in your system. That is if you were not having a fit, or seizing from the withdrawls. That place smelled bad, and there were webs and dirt in the corners. A very cute nurse would tell you about the STDs you tested positive for. Point Blue was so clean it made your eyes hurt. And he had been welcomed by his own personal MD. And the MD was no kid with medical license. He looked like a kindly wizard with a bit of stubble, to prove he could still walk the wards. It was time for the MD to run. In walked in the cute nurse, and Ari got ready for the STD talk, but no it was a welcome presentation on a flat electronic device. This both impressed Ari and scared him all the more. The nurse told Ari that all this was covered by his insurance, and not to worry. This place was polite. Ari knew for a fact that he had more than just alcohol in his blood. He guessed that they were keeping that for later.

The flat screen showed tips on healthy living. There were programs for diet, exercise, and mind training/ meditation.

Yvonne drove the smart battery powered van down a long road that opened up to a inland valley. This was where the farms and vineyards were. The land was terraced with buildings tucked into the landscape. There were orchards of fruit trees that looked green and full of fruit. At one point they stopped at a ranch style home and stretched their legs. Yvonne and Ari were discussing the different lifestyle routines, when a voice spoke softly to Sara. It said very faintly “don’t tell her…” and “watch out…” almost too faint to hear. Besides the warning Sara was very calm and almost euphoric. It reminded her of living overseas in Japan, while she was teaching English to adults. Yes Sara was almost felt intoxicated by the beauty and stillness of this community. Yvonne was now explaining how they had their own airport with passenger aircraft, and a few helicopters. They got back into the van and drove away from the ranch house with the orchard. Yvonne continued to explain the practicality of living there and being able to take classes in almost anything. It was possible to fill your day with any kind of activity you wanted. There were some well known musicians and artists that always came back for rest and recovery from the stress of their work. This caught Ari’s attention since he was a frustrated musician. He would experiment with any musical instrument, or piece of music. He knew some of the musicians that Yvonne mentioned who lived there. They had been around for a long time. The point to the community was to keep busy and get healthy, then maintain. The van hummed its way back to the main office. It was late afternoon, and Ari and Sara were tired. They had eaten at a sandwich shop in town, but that was long gone. Yvonne suggested that they spend the night, but Sarah wanted to get some distance in order to think things over. She could tell that Ari was all for staying. Yvonne said that they could wait till the morning to make a decision, and also review the full terms of the agreement. The atmosphere at this community was so non-stressful, that it made it difficult to get worried. Sara was already feeling a lack of emotion. Almost a disarming sensation. She knew that she was hungry, which usually made her angry, but for the first time in her life she was not angry. It was really strange to her. They got directions to the guest residence, and left Yvonne there at her office, with all her hi tech tools and gadgets. While driving through the town, the sun was setting and painted all the buildings orange and red, the sky remained a cobalt blue. Upon closer inspection the town became more attractive, and not less. It gave the appearance of maybe sixtyfive years ago, with a few upgrades over the years. All the cars were older, and the storefronts and signs were all easy on the eyes. It was a big change from the city where land was being eaten up by development, and every square inch had to be utilized to make some inflated profit. They reached the guest residence at the end of lane. Inside the cozy tiled roof bungalow, was a stocked refrigerator, with plenty of fruit and healthy snack type foods. Someone had left a cooked meal on the stove. The layout was very modular and Scandinavian, Ari and Sara went straight for the food, without a word.

In the morning Ari went for a walk while Sarah slept. He could tell that they were close to the beach, so he walked in that direction. He passed more than one old Volkswagen van from the sixties. He also saw lots of surfboards in the back of old trucks and jeeps. As he neared the beach he saw some people in surfing gear and he followed them to a stretch of sand that ran off towards some cliffs in the distance. There was a long pier that stood about forty feet high, that looked unused. The surf was coming in, and there were many people in the water waiting for that wave that would take them the farthest. The sun was just rising through the marine layer of clouds. There were other people swimming or kayaking. Everyone was engaged in some sort of exercise, there was no one just laying around. Ari could not see any dog walkers, like there were on city beaches. A group of joggers went past maintaining a steady pace while looking relaxed. Ari could even see hang gliders in the distance.

In the office Yvonne laid out the terms of the community. Most of it was a fog of standard rehab requirements, but the bombshell was the cost. The way most people pay for this community, is by donating their bodies to the facility. If both Ari and Sara agreed, they could stay at the community for the rest of their lives, if they wanted. They would have to live by the rules of the community which was no use of drugs or alcohol. They would have to maintain a healthy lifestyle etc. It sounded good to Sara who was starting to like the feel of the town. Ari still had a long way to go with his treatment. After a discussion between them, they agreed. He could telecommute the entire time of his treatment, and continue after it was complete.

Ari would sometimes have dreams of his car accident. The traffic that seemed to crowd around him. The one car that weaved dangerously close from the right. He could see into the driver’s eyes and the shock on her face, as the car struck him. And then suddenly he is back with his buddies doing combat operations overseas. The dream continues like it always does with clearing the apartments in a building that had reports of enemy activity. Good old Trask is the lead guy as always. He smiles and tells a joke before entering the narrow hall into the apartment living room. Then there is a small muffled explosion, and Ari is knocked a few steps back. He is now holding something and shouting to the other soldiers. Then the usual end to this repeating nightmare. The jolting back to consciousness and the horrible screams from the next room, but the screams are not coming from the next room…

Sometimes Sara would be there to try and calm him down. The only medication that seemed to stop the dreams were synthetic opium, and any of a variety of alcohol mixed to complement the pills. This habit of self medicating is why Ari is now in need of some serious therapy.

Yvonne introduces Ari to her associate Dr. Kurtentine, or just “Kurt” as he likes to be called. He goes over the terms of his therapy, if he chooses to go through with it. The goal is a life free and clear of drugs and alcohol, to include junk food, soda etc. What Kurt describes is a method to be completely free of all bad habits. In the end Ari will be in control of his life again. Any past trauma will be dealt with, and coping techniques will be taught to Ari. Kurt explains that it is really the act of consent that determines everything. Once Aris says “yes” then the rest is automatic, and the community will use everything in its power to help Ari be free and clear.

Ari’s concern is the extent of the therapy. He did not realize that he would be giving up junk food, soda...there was a list of other activities that were prohibited. At least sex was not one of the items on the list. That would have been impossible. What Kurt was describing was frightening, and seemed to include becoming a totally different person. Deep down Ari knew that he had to do this. If he did not go through with this the only other route was suicide, after a painful over indulgence in narcotics and self pity, and a stay at yet another unwelcoming jail cell or worse. Dr. Kurt did mention lots of sports to include surfing and swimming. That part did not sound so bad. Sara would be living with him at the community, and in time he could go back to work via the telecommuting, and the tools that his manager gave him. Ari had not seen this coming so soon. He always thought he would have a going away party, but perhaps it is better this way. Sara was waiting outside reading on her phone and scheduling her students for video tutoring and lessons. Ari and Kurt shook hands, and then Ari and Sara went for a walk.

They did not have much to move, and Ari would not have to move it. It was strongly advised that from now on he stay at the community. Sara could come and go as she pleased. It would not be difficult to put most of their stuff into storage, or bring it over with the truck. Kurt wanted to inspect all items brought into the community. Ari had to attend an indoctrination class in order to get a house, and daily living items. From now on Dr. Kurt would be his new best friend. Ari did not need to say goodbye to anyone. His last stay at a city jail pending bail, had shown him the extent of his friendships. The only family he had was Sara, and he did not fully understand her willingness to stay.

The indoctrination class was some visual presentations and guest speakers. There were tests to take and forms to fill out. Some were consent forms, some were personal history forms. He was the only person in this class so far. Kurt said that he would be meeting some other members of the community. His particular type of therapy had determined the group he was going to be seeing on a daily basis. Ari was just starting to wonder how long this would all take. Kurt drove him around to all the shops to get exercise clothes and open water swimming gear. The daily physical fitness routine was the most important part to this whole thing. Yes the beach was nice to look at, but it was used constantly for therapy. After lunch the first session would begin. Ari thought that this was already very serious. He tried to think of an excuse to get out of all this, but he knew there were no more excuses. This was the end of the line. If you could not take the easy way out, this was all that remains.

Kurt promised that the sessions would not go too far too fast. They already had an idea of what kind of personality he was, and would adjust the training accordingly. Since Ari had no history of any broken bones or serious injuries, running and other exercises were on the schedule. Martial arts could be included further down the road. Lunch turned out to be all good tasting food, but no hot wings or chili. Kurt said that eventually Ari would be preparing his own meals. There was a guy who would be teaching him, he liked to call himself Mick. Mick had been around a while and he knew many different ways to prepare the same thing. Mick was a graduate of the community who decided to stay. He had sold many nutrition self help books, and would do the lecture circuit every now and again. Another new face to Ari was miss Sakura, who was originally from Japan. She had lived in Okinawa at about the same time Ari and Sara lived there. Her specialty was gardening and fruit trees. Like Mick she had been with the community for therapy, and then decided to stay. She would go throughout the property, inspecting and tending the orchards, along with a team of helpers. There was an extensive system of orchards and vineyards. Wine was not consumed on site, it was bottled and sold in the cities. Marijuana was also grown, but not consumed on site. Mr. Sakura had a lot of energy in reserve, and came across as very polite and unassuming. Ari spoke briefly with her about the orchard he and Sara had stopped at yesterday. She told him that that was her favorite, and that she had spent a lot of time there taking care of each tree and especially the soil.

After the first day Ari felt worn out. The session had gone on for about three hours beyond what he thought it would. He went back to his house to see Sara. She was busy doing some tutoring online. Ari took a quick shower, and made for the refrigerator. There was watermelon, and dragon fruit which he ate greedily. When Sara was done they discussed the day. Sara had gone to a class of her own, that explained her role at the community. She met some of the same people that Ari had met, and spent some time with Mr. Sakura. There was a odd something about her that Sara had noticed. She had an animal vision with her just like the one with Yvonne. This was white fox that quickly flashed in Sara’s mind, and then was gone. Sara did not know what to make of it all. She had never experienced anything like until coming to the community. Having mentioned the whole thing to her friend back in the city, her opinion was that it could be the new environment, or maybe Sara was psychic. There were times in Sara’s life when she had close calls with danger, like driving or being stopped by strangers. Each time a voice had warned her to be careful. The voice was like rushing water, and it would always be warning her to watch out. She had these feelings all her life and had become accustomed to them. Like Ari she was an orphan, and spent time in foster homes. The best family were a military couple that took Sara to Japan where she learned to speak the language and practice the customs. It was while she was there that she met Ari who was stationed at one of the many military bases there. She would often go to Tokyo on tours, and climb Mt. Fuji. that seemed so long ago now. Ari had been struggling with his demons for so long. She wanted this community to work so they could move on. At least that was what she thought yesterday. Now she was starting to settle into living here, which was way better than where they came from. Ari did not need another rehab clinic. Those places not only were a waste of time, but were a nightmare to live in. Those hospitals were like bus stations except for the condition of the travelers. The bottom line to operating these clinics was money. The inspections were a joke and the living conditions were hellish at best. If this place could cure Ari of all his problems that would be worth donating their bodies to growing transplant marketplace.

Mr. Sakura noticed Yvonne as she drove by the orchard. Yvonne did not notice her. The spot that she was working on was well away from the road, and no one really knew how to get there. From the road you had to head into the center of the orchard, and then make a few turns, like a maze. Mr. Sakura knew that Yvonne was curious about this spot, but there was nothing she could do about it. It was a secret. The soil was a special mix that Mr. Sakura had put together carefully. There were dogs barking in the distance, she knew what they were looking for. The dogs worked off of the scent of people, and constantly roamed looking for anyone to harass, or alert. The problem was that Mr. Sakura was not entirely a person, and had a plan of her own to take care of. It was starting to get dark, and the trees were beginning to murmur in the offshore breeze. It was almost like speaking in some soft ancient language. Maybe the trees were tired of the coming night, and the struggles that always took place then. There were those who lived in perpetual night and darkness, and dreamed of the daylight. A hawk cried in the sky above and circled in a glide.

Ari had gone to sleep early. There was a sound machine next to his bed that played a constant blend of tones and beats that helped to keep Ari from dreaming. For now the key to recovery was getting real deep sleep without the anxiety of dreams that repeat the same trauma of the past, and never seem to help the brain figure out how to fix itself. The fix to all the nightmares of the past would come later. The therapy for now was pretty mild, but in a month would begin the self directed hypnosis. The ground was already being prepared so to speak. Throughout the town there were constantly being played, low frequencies that made the mind more open to suggestion. The new members could experience calm and a willingness to learn what the classes were teaching. For those that had been there a while, it was like a sonic narcotic that kept their mood stable and positive. There were a few that had figured it all out but did not care. They were simply happy to be alive, and did not ask questions. Ari slept a deep almost comatose sleep, that his brain had not known for a very long time. And deep in the limbic centers the old nightmares tried to get out but were held back by the sonic barrage of tones. For tonight the image of Trask disappearing down the hallway that moments later shakes with a faint concussion, does not appear. No being rocked awake by the shouting and screams of the past. It is almost like the past is slowly dying in the depths of the skull.

Mr. Sakura had returned to her house and immediately started her dinner. The daylight was all but gone, and she needed to clean up before eating. She would have leftovers from the day before. She took out her phone and read the messages from her daughter in the city. She had graduated college last year, and was settling into her first job at a biotech firm. She went by the name Lisa, instead of her Japanese name. Lisa was worried for her mother who had been addicted to amphetamines. Now that she was cured, Lisa was even more concerned of what would become of her mother. Since the revelation of her dependency, the rest of the family had forgotten about her. But Lisa could not turn her back on the person who raised her. Despite her mother’s weakness she knew that she was a very good person who would never steal or cheat to supply her habit. Now there was a sense that Lisa was feeling about her mother. Some sort of danger that was growing around her and it had everything to do with that community she refused to leave. The community had saved her, and cursed her. In Japan it is believed that there are spirits everywhere and in all things. Every object has a ghost within it that gives it character. Along with it there are positive and negative, and the struggle between the two. Lisa knew that where her mother lived the balance was uneven. Now her mother was working night and day to restore that balance. The problem was that the forces she was up against were not Japanese, but western maybe native to the land here. Lisa wanted to take her mother away from there. Perhaps she could get her uncle to help? He like the rest of the family stopped talking to her. Of all the family he was the one most likely to cave in and do something. They had grown up together and went to the same school. They had taught each other English, as well as gardening and how to create different soils. As children they were inseparable, but since her problem became known to the family, he could not have anything to do with her. Lisa knew that he wanted to break the silence. Deep down he knew that they would never go back to Japan to live, and this was their real home. They would need each other again in order to survive here. It was not only the culture and language that was different here, but the ghost’s were not the same as Japan. They had a real attitude. The evil ones in Asia were of a nature that always taught the victim a lesson with it’s tricks. But here the evil was so malevolent and it did not people at all. It wanted to destroy anyone alive without exception. Lisa had heard this many times from her uncle and mother, and thought it was superstition. As she grew older and experienced the stress of daily life, and listening to the stories of others, she knew they were right. At least her mother and uncle had a reason to be afraid. She was afraid too, but most of that was for her mother. She knew that her mother had a warrior personality and was getting ready for battle with something.

Kurt and Yvonne were discussing the daily activities and planning for the next month. Yvonne was curious about Ari’s progress, and how he was fitting. Kurt said he was doing fine. The first month is the toughest because of the physical fitness and diet. For most people the toughest drug to quit is caffeine and tobacco, in all it’s forms. There could be no substitution, it was all or nothing. But Ari handled it well without a relapse. Sara had agreed to go through the same regime. But Yvonne was not concerned about that so much, as his spiritual adjustment. She did not want any interference from any cultural beliefs that might warn him of the future. The technology in place was more that enough to mute and psychic abilities. Yvonne was sure that a few had gotten through the net and were living at the community in disguise. Any psychic great or small would run from Yvonne if they could see the whole picture. That was the need of the sonic interference mixed with some ancient practices designed to smooth over Yvonne. To give her a kind of “make over” of sorts. Since she appeared as just another smartly dressed business woman, who would guess what she really was. Kurt went on to describe Ari’s blood work and that all was progressing nicely. In another six weeks he would be producing very healthy blood and that would put him on schedule with the other donors he was grouped with. One of the many forms that Ari had signed was not only to donate his body and tissues after brain death, but provide living donations as well. Kurt was certain that Ari would not complain when the time came. Sara might be another issue. Kurt could not be so sure of her because since she got there she stayed in the house. It was hoped that she would get out and take some classes. If she would interact with the rest of the town, then she could be manipulated the same as Ari. This was going to take some work. There were recording devices everywhere. So her movements and conversations could be monitored and fed into any number of algorithms to predict what she would do next. That is how Kurt was so sure that Sara was not yet ready to donate, even though her physical health was excellent. He knew that in similar cases a direct appeal this early in the game would be risky. It had worked in the past with a sales pitch that documented the suffering of the innocents in the world, and how their living donation of blood and other materials, could save lives and make a difference. Since the company that owned and operated the town was a multinational, it had holdings in other parts of the world that were in need. So any donor could be shown how their contribution would be obtained and then delivered via the on site airport, to the desired location. All this could be spelled out for the donor, and most often they would consent, even though they had already signed the papers. It was a contract that was binding either way, but Kurt liked to please people. But for Sara that could all wait for a later date that coincided with Ari’s donation, that way they could be together. Having reviewed the data on both of them, they really were a nice couple. Their birth years were not the same, which was a big plus. Other couple had settled here, but it did not always go smoothly. For some reason the one not going through the therapy would become suspicious and demand clearer answers. The one going through the therapy never complained. Kurt could produce results right away, and that made them very happy. Once you could prove to them that there was life after addiction, they would follow you anywhere.

The key was to keep them on the treadmill of getting healthy, and then a state of physical well being that they never thought existed. A lot of people wanted to quit after they were free of the addiction. They wanted to go back to the world of fast food and all the other stuff that was allowed on site. It took some convincing to get them to stay. Some did not and that was part of game. But Kurt had been perfecting his technique, and learned from every failure to where now he could persuade almost anybody to stay. While the facts about the donations and where they went was a slight fabrication, the facts about their worth was not. Once there had been a black market for organs and tissues along with medicines. This market had grown and expanded at such a phenomenal rate that before anyone knew about it governments were being bought and paid for. The whole geopolitical landscape was changing to suit this market. Prisons all over the world were rethinking the death penalty as a source of product. Soon the news media fell into step behind the market and companies were expanded to include legitimate supply of organs, tissues, fluids etc.

The best kind of free press in this case is a quiet free press. Anyone and everyone in a position to say anything was well paid to be quiet. And that is how the market grew. And what about the doctors? Were they practicing medicine? Well not really. There was a growing league of physicians who had no reservations about getting their feet wet in this business. The money was good, the patients either never asked questions or complained. Due to the growth in supply the old problems of tissue typing, rejection of donated tissues, and finding donors of the same race were all solved. The only problem that arose over time was the discovery of a soul, or something very similar to it. Medical science in many parts of the world ignored the soul, but now it was demanding to be dealt with. It became apparent that the donor did not always stay behind once the donation had been made. Recipients started to notice strange things following them home from the operating room. The organs in particular had certain attachments to them that let their presence be known to the recipient. This was bad for business, so a team of spiritual trouble shooters had to be formed. Their job was to make sure that the soul did not follow the body part to its new owner. These troubleshooters usually employed any of a variety of practices to get the job done. Soon a manual was in circulation and more talent was being hired to meet the ever increasing demand. That was where Yvonne got her job. She not only met and screened the donors, she stayed with them every step of the process in order to ensure top quality. She was by no means a know it all. She was learning new things all the time. An example of this was the Japanese culture of which she almost nothing about. Yvonne like so many in her line of work, were confident to a fault. In fact that was their fault, overconfidence. And it would soon play out for Yvonne who was always ready for a challenge.

Yvonne was not really herself since that day in college when she took up another challenge. A friend had been discussing with her the occult practices of ancient cultures. Yvonne was a computer science major and very sceptical of anything supernatural. Her friend assured her that the occult was real and should be respected. Yvonne scoffed at the idea that any of was real, or posed any threat and was quite harmless. The friend challenged Yvonne to spend a night with a known demonic artifact, but did not tell her what it was. Yvonne agreed and the next day she picked up the item and took it to her room. She proceeded to take it out and look at it. In order to complete test out the artifact, she cut her finger and put some of her blood on it. All it was an empty wooden box of some sort. When she opened it she did notice a little nausea, but pressed on despite the discomfort. She proceeded to take a shower, read some assignments, and fall asleep. It was while she was asleep that Yvonne got thrown into the back seat of her living body, and something else took the wheel. The next day it returned the artifact to the friend and proceeded to never talk to them again. In time she broke off all contact with any family and friend. All future relationships were to one end. To find that right career to perpetuate as much pain and misery on humanity as was possible. All without giving away the secret to its success. So in Yvonne could go about her daily life without raising any suspicions. When the situation required she became a monster that could collect souls to keep them as she liked. The company did not care since she was doing them a service by removing the soul from the body, so that the body could be used by the company free of any interference. As long as the recipient did not complain of any problems with their transplant, the company did not care what Yvonne did with the soul. Most of the time Yvonne would take pleasure in removing the soul from the body, in much the same way a crocodile would catch a water buffalo in a death roll. After the soul was extracted, then the rest was what you read of in sunday school. A lot of high temperatures, dismemberment, and hunger, a insatiable hunger usually accompanied by a similar thirst. This would continue over and over again. Each time the soul body would reform so that it could all start anew. The soul would not be released into oblivion until Yvonne allowed it. She liked to keep a full house at the ranch next to the orchard. There were a few times that a soul would escape, and that was what the dogs were for. Almost every soul could be accounted for. A few had gone missing since Mr. Sakura became the gardener. Yvonne needed the details of where the souls had gone, and how. She had to be careful because Mr. Sakura was no idiot. In fact Yvonne was certain that he was already wise to her little project.

Ari awoke in the predawn darkness. He had not had a dream since arriving at the the community. At first he was relieved to not be waking up screaming and shaking uncontrollably. Now more than two months later, he was a little curious as to how it was possible. He thought that without the help of his sleep aids the nightmares were a certainty. He used to live in a fear that was so wild, rational thought and reflection were impossible. He had been unable to hope or plan for the future for so long, it was crazy.

In a short time his life had really turned around. The cravings were still there for nicotine and french fries, but he could live with that. He sat in the quiet of his office corner of the living room. The furniture provided was exactly like the items that were in the guest house. He had a neat desk for his notebook computer that charged remotely. As part of his therapy he had to make entries into a diary that functioned like a tracker too. He had to include all the vital statistics. He also inputted his thoughts, though he was still guarded about them. He knew his privacy was non-existent. The sales pitch was good and if only it were all true, but Ari had his suspicions. He was unwilling to confide in anyone right now. The house was at least bugged with microphones and who knows what else. That made any serious talks with Sara impossible. Sure they could go outside and talk, but that would be noticed too. Ari could already tell by the character of the old timers, that this place had something going on under the surface. It was still way better than any of the rehab clinics and hospitals that he had been too thus far. Here he was not treated like an invalid, quite the opposite. He really had not been so active in his life. Even the military reserves did not exercise this much. The classes were all how to get inside your own head. There was no white coat looking down on you, and starting pretend fights to get a rise out of you. With all the workouts you did not need an adrenaline rush. The endorphins flooding into the post workout brain were a welcomed substitute to the prescription stuff that he had used for so long. The meditation stuff was to replace the white coat playing with your memories. The sessions were all self paced and recorded, then you played them back. The reward element was a shorter work day, and positive feed back to your employer. All this was working well for Ari. He did have concerns about Sarah, but that would have to wait for a good time to discuss it all. In the brief talks they had already, she expressed support and a willingness to continue. Her job was still allowing her to video tutor, and she had nice talks with Mr. Sakura. He never inquired about the contents of those talks, because that too would get recorded. Ari got the impression that Mr. Sakura was kind of rogue warrior here, along with Mick the chef who did not care what people thought, especially Yvonne. He had to fight tooth and nail to put pork on the menu. Kurt could not argue in the end since all pig products were high in iron. While fish is always thought of as the healthiest, but in terms of sheer protein the pig beats the fish. There was a fish farm on site too, that was stocked with tilapia and catfish. There were fishing trips at the community, but it was all catch and release.

Again Yvonne never went on the water related activities. She seemed to be firmly planted on dry land. Ari took note of this since it was Yvonne who stood out as the boss. She was not a real part of the therapy, but could be noticed talking to Kurt every now and again. The computer hardware in her office was no doubt the surveillance technology that kept everyone in line. While she was not the enemy there were some strange things she did. The use of sunglasses even when there was no sun or when it was overcast. She did not like to talk directly to the donors, she let Kurt take care of all that. She spent a lot of time with tours when they happened. Most of the people who came to check things out were not as bad off as Ari had been. They looked like high rollers that were just researching their options. It was clear that most of them had not seen the inside of a state sponsored clinic. The main draw for people like that was they could keep their liquidity. By donating their body they could keep all property and assets in trust to their next of kin, or whoever.

While Ari was keeping his official record dry and to the point, he could not help thinking of all things that came to mind. They had started as just minor concerns, but now he saw a trend starting. Although he never physically wrote these things down, it was as if they had collected in his brain somewhere. As he sat in the ergonomically correct office chair, Ari started to do something unheard of. He began to come up with a plan. What if this place does not work out? Then where can Sarah and he go? He needed to come with answers while there seemed to be plenty of time.

Sarah woke up as usual after Ari had left for his morning workout. She knew that he had to swim in the morning, but not in the surf. The threat of sharks was a real danger. The seals there often washed up in bits and pieces sometimes. Later on the day the beach was open for water exercise, but was closed during twilight hours. There was an Olympic size pool there. Scuba diving classes were held there too. Sarah was really impressed by the layout of the place. It was a lot more that she thought was possible for a rehab facility, and there was a hospice there too. She had gone with Ari to the city rehab clinics, and witnessed first hand the misery there. It was a warehouse of pain and suffering, and the condition never got better over time. All the public money went the way of all public funds, schools, fire dept., police, etc. While all this made Sarah cynical it also woke her up out of a naive mindset that the world ran itself. Clearly there were corners of the world that suffered from neglect, and that was the foundation of evil. She thought that the atmosphere here was clean of all that. All the people here, the donors, were involved with getting better and healthier. She knew it would be a matter of time before they came knocking on her door. She had been stalling the fitness side of her agreement. While she was not in rehab she did donate her body, and therefore was obligated to start getting into shape. Her initial exam showed that she did have any major problems that would keep her from working out. The main hurdle was in her imagination. The community was giving her enough space to take care of her job, but soon she would be required to do daily recordings just like Ari, and list her vital statistics. For women it got a little more detailed with the data that needed to be provided. She would have to include all the reproductive health stuff. When she was having a period, ovulating, and how her body was reacting to these events. She was advised during the indoctrination to not get pregnant without consulting the medical staff. They would know without her telling them. Sarah knew that their house had heat sensors and cameras that were always recording their vital stats. The appearance of consent was necessary for this place to operate. If it were not for the illusion of consent, then they would be like all the other rehab clinics. For this reason Sarah knew the vacation was over and she better start working out today. The few months of a healthy diet had helped to put her in the mood to start. She did not want to get Ari in trouble either. That might happen too, if she did not get out of the house. She also did not want a visit from Dr. Kurt who kind of creeped her out. There was every reason to get out there and put on a game face. Like Ari she did not put any of this on record anywhere. She always had a healthy inner monologue. She decided to try and track down Mr. Sakura and see what she did for exercise. It seemed that just being Mr. Sakura was a workout in itself. Before that she would run on the beach, which always had people there. It was a good stretch of sand too. It probably ran for more that ten miles which was more than enough. It was still early morning so the sun was not out of the clouds yet.

Mick had known he suffered from metastatic cancer for a long time. He had enjoyed life as a successful chef. He had written books, done TV shows, and seen the world. And all that was now over. He needed to get his estate planned out. That was why he was here. He got to keep what was his. He still saw his wife and kids who stayed with him, but eventually they would leave after he was gone. He had been ready for a while, and was always clear on the options he had. He had seen others close to him die the same way of one sort of terminal illness. There were the tough ones that held out to the end, lapsing into a coma before dehydrating to death. Now there was the legal right to end it all prior to becoming incapacitated. That was always what Mick’s choice, even before he his diagnosis. Based on his condition now and his own personal trend analysis, Kurt gave him a time frame that was good for moving on. The fact that he had an illness did not make him of less value to the company since even the cornea of his eyes and skin tissue more than covered the cost of his stay. He also worked for free as a chef giving classes on healthy cooking. Mick was going over the talk with Kurt in his mind. The whole mechanics of the thing was really simple. All he needed was to say his goodbyes and then go to the clinic and get an IV. The tube in his arm would have a boutique blend of sedative to usher in sleep, and then the stopping of the heart. The rest would be up to the attending specialist as to what got harvested first. There was no waiting in line for his giblets, and marrow. Mick made it clear that he did not want anything left over, it could all go to research or the furnace.

What Mick did not know was that there other consideration to take care of. He could by no means leave the facility, but his body could. The part that was waiting for him was Yvonne who would get a chance to pay him back for all the arguing. In truth the arguing had nothing to do with it, she simply enjoyed pulling souls out of bodies and watching them suffer like fish out of water. The prolonged suffering is what Yvonne did best. This would weaken the soul to the point that it could not travel. It would soon get thrown into a place with other souls much like itself, and begin the festering process of becoming a hungry ghost. They would form groups and be anchored to one spot until they were driven from it. The full moon was the best time for them to move because it was when their world was the least dark. Traditionally the family would offer some food and prayers during the full moon. In most cultures this was to satisfy the ghosts and keep them out of trouble. In the case of the community, there was no such comfort offered. The only possible escape was Mr. Sakura’s orchard within an orchard. This was a place she had developed to help the hungry ghosts seek refuge. There were only a handful of souls that could make it there. Most souls were exhausted by Yvonne’s tortures to go the distance to the orchard. All the tortures were carried out at one place, the ranch house that most people see during the tour. If a soul is strong enough it can withstand the tortures, and then make a run for it to Mr. Sakura’s orchard. Yvonne does not know where the orchard is, because her dogs can not see it, and neither can she. Yvonne, or the demon inside Yvonne is part psychic vampire, and they are repelled by malachite or black tourmaline. Mr. Sakura has been over time nurturing his trees and soil with malachite, and thus creating a safe haven for these souls. The dogs cannot go near the malachite either, and besides there is airpower also to keep them out. The dogs thus far have not even come close to the orchard.

Mr. Sakura and his brother spent a lot of time in Japan training falcons. He developed a technique to get the falcons to set up a perimeter and guard it. Over time they discovered that birds were attuned to their thoughts. Certain high pitched whistles could communicate commands to the falcons. These falcons, or hawks, were not only trained to guard the orchard. They could harass and steer the dogs away from the orchard, and it all looked perfectly normal. And since Yvonne never saw her dogs getting bullied by these birds, she was none the wiser. Another advantage to these hawks, was that they could carry coded messages. As it turned Mr. Sakura’s brother Tadashi was not as aloof as his daughter Lisa had thought. He agreed to play along with the whole game, and not raise any suspicions because it might put Lisa in danger, if she knew. From the start Mr. Sakura had sensed the evil over the internet. She had targeted the community. Upon further research she found out who the evil was. For Mr. Sakura the evil was not the company and its transplant industry, but Yvonne and her hijacker. She found that this hijacker was an ancient sort of evil that not only hated human life, but liked to set up whole systems of death, and then get the victims to participate in their own destruction. Not only is the demon good at setting up whole killing systems, but the whole concept is so horrifying that anyone who catches on, becomes tired and depressed. Thus the psychic vampire effect. Most people will not discover the killing system, because it is armed with this thought trap. The average person would subconsciously avoid becoming aware of the danger because of this depression. And so the victim will go happily to their own destruction, in order to stay happy. It is like a gathering storm of death, that starts as a strong wind. Then it grows into a wildfire of destruction. Anyone native to the land that the community sits on could tell you of this evil. It was like a force of nature that is almost unstoppable.

Mr. Sakura had suspected all along that this problem might be larger than she thought. All the wars of the past were a testament to the destructive power of this menace. Now it was up to her to do something while it was still small but growing. The amount of death that had taken place there was less than a flood, or earthquake, but the potential for future growth was troubling. In time it could grow to be a plague on the world. It was fueled by greed that blinded anyone with the power to stop it. The world had become jaded to the spiritual side of the world. This was no accident. Unbelief was very popular and most people were content to look the other way if they witnessed a crime. The rewards for doing nothing were great, while the punishment for action was swift and lethal. What could be Mr. Sakura’s plan? How could this diminutive Asian woman have any chance against the leviathan of hate?

Ari ran with his group up the beach and thought to himself. He could feel stronger, much stronger than before. His mind was clearing also. Sarah was working out too, and learning to surf. For once in his young life, Ari felt content. Before he thought he would just stay here until they got him off of the drugs and alcohol. That he would play the game to get clean, and then escape and get ten burgers with fries and lots of ketsup. He had changed a lot since the beginning. He had been through so many so called treatments and therapies, that it seemed hopeless. The clinics and staff were all like petty demons of some hospital themed Hell ride. Like the ones you would go to as a kid for Halloween. All the actors made up to be like nurses and orderlies. And then the lights would go out, and when they came on again there was this devil in front of you. In this case the devil was always the addiction. Ari was sure he would have relapsed by now. The security was so good here, and everyone was afraid. That made the usual path to relapse impossible. There was no black market there with contraband. No hookups who could get you stuff from the outside. You were completely sealed off from the rest of the world as far as booze and drugs were concerned. Mick did manage to get a pizza smuggled in every once and awhile. But lately Mick had been absent, and when did show up he was quiet. It was like he was considering something. The security was better than Area 51. They would keep their distance, and were always at the perimeter. The news media was always trying to sneak in. There was never the need to sneak in a overnight friend. As long as they were searched and scanned, the community had no problems with visitors. Yeah security earned their pay, and did not stop and chat. Ari never saw them with food or coffee. He thought maybe they were retired commandos, Spec Op guys. They were professional who ever they were. Their organs and blood must be worth quite a lot.

Sarah was finishing up a work out at the pool, which seemed to never close. The water was not full of chlorine like the city pools at the health clubs. The water seemed really fresh like lake, or quarry water. She was able to finish a mile under twenty minutes. Sarah could alternate her strokes from freestyle to breaststroke, to butterfly. They had some free weights and pull up bars on the deck. It was a really clean and organized facility. The lifeguards were always alert and scanning the pool, without staring at the patrons. There were some classes going on too. It was a large pool designed to accommodate a large number of swimmers. There was no hot tub, just a locker room with a shower. Unlike the health club this place was no frills. While cooling down Sarah noticed a bird circling over the pool. It was just gliding like a kite. It had to be a hawk which were common in the deserts. It made Sarah think of Mr. Sakura and his quiet way of moving about. He wished that she could be like her. The temperature of the water was perfect, not too hot which tires you out faster. Sarah felt a little tired as her mind wandered. Then she noticed a big black dog or wolf on the deck moving quietly around the pool, and nobody seemed to notice. This dog had eyes that seemed to shine off the water. Then it stopped and looked directly at Sarah. She did not know what to do, and looked away. When she looked back it was Yvonne standing there watching her, and she was in a swimsuit. She got into the lane next to Sarah and said “hi”. Sarah was still speechless, but quickly got it together. “I did not know you swam?”. “Yes, it’s my lunch break”. Yvonne went on to explain that the company gave her time to work out. It was all part of the job. You could not work for the company and look over weight. Sarah was curious about the company. She tried to look them up on the stock exchange. Yvonne explained that they were not ready to be publicly traded yet. There were still some holdings that had to be absorbed before they could unveil their new name. “General Organs?” Sarah joked. Yvonne did not laugh, and kept a straight face. It made Sarah laugh the harder. Then she apologized for the disrespect. Yvonne explained that the new name would be Ellipses. Sarah said she was always bad at geometry. Thinking to herself Sarah remembered Dante’s Inferno, where Hell was a circle, with many levels to it.

Ari settled into his cubicle for the next class. He was able to listen to music while he studied the effects of drug addiction in poorer countries. The video lesson outlined the origins of the “Opium Wars” in China, and how drug trafficking had been used as a political tool to change regimes, and keeping the poor where they are at. Ari had no idea how messed up the rest of the world was. He saw pictures of garbage being burned while children played on top of it. Most of the children would get high using glue or paint fumes. It was really sickening to watch, but Ari felt he had to. The cities in the lesson looked all in ruins. There were wars still going on in much of the world. There was an ever increasing need for medicine and other medical products. That is where Ellipses came in to save the the planet from itself. The footage of the suffering was really graphic. The video was mostly of civilians. There were no images of soldiers or politicians. Ari was wary of being brainwashed, and took everything in with a grain of scepticism

Kurt reviewed Ari’s progress while he was in the next room. He looked at his military medical record and other rehab reports. It looked like Ari had been through a lot of bad treatments. All his IQ testing showed that he was intelligent. That might be how he made it this far. Looking at the statistical data many vets either engaged in high risk behavior till the eventual accident. For others it was not an accident, they did not want to go on. Kurt knew this all too well. This was the major selling point to this community. Not only did the therapy work, but it also offered hope where there had been none. Kurt did not have a big office. He worked long hours with no time for vacations. He was paid well for his efforts, but most of it went to child support. His desk was large enough for his computer and a pad of paper. He did not spend a lot of time in the wood paneled space. It was messy with print outs that were weeks old, and needed to be recycled. He had a cup of green tea to help keep him alert, as he read on. There were other donors there like Ari. It was not easy to get them all together. They were loners that and interested in any new faces in their life. Ari was one of the more outgoing vets. It took a lot of them to get used to Kurt. He had to shepherd them through the first month. With all of the inspections and physicals, Kurt kept his cool amid the complaints. There were a couple of close calls. One guy had got a weapon past security. He did not use it right away, but waited for the worst possible time. Kurt will never forget the nine millimeter automatic pistol pointing at his face. He always kind of knew this could happen. While trying to stay calm and keep talking, Kurt hit a button on his phone. The other guy did not notice while he was yelling. For what seemed like an eternity Kurt waited for security to get there. They would have looked on the cameras and other surveillance devices before rushing into the situation. And before Kurt could fully appreciate the danger he was in...pop! The donor’s head jerked to one side as a small caliber bullet slammed into the back of his head. He fortunately did not jerk the trigger, but let go of the weapon.

Ari finished the classroom part of his daily lesson. He headed out for the fitness portion that consisted of a warm up run, then to the pool for a scuba class. In time there would be an open water dive to explore the coastline. He had already sat through all the conservation video that showed how the undersea habitat had deteriorated, and is continuing to deteriorate. There would be certain fish to watch out for down there. The danger and risk did not phase Ari. since being cleaned by the community, he did become more afraid or paranoid. He noticed within himself a deep calm and sense of wellbeing. He looked forward to the dive that was scheduled for tomorrow. Before the pool dive everyone had to check out their gear. It had all been laid out for them. The tanks were all full. The stuff looked top notch, not the usual used worn look. Most of it might been right out of the box. That surprised Ari who did not think that a rehab facility would be so classy. The water in the pool was tepid, but not too warm. At first it felt cold and took some getting used to. The leader was using hand signals to check on everyone. The compressed air was not too dry to breath. Ari began to feel very good in his head. They were at the bottom of the twelve foot deep section of the pool. Memories began to float through Ari’s mind. He could recall Trask telling him about his family back in Indiana. It all sounded kind of rural with horses and livestock. All that was fine, but hard to relate to for Ari. He tried to imagine what it might be like to live with all that space. All that flat wide open space with no mountains and no desert. It must be...boring. Ari had to have city or mountains, or ocean to break everything up. To have to live in a place that was all farmland must be like working all the time. Ari knew other country people besides Trask, and most of them were real workers to. No matter how long the patrol day after day Trask was always there up front and full of energy. Ari did not know how he did it. Most of the unit wanted to get back to camp and connect to the WiFi and webcam with the folks back home. Trask was all about the mission. It was uncanny in a way. Ari did not like to think what happened to Trask, because there was a big gap at the end of it. Ari though it could have been him instead of Trask, but that’s what everybody thinks. But he actually could not remember what everyone told him had happen. The running around with Trask’s head in his arms. The medic told Ari he demanded to put Trask’s head in a cooler. Eventually they did, and after that nobody remembers.

The bubbles from the regulator drifted to the top of the pool. Ari was getting relaxed, when he glanced down at his gauge and it read less than a quarter remaining. The leader was motioning for everyone to head for the surface inflate their Buoyancy Compensation Apparatus or simply BCA. On the surface it felt good to take off the mask and breath real air. The ocean felt close by, as he smelled the salt air. He was glad not to be in Indiana. He needed the ocean to be alive. It was more than the sound of the waves and the sunsets and all that crap. It was a feeling of security that it gave him. It was time to break all the gear down and turn in the tanks so they could get refilled. The fins and suits needed to get rinsed down and hung out to dry. When it was done there was a review of what to expect for the real dive. It was going to be a thirty foot deep water excursion into the kelp forest. There was no real danger of anything. The seals sometimes get too close.