The Schiaparelli Institute Chronicles: Genesis

The Instruction in the Blood

A Short Story from the First Team Files

London and Oxford, England — Nine months before the first death

The British Museum smelled of empire and explanation, which were, in James Worthington's experience, frequently the same thing.

He stood in Gallery 56—the Mesopotamian room, the room where the oldest written records of human civilisation were displayed behind glass that was cleaned daily by people who did not read Sumerian and who therefore handled, without trembling, objects that contained the first attempts of the human species to explain itself to itself. The gallery was quiet. It was a Tuesday morning in October. The tourists were at the Egyptian rooms. The scholars were at the reading room. James was alone with four and a half thousand years of cuneiform tablets and the growing, uncomfortable conviction that the tablets were trying to tell him something that the museum's interpretive panels had been carefully designed to avoid.

The team's second investigation had begun, like the first, with a telephone call from the intermediary and an instruction that arrived with a plane ticket. James's ticket was to London—his own city, his own country, the place where he had studied and taught

and believed, with the quiet confidence of a man whose civilisation had built the museum he was standing in, that the history of humanity was fundamentally understood. Los Angeles had cracked that confidence. The Battle of LA had shown him that something had been in the sky and that someone had gone to considerable effort to ensure it was forgotten. But the sky was large and strange and distant, and James could accommodate an anomaly in the sky the way a ship accommodates a storm—by riding it out and returning to the known waters of his discipline.

The others arrived over the course of the morning. Greta came from Berlin, direct, punctual, wearing the field jacket and the expression of focused assessment that James was learning to recognise as her operational mode—the mode in which she stopped being a colleague and became an instrument of inquiry. Koichi came from Tokyo via Amsterdam, appearing in the gallery with the silent materialisation that the team was beginning to accept as his natural state of locomotion. He went immediately to the cuneiform tablets and stood before them with his hands clasped behind his back and his dark eyes moving across the wedge-shaped script with the fluency of a man reading his morning post.

Sarah arrived last. She was wearing fingerless gloves despite the mild October weather, and she carried two coffees—one of which she was drinking, the other of which she handed to James without comment, as though she had calculated his caffeine deficit from a distance and had acted accordingly. She looked at the tablets. She looked at the gallery. She looked at the ceiling, which was not architecturally remarkable but which she examined with the attention she gave to things that other people considered unimportant.

"The Sumerians," Koichi said, not turning from the tablets, "had a creation myth that is unlike any other creation myth in the ancient world."

"Every civilisation has a creation myth," James said. "They're all unlike each other. That's rather the point of being different civilisations."

"No," Koichi said. His voice had the quality it acquired when he was about to say something that he had been thinking about for a long time and had decided, at last, to release into the world. "Every other civilisation's creation myth is cosmological. The Egyptians: the world rises from the primordial waters. The Greeks: Chaos begets Gaia. The Norse: ice and fire in Ginnungagap. The Hebrew Genesis: God speaks and the world appears. These are stories about the origin of the cosmos. The universe is made, and humanity arrives as a consequence—an afterthought, a purpose, a gift."

He turned from the tablets. "The Sumerians are different. The Sumerian creation myth is not cosmological. It is industrial. The gods—the Anunnaki—create humanity not from divine inspiration but from practical necessity. They create us because they need workers. The text is explicit: the Anunnaki are tired of labouring. They need a servant race. So Enki—the god of wisdom, of craft, of technology—takes an existing being, a primitive, and he modifies it. He mixes the clay with the blood of a slaughtered god. He shapes the result in a mould. He produces *lú-lú*—the mixed one. The human being."

"Adam," Greta said. "*Adamu* in the Akkadian versions."

"*Adamu*," Koichi confirmed. "The word is cognate. The Hebrew Adam derives from the Akkadian *adamu*, which derives from the Sumerian *lú-lú*—the mixed one, the hybrid, the engineered creature. And the process of creation is described not in the language of magic or miracle but in the language of manufacture. Enki does not speak humanity into existence. He fabricates it. He takes raw material—an existing biological entity—and he modifies it, using his own biological material, through a process that the text describes with terminology that scholars have struggled to translate because it belongs to no category of ancient knowledge that the scholarly tradition recognises."

"Until now," said the intermediary, who had entered the gallery without being observed—his standard mode of arrival, which the team had ceased to find startling and had begun to find merely irritating. He carried his portfolio and a second leather case—heavier, wider, the case of someone transporting documents that required physical protection.

"Because the terminology that the Sumerian texts use to describe Enki's process of human creation—the mixing, the moulding, the combining of materials from two sources—has no parallel in any ancient manufacturing process. It does, however, have a precise parallel in a modern one." He looked at each of them. "Genetic engineering."

He opened the portfolio. "Your contact for this investigation is not an archaeologist, not a linguist, and not a historian. She is a molecular geneticist. Her name is Dr. Catherine Haworth, and she is a research fellow at the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics at the University of Oxford. She has spent the past seven

years studying anomalies in the human genome—features of our DNA that the standard evolutionary model does not adequately explain. She has published on three of these anomalies. She has been prevented from publishing on a fourth." He paused.

The Wellcome Trust Centre occupied a building on Roosevelt Drive in Headington—a purpose-built facility of glass and concrete that hummed with the specific energy of a place where very expensive machines were asking very precise questions of very old molecules. Dr. Catherine Haworth met them in a conference room on the third floor, where the whiteboard was covered in diagrams that Greta and James and Koichi could not read and that Sarah could—not because she was a geneticist, but because the diagrams were fundamentally mathematical, and mathematics was the language Sarah dreamed in.

Haworth was forty-three, precise, with short auburn hair and the rapid speech patterns of a mind that moved faster than conversation typically permitted. She wore a lab coat over a jumper and had the distracted air of someone who had been pulled from important work to discuss something more important, and who was not yet certain that the substitution was justified.

"I study human chromosome 2," she said, without preamble, because Haworth did not believe in preamble. She believed in data. "Human chromosome 2 is the second largest chromosome in the human genome. It is also the most anomalous. Every other great ape—chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans—has twenty-four pairs of chromosomes. Humans have twenty-three. We

are missing a pair. Except we're not missing it. It's been fused."

She drew on the whiteboard—a rapid, practised sketch of two chromosomes joined end to end. "Chromosome 2 contains, at its centre, the remnants of two separate telomere sequences—the caps that protect the ends of chromosomes—fused together. It also contains a vestigial centromere—a second centromere, deactivated, in a position consistent with the centromere of one of the two ancestral chromosomes. The evidence is unambiguous. At some point in our evolutionary history, two separate chromosomes—chromosomes that still exist as separate entities in every other great ape—were fused into one."

"This is established science," James said. "I've read about chromosome 2 fusion. It's presented as evidence for common ancestry with apes—the fusion occurred naturally in our lineage after the divergence from the chimpanzee line."

"Naturally," Haworth repeated. She said the word the way a chemist says *inert*—technically accurate, epistemically insufficient. "The standard model says the fusion was a Robertsonian translocation—a random chromosomal accident that happens occasionally in nature. Two chromosomes stuck together during cell division. The individual survived. The fused chromosome was passed to offspring. It became fixed in the population. Random. Natural. Accidental."

"And you disagree," Greta said.

"I don't disagree with the observation. The fusion happened. The evidence is in every cell of every human being on Earth. I disagree with the characterisation of the event as random." She turned back to the

whiteboard. "Robertsonian translocations in nature are messy. They produce chromosomes with duplicated genetic material, with breakage points that are ragged and irregular, with gene disruptions at the fusion site. The chromosome 2 fusion is not messy. It is clean. The telomere-to-telomere junction is precise. The vestigial centromere was deactivated—silenced—with an efficiency that suggests not accidental breakage but controlled modification. And the fusion site itself contains a sequence that I have spent the past three years analysing and that I was prevented from publishing."

She opened a folder. Inside were printouts of DNA sequences—long columns of the letters A, T, G, and C that constituted the alphabet of life, annotated in Haworth's precise hand with markings that indicated regions of interest.

"The fusion site on chromosome 2 contains a sequence of approximately 650 base pairs that does not correspond to any known telomeric, centromeric, or gene-coding function. It is not junk DNA—it is too structured, too conserved across human populations, too resistant to mutation to be non-functional. It is present in every human being who has ever been sequenced—every ethnicity, every population, every geographic region. It is perfectly conserved. In four hundred thousand years of human evolution—during which time the rest of the genome has accumulated thousands of mutations—this 650-base-pair sequence has not changed."

Sarah was leaning forward. "Perfect conservation implies perfect selection pressure. The sequence is maintained because any mutation in it is lethal or strongly deleterious. Which means—"

"Which means it does something essential," Haworth finished. "Something so critical to human biology that any alteration is incompatible with survival. And I cannot determine what it does because its function does not correspond to any known regulatory mechanism, any known gene expression pathway, any known epigenetic control system. It is doing something that our current understanding of genetics does not have a category for."

The conference room was very quiet. Outside, Oxford went about the business of being Oxford—ancient, certain, the city that had spent eight centuries explaining the world and that had, in this building, on this floor, in this room, produced a piece of data that the world's explanatory frameworks could not accommodate.

"Show me the sequence," Sarah said.

Haworth handed her the printout. Sarah studied it—not as a geneticist would study it, reading the codons, looking for protein-coding regions, but as a mathematician. She was looking at the structure. The pattern. The ratio.

"The sequence is not random," she said. "The base-pair distribution is non-random. The ratio of adenine to thymine and guanine to cytosine follows Chargaff's rules—obviously, it's DNA—but the higher-order pattern—the way the bases are arranged in groups—is mathematical. There's a periodicity." She was running her finger along the columns of letters, her lips moving as she counted. "The bases repeat in groups that follow a Fibonacci sequence. One, one, two, three, five, eight, thirteen. Then the sequence resets and repeats. A Fibonacci signature embedded in the base-pair arrangement of a perfectly conserved sequence at the fusion

site of the one chromosome that distinguishes humans from every other great ape."

Haworth stared at her. "I spent two years looking for a pattern in that sequence. How did you see it in three minutes?"

"Because I can see Fibonacci signatures," Sarah said. The pattern was there—in her mind, in the mathematical architecture that her brain constructed instinctively, the architecture that allowed her to see relationships between numbers the way other people saw relationships between faces.

"In what?" Haworth asked.

"In structures," Sarah said carefully.

Koichi's contribution came that evening, in the reading room of the British Museum, where the intermediary had arranged after-hours access—a privilege that the museum extended to scholars of a certain calibre and to patrons of a certain generosity, and the mysterious patron was, through the mechanism of the unnamed institution he represented, both.

The reading room was closed. The public galleries were closed. The cuneiform collection was available, under supervision, for Koichi's examination—hundreds of tablets, thousands of years of the oldest written language on Earth, the clay memories of a civilisation that had recorded, with the meticulous attention to inventory that characterised Sumerian culture, everything from barley rations to the creation of the human race.

Koichi worked for three hours. He read tablets that the museum's own catalogue described as "mythological" and "religious" and that he read, after the morning's conversation with Haworth, with a different eye—the eye of a linguist who had been given, by a geneticist, a vocabulary for what the ancient scribes were describing.

At eleven o'clock, he assembled the team in the reading room, arranged around a table where a selection of tablets lay under controlled lighting, the clay surfaces inscribed with the wedge-shaped marks that a reed stylus had pressed into wet earth four thousand years ago.

"The Atra-Hasis," Koichi said. He indicated a tablet—a copy, museum reproduction, of the original held in the museum's collection. "The Babylonian creation epic. Composed around 1700 BCE, derived from earlier Sumerian sources. It describes the creation of humanity by the god Enki in collaboration with the goddess Ninhursag—the lady of the mountain, the birth goddess." He read from his translation:

"*Enki opened his mouth and spoke to the great gods: 'On the first, seventh, and fifteenth days of the month, I will make a purifying bath. Let one god be slaughtered. Let the gods be purified by immersion. With his flesh and his blood, let Ninhursag mix the clay. God and man shall be mixed together in the clay.*'"

He looked up. "Flesh and blood mixed with clay. The flesh and blood of a god—a superior being—combined with the existing material—the clay, the raw biological substrate. The result: a new creature. Not god, not clay. Mixed. *Lú-lú*."

"Hybridisation," Greta said.

"The text uses a word for the mixing process—*bánda*—that scholars have translated variously as 'to mix,' 'to bind,' or 'to weave.' The word is unusual. It does not appear in any other Sumerian context with this meaning. It is used exclusively in descriptions of the creation of humanity, and its semantic field—the range of meanings it carries—includes the concepts of combining, intertwining, and splicing."

"Splicing," James repeated.

"Splicing. A word that has no purpose in Bronze Age manufacturing—you do not splice clay, you do not splice metal, you do not splice any material available to a culture that works in earth and copper. The word describes a process that has no analogue in ancient technology. It does, however, have a precise analogue in modern biotechnology. Gene splicing. The combination of genetic material from two different organisms to produce a hybrid."

He moved to another tablet. "The Enûma Eliš—the Babylonian creation epic. Tablet VI. *Blood I will bind, bone I will make stand. I will create lullû, man shall be his name. I will create lullû-man. They shall bear the toil of the gods, that those may rest.*" He paused. "The word *lullû* is a variant of *lú-lú*—the mixed one. And the purpose of the creation is explicit: labour. The gods create humanity to perform work. Not from love, not from divine purpose, not from the overflow of creative power. From the need for a workforce. It is the most pragmatic creation myth in the ancient world."

"And the most specific," Sarah said. "The texts describe the process—mixing blood with clay, using flesh from a divine being. They describe the purpose—

labour. And they describe the result—a hybrid creature, mixed, not fully divine and not fully natural." She looked at Haworth, who was sitting at the end of the table, her lab coat replaced by a jacket, her expression the expression of a molecular geneticist who was hearing, in four-thousand-year-old clay, a description of the process she had spent her career studying. "Dr. Haworth, if you were to describe, in non-technical language, the process of genetically modifying a primate species using genetic material from a more advanced organism, what words would you use?"

Haworth considered. "I would say: take the existing biological material. Add genetic material from the donor organism. Combine them—splice, bind, mix. Produce a hybrid that has characteristics of both sources but is identical to neither. The resulting organism would be, in lay terms, a mixed creature."

"*Lú-lú*," Koichi said.

"*Lú-lú*," Haworth agreed. Her voice was very quiet.

The complication came the following morning.

Haworth telephoned James at seven AM—the hour at which British scientists telephone when something has gone wrong in the specific, institutional, career-threatening way that British science goes wrong. Her voice was controlled. Beneath the control, something harder—the hardness of a woman who has been told she cannot do her job and is deciding how to respond.

"My access to the genome databases has been revoked," she said. "As of six o'clock this morning. I arrived at the Centre to find my login disabled. My department head informed me that my database access was suspended pending a review of my research protocols. The review was requested by an external advisory body."

"The advisory body," James said. He was sitting on the edge of his bed in the hotel in Headington, and the October morning was grey through the window, and the greyness felt like a closing. "Unnamed. Unpublished membership."

"My department head would not identify them. He also mentioned that the Centre had recently received a significant endowment from a research foundation, and that the foundation had expressed concerns about—his words—'the responsible use of sensitive genomic data.' He suggested that my research on the chromosome 2 fusion site was 'methodologically unconventional' and that a pause for review would be beneficial."

"The foundation," James said. He did not ask the city.

"Zürich," Haworth said. "I looked it up. The endowment was made three months before I submitted my paper on the fusion site sequence. Three months. The paper was rejected by two journals before the endowment was made and by three journals after. The endowment coincides precisely with the point at which my rejections shifted from 'insufficient evidence' to 'methodological concerns.' They changed the reason. Which means they changed the reviewers."

James relayed the call to the team. They assembled in his hotel room—Greta sitting on the desk chair with her notebook already open, Koichi on the floor, Sarah on the windowsill with her coffee and her green eyes and the particular intensity she brought to moments when the investigation's two threads—the ancient and the modern, the textual and the physical—twisted together into something that neither thread alone could bear.

"The pattern," Greta said. She was writing. She had bought a new notebook in London, keeping a dedicated record of the investigation's interference, separate from her field notes. The record was growing. Los Angeles: fragments destroyed, radar redacted. Now Oxford: database access revoked, publication suppressed, endowment timed to coincide with research that threatened—

That threatened what? What was the threat? A geneticist studying an anomalous sequence on human chromosome 2? A sequence that was perfectly conserved, Fibonacci-patterned, and located at the fusion site that distinguished humans from every other primate? Why would a foundation in Zürich care about a molecular geneticist's database access?

The argument happened in the museum, after hours, in the reading room where the cuneiform tablets lay under their controlled lighting and the clay of Mesopotamia held the oldest words that humanity had written about its own origin.

Sarah opened. "I want to present the genetic case and the textual case as a single thesis, because they are a single thesis, and separating them—treating

the genetics as science and the texts as mythology—is exactly the error that has prevented anyone from seeing what we're looking at."

She stood. "The genetic case. Human chromosome 2 was formed by the fusion of two ancestral chromosomes. The fusion is anomalously clean—precise, not ragged. The fusion site contains a 650-base-pair sequence that is perfectly conserved, non-random, Fibonacci-patterned, and functionally unknown. Separately: the human genome contains approximately four per cent Neanderthal DNA—evidence of interbreeding between anatomically modern humans and an archaic species. And the human species underwent a cognitive explosion approximately seventy thousand years ago—the 'Great Leap Forward'—in which symbolic thinking, language, art, and complex tool-making appeared with a rapidity that the gradualist model of evolution cannot explain. In the space of a few thousand years, a species that had been making the same stone tools for hundreds of thousands of years suddenly began painting caves, burying their dead with ritual, and producing symbolic art. Something changed. Something fundamental, in the neurological architecture of Homo sapiens, was altered in a timeframe that is incompatible with natural selection."

She paused. "The textual case. The oldest civilisation to develop writing—the Sumerians—recorded a creation myth in which humanity was fabricated, not born. Fabricated by beings called the Anunnaki, using a process described in terminology that has no analogue in ancient technology but precise analogues in modern genetic engineering. The raw material: an existing biological entity—the clay, the primitive. The modifier: genetic material from a superior being—the blood and flesh of a god. The process: mixing, binding,

splicing. The result: a hybrid—*lú-lú*, the mixed one, the creature that is neither god nor animal but something in between. A creature designed to serve. A creature designed to work."

She looked at each of them. "A creature that did not evolve. That was engineered. By an intelligence that the Sumerians called gods and that every subsequent civilisation called gods and that the evidence—the genetic evidence, sitting in every cell of every human body on this planet—suggests were not gods at all. They were engineers."

The reading room held the silence of a space designed for the contemplation of ancient truths and confronted, in this moment, with the possibility that the oldest truth it contained—the cuneiform creation texts, the first words, the original record—was not mythology but memoir.

James spoke. "I am going to make the argument that should be made, because it must be made, even though—" He stopped. Started again. "The chromosome 2 fusion occurred between five and six million years ago—at or near the divergence of the human and chimpanzee lineages. The Great Leap Forward occurred seventy thousand years ago. These events are separated by millions of years. If the fusion was an act of engineering, and the cognitive explosion was a consequence of that engineering, why the gap? Why modify the chromosome and then wait five million years for the result?"

Haworth answered. She had been sitting quietly, watching the argument as a scientist watches an experiment—attentively, without attachment to outcome, interested primarily in whether the hypothesis survived contact with critique.

"Because the modification may not have been the fusion itself," she said. "The fusion may have been the platform—the structural change that created the genomic architecture necessary for subsequent modifications. Chromosome 2 is the longest chromosome in the human genome. It carries over twelve hundred genes. The fusion created a single, large chromosome with a unique regulatory landscape—a platform on which subsequent genetic modifications could be introduced and coordinated across a wider genomic region than any single ancestral chromosome would allow."

"You're describing a multi-stage process," Sarah said. "Stage one: structural modification—the fusion. Creating the platform. Stage two: functional modification—introducing the genetic changes that produced the cognitive leap. Separated by millions of years of natural evolution, during which the platform was tested, stabilised, and refined by ordinary selection. And then—"

"And then, seventy thousand years ago, someone came back," Koichi said. "And completed the process. Introduced the final modifications. Activated the sequence. And *Homo sapiens*—the mixed one, the hybrid, the creature that had been waiting for five million years to become what it was designed to become—woke up. And began to paint. And began to speak. And began to remember."

"And began," the intermediary said, from the corner of the reading room where he had been standing for the entire argument, motionless, "to write."

He came forward. "The Sumerians are the first civilisation to write. They record, in their first texts, the story of their own creation by beings from elsewhere.

They use terminology that describes genetic engineering. And the genetic evidence—the fusion, the sequence, the cognitive explosion—is consistent with their account

"You are investigating whether humanity was visited by an advanced civilisation. The answer, based on the evidence from Los Angeles and from this investigation, is yes. But the visit was not a fly-by. It was not observation. It was not a teaching mission that left behind monuments and manuals. It was intervention. Biological intervention. The visitors did not simply come to Earth. They made us. We are the artefact. Every human being on this planet carries, in their cells, the evidence of their engineering. The chromosome 2 fusion site. The perfectly conserved sequence. The Fibonacci signature in our DNA."

He looked at each of them—at James, whose scepticism was not gone but was now directed not at the evidence but at the institutions that had hidden it; at Greta, whose notebook was filling with a pattern of suppression that was no longer surprising but was becoming, with each entry, more frightening; at Koichi, whose linguistic evidence was accumulating toward a critical mass that would produce some kind of language that connected everything; at Sarah, whose mathematical sensitivity had seen in three minutes what Haworth had missed in two years and whose mind was beginning, in ways that none of them yet understood, to operate on frequencies that the engineering had designed it to receive.

They parted at Paddington Station—the great glass-and-iron cathedral of Victorian engineering that

was, James reflected, a monument to the last time his civilisation had been certain it understood the world.

Haworth had given them copies of everything—the chromosome 2 data, the fusion site sequence, the Fibonacci analysis that Sarah had identified. She had also given them something else: a name. A colleague at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig—the facility that had sequenced the Neanderthal genome—who had, Haworth said, encountered anomalies in the ancient DNA data that paralleled her findings. Anomalies he had not published. Anomalies that had been, in Haworth's careful phrasing, "discouraged from publication."

"The same foundation?" Greta asked.

"Not directly. A different funding body. But the funding body's board included—" Haworth hesitated, the hesitation of a scientist who was about to leave the territory of data and enter the territory of inference, a border she crossed reluctantly. "The funding body's board included a member who was also listed as an advisor to the foundation that endowed the Oxford Centre. The same individual. Serving on both boards. Connecting Oxford and Leipzig through a single person whose name—" She produced a printout. "—appears in the governance records of fourteen separate academic funding organisations, across eight countries, all of which fund research in genetics, archaeology, or ancient languages."

One person. Fourteen organisations. Eight countries. Sitting at the intersection of every discipline that could, if the disciplines talked to each other, assemble a picture that someone had spent considerable resources keeping in fragments.

Greta took the printout. She would add it to her notebook. She would trace the name. She would map the connections. She would build, over the coming months, a diagram of the this institutional architecture that was meticulous, comprehensive, patient.

Tonight, Greta was simply a woman at a train station, holding a printout, adding another thread to a pattern that was growing tighter and more coherent with every investigation.

James caught the train to Portsmouth. He sat in a first-class carriage and stared at the English countryside passing in the October dark—the fields, the hedgerows, the ancient landscape that he had been born in and had loved and that was, he now understood, the product of a species that was itself a product. Not evolved. Not accidental. Made. Designed. Engineered by an intelligence that had left its signature in every cell and its story in the oldest clay and its purpose in a word—*lú-lú*, the mixed one—that had been pressed into wet earth four thousand years ago and that was, tonight, being carried in the bloodstream of every passenger on the train and every person in every station and every human being who had ever been born and who had carried, without knowing it, the instruction that had made them what they were.

Koichi caught the flight to Tokyo. He carried transcriptions of the creation texts and a growing certainty that the Sumerian vocabulary of creation—*bánda*, *lú-lú*, *šìr* (flesh), *ùš* (blood)—belonged to the language that had no etymology because it was not derived from any human language. It was the language of the engineers.

Sarah caught the flight to Boston. She sat by the window and drew. Not the chromosome. Not the Fibonacci sequence. A diagram—the beginning of a diagram, the first tentative sketch of a map that was not a map, that connected the genetic data and the Sumerian texts and the unexplained absorption coefficient from the Los Angeles photographs.

She drew because the frequency told her to draw. The frequency was new—barely audible, more a sensation than a sound, the feeling of a radio dial hovering just below a station.

On a plane over the Atlantic, Sarah Ward drew the first line of the diagram that would, over the next nine months, become the unified field theory of the investigation—the map that connected the blood and the books and the stones and the stars. And the first line of the diagram started, as all lines start, at the beginning.

At the point where someone had looked at a primate on a young planet and decided to make something more.

Above them, the stars were hidden by cloud and light pollution, but they were there—the Pleiades, Orion, Sirius, the addresses that every ancient culture had preserved.

The addresses were in the sky. The instruction was in the blood. And somewhere between the two—between the stars and the cells, between the signal and the receiver—was the truth.

But it would be heard. The instruction guaranteed it. You could suppress the texts. You could burn the libraries. You could revoke the database access and endow the journals and place one person on fourteen

boards. But you could not suppress the instruction, because the instruction was in the blood, and the blood was in every human being who had ever lived, and the instruction said:

Listen.

Remember.

Come find us.

Author's Note

This is a work of fiction. The characters, organisations, and narrative conclusions are entirely imaginary.

The historical events, archaeological sites, ancient texts, and scientific evidence referenced throughout are real and verifiable. The author has drawn on documented history, published research, and physical artefacts held in museums and archives around the world. Where the factual record ends and the fictional interpretation begins is left, deliberately, for the reader to determine.

No endorsement of any particular theory regarding the subjects depicted is intended or implied.