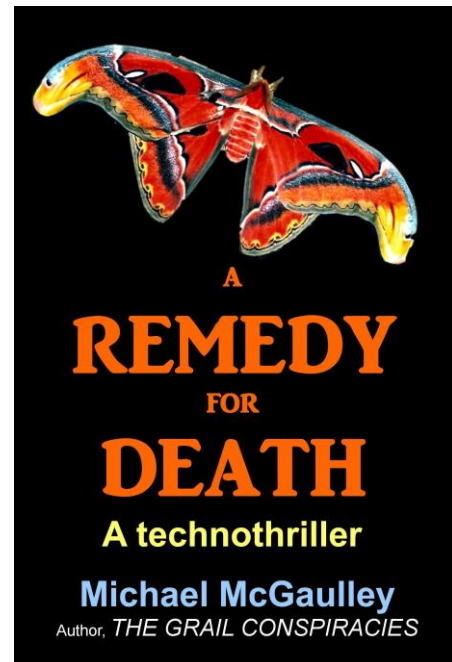


Here's your free sample of the scientific techno-thriller, A REMEDY FOR DEATH. This segment picks up from the middle of the book, and focuses on how sensory deprivation immersion tanks fit in the plot.



A REMEDY FOR DEATH

They say we only go around once in life. But what if?

What if today's emerging bio-science promises a select, secretive, super-rich elite the chance to come back into "healthy, horny 21-year old bodies complete with all our accumulated savvy from this lifetime"?

But what if the project is almost successful . . . but opens dangerous doors to another dimension . . . doors that cannot be closed"?

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Apologies for any technical glitches that may have crept in in "translating" these pages from book form to this sampler.

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“What a caterpillar calls death, we call a butterfly”

Unknown

“That is one of the privileges here at the clinic: We provide a remedy for death.”

Hubert Langwein, M.D., Ph.D.

“You’re opening very dangerous doorways! Once they’re open, there’s no stopping what may come through from the other side!”

Katherine Remington, Ph.D.

EVEN MORE TROUBLING

DR. DAULBY FINALLY TRACKED Tedi to Room 127 in the basement of the clinic. A technician in white appeared and blocked his way, then agreed to tell Dr. Remington that Daulby was there inquiring about his patient.

Daulby recalled Langwein’s reference to Dr. Remington as “Hauenfelder’s Resident Witch,” and he waited, wondering what he would encounter. Why “witch?” Supposedly only a joke, but a joke with an edge. For whatever reason.

Minutes passed before a tall woman emerged, wearing a Wedgewood blue jogging suit. He recognized her from the cafeteria yesterday, the woman who’d been staring at him. She had seemed angry then, and still seemed hostile.

A witch in a jogging suit? A pair of large, dark-framed glasses rested in her long brown hair. He guessed she was perhaps 30, 32 at most. Why was she angry at someone she had never seen before?

“You’re Dr. Daulby,” she said with the warmth she might use in speaking to a bag of garbage.

He nodded. She didn’t offer her hand, and seemed to keep a distance from him, even in the small room.

“I’m Kate Remington, *Doctor* Remington. We were at a crucial stage of the maneuver just then. What is it you want?”

She was American— that was a surprise, the only American he’d encountered here. With high cheekbones in a thin face, she was unusually attractive, with an almost luminous quality about her. He got no sense of the weirdness that seemed the norm among the others at Hauenfelder.

Yet she obviously loathed him on first sight.

“I went to check on my patient— rather, patients, plural, Tedi and his clone—correction, his ‘Vehicle’ in the jargon of this place. I found they had been signed out to you.”

She stared at him for a moment, then turned and led the way through the door from which she had emerged. “He is here, yes. Both of him. Both versions of Tedi, old and new. I have some time now, I might as well show you now and get it over with.”

IT LOOKED LIKE THE CONTROL ROOM of a radio station, with a microphone and an array of tape recorders set up below wide windows that overlooked a pair of adjacent rooms.

Tedi Beckwith lay on a bed in one of the darkened rooms, earphones fitted around his bandaged head, the IV drips still in place. He wore a sleep mask.

In the other room, Tedi's Vehicle lay in a bed, also wearing headphones and a sleep mask. Beside the bed was what seemed to be a large white plastic cylinder, about eight feet long and three or four feet high.

"That's Tedi himself in the bed in Room A. His Vehicle is in Room B. We're not using the flotation tank yet, of course."

"Flotation tank? Out of the question. We can't have water touching those fresh incisions."

"Agreed. Even Dr. Von Schwalbenbach agreed not to use the tank yet. That has to be the first time he's ever agreed with me on anything."

"I don't understand — why a flotation tank?"

"The flotation tank, in case you've never seen one, is that thing in the room that looks like a giant white cucumber. The plan is to use it as an environment to assist the donor in moving his CE—his Conscious Essence—across to the Vehicle. After, of course, the incisions have healed."

He waited for her to explain. Finally he said, "You're giving me credit for knowing more background than I do. Langwein told me you were beginning to move the Conscious Essence, whatever they mean by that—to the clone, to the Vehicle. But this patient—correct that, this *pair* of patients—just had surgery. They should be resting, not working with you."

"On that, at least, we agree," she said, again seeming to scrutinize him. "It definitely is too soon. But I didn't make the decision, nor was I consulted. Dr. Rausch has made it clear that there is no time to lose on this work."

She shrugged. "In any case, the guidance tape is running, and both of the Tedis will be finished here in about a half-hour. Then they can rest until the evening session."

He was silent, not knowing how to respond.

She stared at him, and he had the sense that was looking through him in search of some inner essence. "You really haven't been briefed on these things?"

"On none of this. My involvement was strictly with the surgery, and that only because it was an emergency."

"Emergency?" She shook her head. "That's not true, not at all. Tedi's operation has been planned for weeks, to take place as soon as you got here. It was hardly an emergency."

"As soon as I got here? That's . . . that is very peculiar. The first time I ever heard of this place was the day before yesterday, I think, when I was back in Florida. So how could they have been waiting for me?"

She stared at him. "I don't know. But I also find that disturbing. *Very* disturbing."

Her hostility seemed to have faded a little, now replaced by concern. But concern for what? "The red phone rang yesterday, when I was being oriented, and Dr. Rausch said an emergency operation was needed. I didn't feel I should be directly involved in the surgery, but . . . But they twisted my arm."

"You really have been kept in the dark, haven't you?"

"Yesterday was only my first full day here."

"What's your schedule for the next few hours?"

“Nothing, so far as I know.”

“I’m free, as soon as I finish with Tedi. I can show you the tank, and brief you on at least that aspect of it—whether they like it or not. You should know what’s happening in this place. Perhaps if we meet back here in an hour?”

He was down the hall when she called him to wait. “You referred to these as clones. They’re not clones, you need to understand that. They haven’t been *cloned*, they’ve been *tissue engineered* — as adults. Which I find even spookier. Even more troubling.”

ACTING DIRECTOR

GERDA WAS WAITING for him when Daulby returned to the main floor after his talk with Kate Remington. “Where have you been, Doctor?”

“Downstairs. I went looking for my patient.”

“You must call now to Dr. Langwein. He is in his office.”

“Dr. Rausch is unavailable,” Langwein said when Daulby phoned him back. “In his absence, I am acting director of the Clinic. You will report to me now.”

“Report to you?” Daulby responded, not sure what he meant.

“Be in my office in five minutes.”

Langwein’s office was cluttered with piles of papers on every area of desk and shelf space, and most of one corner of the room.

“Given Dr. Rausch’s absence, and the fact that we are waiting to see how well the operation on Tedi turned out, this is a good time to orient you to some of the other experimental work being carried on at the Clinic,” Langwein said, then paused to clean his glasses on his necktie.

Daulby wondered if he wore the tie only to ensure that he had silk ready to indulge his obsession with clean glasses. Or did he clean the glasses just for the sake of something to do with his hands?

“Our plan,” Langwein continued, staring at his desk, “was to begin your orientation this afternoon. However, it has come to my attention that you undertook to attempt this orientation on your own by venturing into areas that you have not been authorized to see.”

Langwein still avoided eye contact, so it was hard to tell whether he was genuinely angry, or pretending anger to assert his power. Gerda was angry. Kate Remington had been angry. Is it something about this place?

“I went looking for my patient . . . rather the *pair* of patients, the two versions of Tedi. That’s how I happened to meet Dr. Remington, because Tedi—and his clone, his Vehicle—were signed out to her. I happened to see the flotation tank. She offered me a tour, so I accepted.”

I’m sounding defensive, he realized.

Langwein nodded. “Ah, the elusive Dr. Remington. Hauenfelder’s Resident Witch.”

“Resident Witch? You called her that before. Why? It may be an insider’s joke, but there’s a point to it.”

Langwein flicked a quick glance at him before his eyes again darted away. “Because she is in charge of what one might call the *occult* side of our endeavors.”

“Occult?”

"You are surprised that I use the term? It should be no surprise. After all, our work straddles the filmy border-line between the leading edge of medical science and what is often referred to as the occult."

Daulby stared at him, unable to formulate a response. True, Hauenfelder was at the leading edge of science in several areas. First, tissue engineering, not just of individual organs but of entire bodies. Now, with his help, neurosurgery. But for Langwein to speak of the occult as only a small step further along the continuum from established science? Absurd. "I find occult a peculiar word for a scientist to be using."

Langwein leaned back in his chair and smiled. "Someone once defined the occult as occurrences for which the scientific establishment has not yet discovered the reasons."

"How does your so-called Resident Witch fit into that?"

"Our Resident Witch works her magic by guiding the Conscious Essence, or 'soul,' or 'personality,' or whatever term you prefer, in moving from the old body to animate the new one."

SENSORY DEPRIVATION

KATE REMINGTON apologized when Daulby returned to Room 127. "Unfortunately, a problem has arisen with one of my other patients so I can't be here during your time in the tank." The hard edge of hostility seemed to be gone.

"Tank? That's news to me. What kind of tank?"

"A flotation tank, like the one you saw earlier. I assumed Dr. Langwein had briefed you."

"He didn't explain much, just chewed me out for talking to you without his permission."

"Ah, this place." She shook her head, and he detected a trace of a smile. "They're all petty tyrants, they're all *crazy*. There's no better word for it."

She giggled, then cut it off. "Instant psychoanalysis. In any case, it's up to you whether you want to do the exercise in the tank. Though it is a very interesting experience."

He shrugged. "I do have a choice?"

"As far as I'm concerned you do. Though I'm not in charge . . . *far from it*. I'd suggest rescheduling so I could be present, but now Dr. Langwein has gotten himself involved, and any changes in the schedule would get him bent out of shape."

"I'm here, let's do it." Hold off on making waves until it really matters.

She introduced him to her technician, Hans-Georg, the one who had blocked him earlier. He was in his mid-20's, chubby and soft, with a face so pale it seemed he never left the basement. His long blond hair flapped in his face. As soon as he swept it back with his hand, the hair slid down across his eyes again.

Daulby asked what he should expect in the tank.

"It's best to let you discover that for yourself," she said. "Instead, let me leave with you some questions to ponder. First question: What makes the difference between the real Doug Daulby sitting here, and one of the empty Vehicles upstairs?"

He paused, trying to come up with the words. "I suppose 'consciousness' is the best word."

"What's involved in consciousness?"

“Personality. Intelligence. Memories and experiences. Whatever it is that energizes the body.”

“Where is that ‘whatever’ located? Where is your consciousness, your personality? Is there a spot where it’s primarily centered?”

“In the head, obviously.”

She smiled. “Why is it so *obviously* there?”

What was it about Hauenfelder, he wondered, that generated these bizarre discussions? “Because that’s where the brain is. Consciousness is a function of the operation of the brain.”

“‘Consciousness flows from the brain?’ Why not from the heart, or the spine, or the big toe?”

“What’s your point?”

“For that matter, how can you be sure that consciousness isn’t something outside the body that steps in and uses the brain— in the same way that a person sits down at a computer, logs in, and taps into its memory?”

“I’d have to give that some thought.”

She stood. “I think you’re going to have an interesting morning.”

HANS-GEORG led the way to an adjoining room, dominated by the white fiberglass flotation tank.

It really does look like a giant white plastic cucumber, Daulby thought, recalling Kate’s description. Or like a midget blimp.

He opened the hatch at one end of the cucumber: a shallow bathtub sat under the canopy formed by the fiberglass. “This is a flotation tank, based on work begun by Dr. John Lilly in America,” Hans-Georg said. “Do you know Dr. Lilly?”

Daulby nodded. “I’ve heard of his work. But it’s out of the mainstream.”

From the 1960’s onward, in *The Center of the Cyclone* and later books, John Lilly had written of his development of the flotation tank, and the series of experiments he and others had undertaken as they developed what evolved into the flotation tank. They had used the tank in some of the early LSD experiments.

“Have you ever been in a flotation tank?”

“Never even seen one before.”

“It is a sensory deprivation chamber. You will float in unusually buoyant water saturated with sea-salts, heated to match your body temperature. You will have no sense of gravity, and it will be very dark, as dark as the darkest night, so you will see nothing. You will lose awareness of your body. Dr. Lilly and others have reported very unusual experiences once the senses stop sending input to the brain.”

“What kinds of experiences?”

“Some have said it is like being a mind without a body. But it is best for you to be open to whatever may come. Our approach, here at Hauenfelder, is somewhat unusual. You will not experience total sensory deprivation. Instead, you will be receiving certain input through your sense of hearing.”

“Input?”

“You will hear music, very faintly.”

“Why the music? Why not total sensory shut-off?”

“Because zis is our procedure,” Hans-Georg said stiffly, his German accent coming through more strongly for a moment.

“There is one other matter,” he added. “Dr. Langwein talked to you about Out-of-Body Experiences—OBE’s—yes?”

“I’m familiar with the term, but no, he hasn’t talked to me about it. I haven’t really been briefed.”

Hans-Georg looked at him for an instant, then said, “Well, so. In any event, if you travel out of your body, you will want some objective evidence to prove that you have actually been out of your physical body, and not merely imagined doing so. Thus we have devised a simple test, based on the work of Dr. Charles Tart and others.”

“I’m to travel out of my body?”

“Yes, perhaps so, if you are lucky,” Hans-Georg said, then opened a file cabinet, and motioned to Daulby to select one of the large envelopes lined up in one of the drawers. He chose one, and Hans Georg pulled a large white card from it, told Daulby to sign the back side, which was blank. Then he slid it onto a small shelf just below the ceiling.

“You were not able to read what was on the front of that card, were you, Dr. Daulby?”

“No.”

“Nor was I. Thus no one knows what the card contains. Each of these envelopes contains a card with a different combination of letters and numerals. Do you understand?”

Daulby nodded, wondering what the point was.

“Therefore, when you pass out of your body, you must try to read what is written on that card.”

“I’m supposed to read that card while I’m here in the tank? How am I going to pull *that* off?”

“I think you will understand once you begin the experiment.”

“How long will I be in the tank?”

“That is up to you. Now you must shower and enter the tank.”

TRAVELS

THE DOOR OF THE TANK closed over him, and Daulby felt a flash of panic—claustrophobia, mixed with a flash of the pain he’d felt when he saw the closed coffins that held Jackie and Jenny.

Then he relaxed, feeling the peace of total darkness, total silence. Yet it was cozy in a way, and he realized that it was also a lot like being in the womb: it was warm and dark, with his body bathed in comforting warm liquids.

Before long, he lost awareness of his body, and was no longer conscious of the water. It seemed as if his body had dissolved— as if he had left the body behind, as if he were now pure mind, unfettered by a physical body.

Music begins softly. It seems to come from within his head. It sounds Oriental, something like a harp playing far away, as if drifting on the wind from the next mountain—a great jagged snow-capped mountain floated past.

Or did he float past the mountain? It didn't matter.

No, not a harp. A flute, but like no flute he has heard before; softer, warmer, more like a wooden clarinet in its lower register holding a single deep tone that seems to resonate within his core, and he is drifting through a lush green jungle.

Lush. Warm. Languid. Ripe green, green flecked with spots of color. Huge tropical flowers, red, violet, pink.

He drifts into the petal of one of the pink flowers, and enters a pink, peaceful world that shimmers softly, and tastes of ripe mango— mango and strawberry and the pink glow in the dawn sky just before sunrise— feeling, seeing, tasting, and smelling all blended into one experience.

He looks again, and sees there is no petal to blend into, no substance at all, no physical matter, only a feeling of energy, of a soft pink energy that envelopes him.

He floats back into the sunlight. The sunlight feels pink and yellow and blue, and it's like drifting through a rainbow.

It seems he can inhale the light, and it tastes of lilacs and baking bread and the warm cozy feeling of a fireplace after a day of skiing.

Skiing a long white trail down the mountain. Skiing through a stand of pine trees, some of the trees dark green, others vivid pink. The scents of pine and jasmine and new-mown hay hang heavy in the crisp, snowy mountain air.

After leaving the pine trees, the trail runs straight for a while through glowing white virgin snow. His skis cut cleanly through the snow with a soft hissing, a hissing that blends with the sound of a thousand harps and flutes holding a single soft note until the trail dips sharply away.

A voice says "Lift out," and he watches himself skiing away through the snow while he hangs weightlessly in the air watching his body floating below the white canopy of the floatation tank.

He drifts up to look at the shelf, but what's on the card doesn't matter to him now. He passes into the next room and sees Hans-Georg reading a magazine.

I should go to my room, he thinks. The stairs and hallways pass as a blur, and he is in his suite here at the Clinic. He is surprised to see Gerda there. She looks up quickly, as if startled by a noise. She glances nervously around the room, then goes back to checking through the clothes hanging in his closet.

He notices a manila envelope on the desk which had not been there when he left the room earlier.

The hallways blur past, and he finds himself in front of one of the patient wards. But he feels strangely reluctant to pass through the door. The ward exudes a forbidding chill. He sticks his arm through the door, and pulls it back quickly. The arm feels icy now. It seems to carry an odor, a faint stench of decay.

He doesn't want to be there any longer. Back in my office, he decides, and he is soaring now, out of the clinic, across a cobalt-blue lake, over the snow-capped Alps.

HE IS IN HIS OFFICE at the University, in Chicago, but the room is different now. Different furniture, and different books fill the shelves. He sees a new fern by the window and a battered leather sofa that wasn't there when the room was his.

A man sits at the desk, reading a book. He moves into the man, assuming it is himself. The man jerks around in the chair as if he has been hit. Daulby sees that the man is Bob Perkins, from Oncology.

So old Perkins has taken it over. Good for him. At least now he has an office with a window.

It's time to head home for dinner, and he thinks how nice it will be to see Jackie, and maybe play a game with Jenny before tucking her into bed and reading her a story. That'll be good: there hasn't been enough time for stories lately.

He is in the house, and it smells as homey as always, the sweet blend of Jackie and Jenny.

But now he finds that the house is split down the middle by a pane of glass stretching floor to ceiling. He sees Jackie and Jenny, but can't pass through this barrier.

Jackie sits in her usual chair, the big soft one with the flowers, looking straight at him, her face troubled as he has never seen it before. She speaks to him, but he can't hear through the glass.

Jenny is coloring a book at her little table in the corner. Then she is a baby again in her rocker that used to be in that corner. Then she is already Jackie's age, and she is painting a canvas. She is crying.

"Why are you crying?" he asks.

"Because I'll never be like this," Jenny tells him. "I'll never know what my life might have been. They took me away too soon."

"Who took you away?"

"The men in the castle," she replies, turning her painting around so he can see it through the glass. In the painting, a solitary skier, one small dot in a field of white, heads toward a cliff. At the bottom of the cliff, far below, on the shore of an intensely blue lake, the Hauenfelder Clinic stands behind a stone wall.

"Be very careful there, Daddy. There're real cannibals in that castle."

NOW HE JOINS that painting with the solitary skier. He moves ahead of the skier, then slows and lets the skier blend into him just as they reach the edge of the cliff.

He soars out into the clear vanilla sunshine, and floats weightlessly down, the ski-poles now the handles of a parachute. The journey down takes a very long time, as he moves as slowly as a falling leaf. As he drifts down, he realizes he is hungry.

The roof opens to him. He floats down through the levels, watching the clinic staff going about their rounds. They seem unaware of him.

He passes through a room, and sees Kate Remington talking to someone in a bed, a woman, who seems to be asleep.

He looks again. The woman in the bed is Kate Remington. No, not Kate. It's Kate talking to a replica of herself.

He drifts through the floor to another level, feeling like a leaf floating gently downward. He senses Jackie and Jenny nearby. Are they hiding, playing a game? He calls to them, but no sound comes.

He pauses on his drift downward, curious. They are here, somewhere just out of his line of sight. He feels them, knows they are there. He follows the feeling. A doorway dissolves and he's in another of the wards of the clinic. He moves down the corridor, the feeling of them

getting stronger, almost like their body-scents used to be early in the morning, after a night's sleep.

Through another door, and—

He feels pulled away, and tries to swim back to them, but he's helpless against the forces, and he's swept away, feeling as helpless as a leaf tumbling on the wind.

He sees the bulbous white tank again, but now there are others there, trying to climb into the tank. Not people, just indistinct forms. Get away! he says, and they fade away.

He passes a shelf and sees a card on which someone has printed what seems to be "BOOBZ," and he laughs.

He found himself back in the tank with a single flute playing very softly, far away.

BOOBZ

THE MUSIC FADED, but Daulby wasn't ready to leave the tank. He felt secure and relaxed in the enclosed warm darkness. He was still basking in the sense of closeness he'd felt to Jackie and Jenny. He savored it, wishing that it could be as real as it felt, yet knowing that this experience was no more substantial than a dream.

Finally, reluctantly, he pushed the door open and emerged, slowly, feeling as if he'd been drugged. Or detached from his body. His fingers were deeply wrinkled from the water.

Hans-Georg appeared and pointed him to the locker room.

He showered and dressed. Dr. Langwein arrived. "How long was I in the tank?" Daulby asked, guessing it had been about twenty minutes, a half-hour at the most.

"Slightly more than two hours," Langwein replied. "Some have been in six hours, believing it was only a few minutes. An interesting experience, yes?"

Daulby nodded. He didn't want to talk about it now. Especially not that sense of being close to Jackie and Jenny.

"And what of the message?" Langwein asked.

"What message?"

"The card on the shelf," Langwein said, pointing to the shelf by the ceiling. "Were you able to read it?"

Daulby printed BOOBZ on a pad while Langwein stood on a chair to reach the card.

"Interesting," Langwein said, reading what he had written, then handing him the card so he could see for himself: 80087. Daulby checked where he'd signed the card earlier: it seemed genuine.

"Close, but no cigar," Daulby said.

"Cigar?" Langwein asked, his eyes troubled.

Daulby suppressed a grin at Langwein's puzzlement. "A turn of phrase. I meant it was close, but not exact."

"But a very interesting juxtaposition, nonetheless," Langwein pointed out. "80087, BOOBZ— the B for the 8 and Z for the 7. 80087 which you saw as BOOBZ. I do not recall that we have ever encountered this kind of situation before. It is as if you saw, but not clearly enough. Or glanced too hastily."

“I’m not sure what it proves.”

“It is one piece in a mosaic. Perhaps you would like to repeat the experiment another day, yes?”

“Maybe.” He looked again at the card. At first glance, 80087 did look like BOOBZ— the sort of error you could make by not looking closely.

“But I—my eyes, my whole body—was floating in the tank. There’s no way I could have read what was on the card,” he objected.

“You are by no means the only person who has seen without eyes. Read the literature on Out-of-Body experiences, and you will find numerous instances like yours, even cases of blind people who have accurately seen while in an Out-of-Body state. Dr. Charles Tart in California conducted experiments like this as far back as the 1960’s.”

“But how could I have seen without eyes? It’s a physical impossibility.”

“In the conventional sense, yes, it seems impossible. Yet it happens. No one knows how, yet it is. Perhaps you will solve the mystery while you are here at Hauenfelder.”

End of the special sample of A REMEDY FOR DEATH.

Again, this sample began along in the story, rather than at the start, in order to highlight how sensory deprivation immersion tanks fit in.

Hope you enjoyed it, and want to read more!

Michael McGaulley

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