

Chapter 2

Dr. Laden and the nurse shuttled the gurney through the hospital's silent corridors toward the south end of the building. At that early morning hour, they encountered no staff members or patients moving about the facility. The doctor led the way at the head of the bed, constantly looking at the monitors tracking the patient's vital signs. The devices showed no indication of life, but he knew this man wasn't dead.

They approached glass doors that led to a short walkway. The doctor pressed a button, the doors slid open, and they proceeded across the walkway to the next building that housed his lab. He placed his thumb on an electronic reader. A green light displayed, and he keyed in the passcode. The doors swung open and they proceeded inside. Triggered by their entry, all the equipment began to hum, lights turned on all over the lab, computers came to life, monitors illuminated, and the five large medical scanning devices in the room activated.

I hope I didn't make a mistake bringing him here before surgery, the doctor thought, but I've got to know what's going on inside him first. Cuts do not spontaneously heal like that, and I know what I saw. No one else noticed it. I was looking right at that cut when it closed. Some of the bandages the medics applied are still covering wounds. This nurse must think I'm out of my mind for doing this, but who cares what she thinks. I'm the surgeon.

He noticed her staring around the lab, clearly intrigued. *I bet she's never seen anything like this. It must look like something out of Star Trek.*