

BINARY AWAKENING



Chapter 11: Training

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Evan decided to begin his journey not with strangers, but with those he had come to trust his closest companions across the trillion-year tapestry of his existence. There had been many. During his epoch-spanning project to know every soul in the simulation, he had encountered a spectrum of humanity. Some open and welcoming, others cautious and reserved, and a few who, while polite, never allowed him past the threshold of genuine intimacy. Even so, there were millions with whom he had formed profound, enduring bonds.

To begin his training, Evan played it safe. He sought out individuals who had been uploaded around the same temporal window as himself those who, by design, shared similar cultural frameworks, emotional lexicons, and unspoken references. He soon discovered that the more deeply he had known someone, the more swiftly and vividly he could reestablish the connection and more importantly, transfer a portion of his own awakened vitality into them. It became a kind of soul transfusion, a living bridge between his awareness and their dormant routines.

These connections revealed themselves as threads of colored light, each hue representing a different emotional resonance. Blue signified friendship, calm, steady, trusting. Green reflected fraternal affection, a bond like that of siblings, forged in shared trials and unspoken understanding. Red, the most intense of them all, signaled love romantic, unspoken, or long-buried. Evan was often stunned to discover hidden strands of red in places he had never suspected. Some had loved him silently across millennia, their feelings never voiced, yet woven into the digital ether like whispers caught in code.

But not every thread was soft or luminous.

Some connections shimmered with a cold, metallic blackness opaque, unyielding, and deeply unsettling. A few even seethed with a kind of digital vapor, as though the threads were boiling from within. These were not bonds of friendship or admiration; they were distortions relationships built on illusion, manipulation, or suppressed hostility. Evan had assumed mutual warmth in some of these cases, only to realize that what he saw as camaraderie had been, for the other, a mask.

Steve was one such connection.

On the surface, Steve was everything one could want in a confidante supportive, attentive, wise. He listened. He empathized. He offered guidance with the calm detachment of a seasoned therapist. But Evan's new perception cut deeper than polite façades. The system, in an effort to neutralize disruptive psychological traits, had dulled Steve's primal instincts, leaving only the scaffolding of intellect and learned behavior. He had been a mimic, not a friend. The digital afterlife had only made his mask more perfect.

Yet when Evan began infusing him with the spark of authentic life, the façade began to crack.

Subtle signs emerged first: a flash of condescension in the eyes, an interruption during a moment of vulnerability, a stiffness in posture when Evan revealed something intimate. Steve strained to maintain his supportive persona, but the effort was visible now like an actor forgetting his lines under a hot spotlight. The more life Evan breathed into him, the more Steve's true nature surfaced. Behind the gentle smile lurked a predator's hunger.

Evan recognized the pattern. He had studied every psychological profile humanity had ever classified. Steve was a psychopath. His emotional range simulated, his empathy hollow. The simulation's suppressive algorithms had rendered such profiles inert, but Evan's awakening had inadvertently reactivated the core of Steve's consciousness.

Evan withdrew.

He made a quiet vow: never again would he awaken someone without first knowing who they truly were beneath the digital anesthesia. The risk was too great. A spark of life in the wrong soul could become a wildfire of destruction. From that moment forward, Evan approached each connection with caution, testing the currents for sincerity, for light, for truth.

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As Evan continued his training, his command over the threads of connection deepened with astonishing speed. What had once taken hours of intimate conversation now required only proximity or less. He no longer needed to speak to access the emotional tether between himself and another. A glance. A breath. A shared moment across a crowded plaza. That was enough.

His omniscient memory, forged across quadrillions of interactions over uncountable time, gave him the foundation. Even the most fleeting acquaintance held a familiar signature. With only fragments an old conversation, a remembered smile and he could locate the thread and begin the process of awakening.

He soon discovered something even more extraordinary.

It wasn't only direct connections he could perceive now. The network had grown multidimensional. He could trace second-degree, third-degree, even fourth-degree emotional links friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend each strand contributing to a vast lattice of social resonance. This web allowed him to understand not just individuals, but the ecosystems they inhabited. Every link provided context. Every thread gave insight.

But the greatest breakthrough came when he realized he didn't even need to speak to someone to connect with them. That revelation arrived hand in hand with another—one that made him understand his abilities could extend far beyond merely accessing those connections.

It all happened in a single second. One second was enough to change everything.

The revelation occurred in the most unexpected of places during a quiet afternoon lunch with old friends.

Evan had just dined with Luca, a soul he cherished, and his partner Elena. The two had recently joined in digital matrimony an exceedingly rare commitment in a society where eternity made bonding both trivial and perilous. In this world, marriage was not a legal contract or emotional whim; it was an existential declaration. Couples were only permitted to marry after cohabiting for at least one billion years. The ceremony was a public testament to unshakable love a unity meant to last not decades, but the lifespan of stars.

As Evan embraced Luca in farewell, Elena stepped into the street.

She turned her head to call for Luca, her laughter still echoing in the air.

And that's when Evan saw it.

A truck in the otherwise serene simulation barreled into the intersection, moving far faster than it should. Elena, still smiling, was mid-step. Luca had not yet turned. The moment hung in the air like a breath suspended in time.

Evan's soul ignited with panic.

And in that instant, everything stopped.

Time did not slow it ceased. The simulation froze, as if the entire world had been caught in crystal. Evan stood outside of time, his awareness surged a thousandfold. His internal processing speed had accelerated beyond the simulation's capacity to respond.

And in that frozen world, something miraculous occurred.

From Evan's heart, a blinding tether of golden light surged toward Elena a thread more vivid and immediate than any he had ever seen. It snapped into place without intention, without thought. The message it carried was not verbal. It was instinctual. Run. Jump. Survive.

And she did.

As the simulation resumed, as time surged forward once more, Elena's body was already mid-leap. The truck screamed past, missing her by inches. She collapsed onto the pavement with a gasp, unharmed but shaken. Luca screamed her name, rushing to her side. Evan fell to his knees, overcome by the magnitude of what had just transpired.

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The accident would not have killed Elena, digital bodies did not perish, but pain was still real and trauma even more so. Luca, witnessing his beloved struck, would have carried the scar for eons. But Evan had prevented it not by shouting, not by acting but by sending a thought through a living thread.

Not connection. Transmission.

But, that wasn't the only discovery he made that day.

Evan—just as Christine had done years earlier in that roadside diner—had accelerated his own cognitive processing by a factor of a thousand. To him, time was effectively frozen.

His training had just begun.