

## Chapter 12: Subchapter - Leaving Humanity Behind

Jerry stood at the intersection of Mobile Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. It was late November. He could see his breath in the crisp Northern Mississippi morning. He looked across the street at the burned ruins of Mr. Wesson's store, still a hole in the ground since it burned last year.

He'd told his mother he would move away to live near Tupelo. She had hoped he would stay here in Saltillo and marry a local girl. She wanted him nearby.

He neglected to tell her that he would no longer age, that he would never marry or have children. He didn't tell her that in fifteen years, he would stage his own death, that he would go away and begin working in Tayamni missions.

She would be dead by then. She wouldn't live to see the death of her only child.

He observed morning traffic passing in front of him like a stranger, as if, rather than standing in the town where he'd lived his whole life, he was standing on a planet in an alien star system.

All that was familiar was now foreign. He had alien memories. The downloads gave him recollections of a life at Mussara, the Tayamni home world, a moon in what humans called the Pleiades. "*My people,*" he whispered, sighing with the regret of losing his former life. He looked at the burned-out hole where Mr. Wesson's store had collapsed, feeling as if it would swallow him. "*My people* call it Tayamni-Pa."

He looked up at a yellow bus, transporting children to the county elementary school. He saw it was school bus number 36. It was on this very bus, that Denny Shields would travel next year to first grade. Looking down at the cracked sidewalk, he realized Batresh would leave soon. She would travel back to her home to ancient Egypt.

The thought of Batresh being with another man, a man she loved more than him, caused his stomach to churn. He felt as if he would vomit, right here on Mobile Street. He knew how the Matriarchal Tayamni people, *his people*, saw relationships. Monogamy was Patriarchal. He knew he shouldn't feel ownership. He shouldn't feel that she belonged to him. But he did. They told him these feelings would pass. But, for now, they tore at him.

She was available to him. He knew that she loved him. She would make love with him, if he wanted. But he had to share her with another man. He couldn't. Not now. He looked at the hole in the ground, trying not to remember.

As he approached his house in Saltillo, he saw workmen were already packing his belongings. After today, he would live with Batresh until she returned home. He would become a diplomat, the Tayamni Ambassador to the U.S. military.

His eyes widened thinking of how much his life had changed in two months.

He didn't feel human.

In leaving Saltillo, the only home he had known, he was leaving his humanity behind.