

WHAT IS HOME?

Betsy McCall

The first thing that came back to him was the pain. The terrible, numbing pain. Then the heart-wrenching terror.

Blackness.

The sequence of events recurred again and again. Leaving him gasping for breath in a vicious circle. Haley felt nothing else. Only the pain, the terror and nothing. Time did not exist for him. Yet days passed. . . .

Haley had never been in a hospital before. He had never had sick relatives to visit, for he had no relatives. He was an orphan. His wife was pregnant with their first child, so even if the accident had never happened he was soon destined to see one. Consequently, when he woke up, Haley had no conception of what the inside of a hospital looked like, and no idea of what he should do about it.

There was a long moment when he stared at the ceiling. Mind blank. But the blankness reminded him of something. But what?

It came back to him slowly. The pain. The terror. The accident. And then the realization that his wife had been with him. And the baby. . .

Weeping, Haley twisted in his bed. He pulled the IV out of his arm, not noticing or caring. Having already suffered the greatest loss a lonely young man could suffer, what more was there to care about?

Why?!

His mind screamed the question again and again in his torment; body twisting deliriously while nurses tried to hold him still. Crying and screaming. Sobbing. He called her name in vain, knowing there was no one to answer his calls.

Vaguely, a stab in his arm. Slowly, as it had left, the darkness once again held sway.

"Subject's name?"

"According to his ID: Haley Alexandr (Slavic spelling) Tirion."

"Age?"

"32."

"Occupation?"

"Psychologist."

"Alright, Miss. What is it that is troubling you about this patient?"

"Sir, his brain waves don't check right. They're all off. There is an unexplained increase in both the Zeta and Gamma waves. Also, the computer picked up Psi waves that nearly go off the scale."

Now, Nurse. You know that Psi waves are only theoretical. They don't really exist."

"Sir, they have been proved to exist in monitoring so-called psychics. They programmed them into the computer for just that reason, sir, but no one has ever shown readings this high before. If this continues, we may have to redefine the scale for measuring them, at least.

"Sir, you may not realize this, but this could be a very important discovery."

The man looked skeptical. "I'll inform my superior about this. He'll know what should be done."

Meanwhile, Haley was waking up. He stirred in his sleep, but not from the nightmare that had early plagued his sanity. There were no dreams now, only a pleasant peacefulness that weighed on his limbs. His face had a dreamy expression on it, that soon turned to one of confusion when he opened his eyes.

He remembered everything. Strangely, nothing seemed to bother him now. It scared a part of him, yet outwardly he didn't even react when they took him away.