

MARKOVIĆ MARTIN

At the Dream End





We are a team of writers from Serbia. We create short, dark stories with equally dark digital art. The goal is to introduce readers to melancholy and often brutal worlds, if only for a short time. If you are a fan of dark imagery, and depressing stories, you are in the right place! Team members: Markovic Martin and Djordje Disic. You can contact us at markovic.martin887@gmail.com



AT THE DREAM END

- Markovic Martin –



Digital art for the book:

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We are Alpha and Omega. The first and the last.
Nothing, yet infinite. We give life, but we also take it
away. This planet was chosen to be the cocoon from
which one of us would be born. A being that will be
able to give life to other planets, even if only for a
short time.

A young scientist was lying on the floor of a once very advanced, now ruined laboratory. He was in a pool of his blood, but he was not in his body. He slowly regained consciousness.

I did it. I managed to transfer my energy into a new body. The head... It's killing me. How did we get to this point... We could have been gods. Unlike others, we have a gift. To know what life is and to know what makes us alive. But, like everything else, we decided to destroy that gift too. We started changing life as we see fit, and the energy that gives us life, we corrupted it and destroyed it... The day we discovered Life Energy and learned what we could do with it was the day we signed our death sentence.

In the beginning, it was innocent. We just observed the properties of this strange energy and wondered why we could see it only on our planet... This energy created life on this desolated rock. And at the beginning, we cherish it. But after a while, we started experimenting with it. And what we discovered led to unspeakable bio experiments that lasted for years. We should have known... Playing God will be our end. Now that everything is over, I have a small chance to make things right. But I am wondering... Do we deserve to be saved... after everything we've done?



The way we used the energy that gave us life was brutal. Wolves, who were the only ones who could withstand most of the experiments, were tortured in the worst possible ways.



We made them in artificial wombs. We watched them disintegrate from high-energy exposure while they were still fetuses. And we didn't stop. Regardless of the pain we inflicted, we continued with the experiments as long as the results were in our favor. And then we started doing something even worse.



We started making wolves artificially. We consoled ourselves that artificial beings do not have feelings and do not feel pain. But due to mistakes in the making, they felt worse things than pain. And all this just so we could do more experiments because we wiped out all natural wolves within a couple of years.

But the worst of all was the first wolf on which the experiments began. He was constantly tortured. We kept him artificially alive only to make clones of him that mutated and died before his eyes as he endured abnormal procedures in severe pain every day. He's still alive. But he has mutated beyond recognition.



He no longer feels anything, and kills everything in front of him, including his kind. I can't say I blame him. Ever since he destroyed the lab he'd been in for years, he ran away and I haven't seen him since. However, that wolf also managed to do something

good. He managed to stop the biggest and longest bio project in the history of mankind. A project called Tabula Rasa.



A project where we tried to use life energy to create a conscious being. Life would be created in special capsules that looked more like plates. And we were successful in that. The beings we created did not have a highly developed consciousness, but that was

enough, to begin with. But one day the project went too far... We created a living organism that we couldn't control and soon the entire laboratory was destroyed. The worst thing was that the departments with other experiments were also affected. Various mutated animals, including a bunch of mutated wolves, were released. All the safeguards failed... one after the other. We had no chance...



Soon, a massacre ensued. From our laboratory, which was one of the largest for carrying out these experiments, over twelve thousand creatures came out

and began to destroy everything in front of them. As far as our lab is concerned, only a few of us survived. Soon after, the whole world was in ruins and blood.



Yet, in all that chaos, one of us managed to rise. A scientist who survived it all without a single scratch and who saved a few of us. He managed to control a certain group of creatures and suppress the disorder together with them. At the time, we didn't even think about how he managed to do it. We just wanted to survive. Years passed. The human race managed to recover and these experiments were banned all over the world. And the scientist who saved us was declared a hero. If only we knew that he was more dangerous than all those creatures combined. We now call that scientist the Butcher. After the chaos, he secretly started a new project that drained almost all the energy of life from our planet. And now we are where we are thanks to him. I tried to reason with him but... He just walked up to me, stabbed me, and took my lifeless body with him. Luckily, I managed to transfer my energy into the young wolf's body at the last second.

However, despite all that, I think that maybe we deserve a second chance. We didn't all deserve to disappear just because a couple of us went astray. There were also good things. Thanks to all the experiments, we managed to cure countless diseases and improve our organisms. If we were just a little

wiser we could bring good to this world. Maybe it's not too late. But the butcher must go.

The scientist slowly moved forward. He was still getting used to his new body. He walked over to the broken mirror barely holding on to the wall of the ruined laboratory and looked into it.



If I hadn't been next to the body of this young wolf-man hybrid into which I had transferred my life energy, I would not have survived. But I can't remember how I got into the mind transfer pod. ...The butcher. The things he said before the stabbing... He truly believes he was the chosen one. One that will bring us to the next step in evolution. But the only thing he's doing is destroying our entire planet... The worst part is that even if I manage to kill him, I don't know how to reverse the damage he's done to our world... But first I have to get out of the lab.

The moment he approached the exit door he heard the eerie but familiar sound of flapping wings.

I feel someone's presence. The sound of wings? There is no doubt. These are two brothers, owls on whom I conducted experiments. I have known them since they were born, and I know that I have no chance of surviving contact with them. I have to make sure that these doors are never opened. But... I feel weak... Why? No, I... I have to... I have to stay awake...

The young scientist found himself on the laboratory floor again. He lay motionless but his mind was working faster than usual.

Has this body already started rejecting my energy...
No. It's still early for that. If that's the case, then I don't have much time left. I have to get up. But all I see around me is darkness. Although in the distance I manage to see a small light.

The scientist stood still for a while and then walked towards the light with a slow and careful step. There was simply nothing else he could do at that moment. However, as he slowly walked towards the light, the light did not get closer, but the space he was in became brighter and brighter. He walked towards the light until the darkness was completely gone. At that moment he found himself in the middle of a meadow. The meadow was already dying and a strange smell was coming from all sides. A smell that the scientist has only smelled once so far. And that was a long time ago when he was still starting to work in the laboratory. He stood motionless and looked around. From a distance, he managed to hear some soft squealing. Something like a wounded animal that was already running out of strength. He had to make a decision again. What next. All he wanted was to wake up as soon as possible, but that was not possible at the moment.



Why can't I wake up? I must not stay in this place for long. The longer I stay, the harder it will be to reactivate my consciousness in this body. And if I fail to activate it, this body will simply reject my energy and I will disappear... Maybe it's better that way. I am partly responsible for the state of our world. I was so obsessed with the experiments of transplanting life energy into another body that I didn't stop, even for a second to think about the consequences. Maybe we all deserve to disappear and leave this ruined planet to some new beings who will know to appreciate it more than we knew...

With these thoughts, the scientist sat down on the ground and closed his eyes. He slowly felt the will to

fight to leave him until, at one point, the animal's squeals became so loud that he had to open his eyes. He stood up and looked in front of him and to his surprise, he saw that he was right at the entrance of the cave from which the sound was coming. He paused to think but the darkness began to descend again as the wind blew stronger and stronger. And before the young scientist could understand what was happening, he found himself in a cave.

Why can't I wake up? Maybe this isn't a dream... Maybe the wolf energy is trying to tell me something. And perhaps the energy transfer was only partially successful.

While a bunch of thoughts was going through his head, he slowly looked down toward the place where the whining was coming from. And in the distance, he managed to see a young wolf sitting on the edge of the cliff and looking up at the crack in the upper wall of the cave.

So this is how he sees himself. Like a weak, exhausted, injured wolf. No wonder. After all the experiments that were done on him... The whining stopped but what is he looking at? And why doesn't he look away?



He cautiously walked towards the wolf as he slowly looked up at the point the wolf was also looking at. But what he saw made him stop in the place. Not only because the sight was more than his mind could handle, but because something like this simply could not exist in a wolf's body. On the upper wall of the

cave, through a huge crack, high in the dark sky, an eclipse of the sun could be seen. And in the very center was a creature that did not resemble anything the scientist had seen before. The creature's body was completely pale and had no defined shape. And in the middle was a huge mouth full of sharp teeth. Hundreds of thin tentacles protruded from the body and seemed to burrow into the eclipsed sun behind him.



This body contains only wolf energy and mine... This creature... How did it manage to find itself in this body? This is not possible. It can only mean that someone else's energy is in this body. But... Whose?

Suddenly there was a loud cry, and immediately after that, a whisper began to be heard. It was as if the creature was trying to communicate with the scientist. But the scientist could not recognize a single word. Regardless, the creature didn't stop talking. The voice grew quieter and quieter as darkness began to swallow every part of the cave. And soon everything was devoured by complete darkness. And, as if nothing had happened, the scientist woke up on the floor of the laboratory where he woke up for the first time. He was still in the body of a wolf, but it was clear... The time he had left to face the butcher was getting shorter and shorter.

What, where...? I'm still in the lab. The owls failed to enter. I managed to wake up but... Fainting will happen again. And maybe next time I won't be able to come to my senses. I have to hurry. I just need to get to the portal that connects the labs and I'll get to butcher very soon.

As soon as he got up from the floor and took the first step, the young scientist remembered that he had an injection with him that could easily break from a fall. In the same second, he nervously put his hand in his pocket to make sure that the injection remained intact. That injection was the only salvation. It contained a large number of energies extracted from different beings. Considering that the scientist worked exclusively on the transfer of energy from one body to another, he knew that the greater the number of different energies in one body, the greater the chance is that the body would expel all the energy from itself and remain only an empty shell.



Good. The injection is intact. Now all I have to do is inject its contents into the butcher and cause a reaction. But there is one problem. To get to the butcher, I have to get to the teleport. And the teleport is outside. If I come across some mutated creature this will all be over very quickly. And there is also the possibility that the owl brothers are still outside. I have to take a risk. If I stay too long in the laboratory, I may waste the little time I have.

As he approached the door, he tried to listen as best he could to see if the area outside the lab was safe or not. However, the only thing he managed to hear was the sound of the wind and the screeching of broken metal parts hanging from the roof of the dilapidated laboratory. He slowly started to open the door with his hand. He was scared, but he knew that it was only a matter of time before he has to go outside. He peeked through the half-open door. The path to the teleport seemed safe. "Now or never," he said to himself and ran towards the teleport. He didn't look around. He had only one goal in mind. To get to the teleport as soon as possible. Fortunately, the teleports were already predetermined where they lead. Each teleport had a different endpoint where a person

would exit when using it. And the endpoint of this teleport was placed directly in front of the butcher's laboratory. However, the closer he got, the slower his legs moved.

No... The wolf's body is trying to reject my energy again. I can't let him do that. I have to stay calm.



As he struggled for breath, his vision slowly began to fade and everything in front of him looked dark and blurry. He was only a few steps away from the teleport. As he prepared to pass through the teleport, he wondered if the wolf's body was even strong enough to go through. But now it was too late to stop. He was so close that he could feel the teleport start to pull him inside. He was slowly losing consciousness as the teleporter began to merge with its endpoint in order to lead the scientist to the exit. "Is this the end of us?" the scientist asked as he felt increasingly weak. The sound of the teleport grew louder and louder. And the very next moment, everything stopped. It all got quiet as the scientist regained his strength and felt as if nothing had happened. He looked ahead and saw a large mechanical tower that was so tall it pierced the clouds.

I did it. I arrived outside the butcher's laboratory.

Although the scientist was relieved that he made it through the teleport alive, he noticed something near the top of the tower that made him shiver and wonder if he really regained consciousness or if this was all still just a dream. Eclipse... The same one he saw through the crack in the cave. It was located right

above the laboratory. But this time there was no creature in it.



What does all this mean? Am I still trapped in wolf thoughts? That's not possible. I woke up in a lab, didn't I? The teleport and the butcher's lab are exactly where they should be. And the wolf simply could not know what the teleport and the laboratory looked like. He grew up inside my lab and never left it. But this eclipse...

The scientist sank deeper and deeper into his thoughts until at one point he heard footsteps in the distance. He looked and saw the silhouette of one of the brothers.



Owl... The brothers are here. I have to hurry and get into the lab before they see me. If this is all just a dream, then the fight for our salvation is already over. And if this is reality, then I'm on the right track. I'll only find out which one is it if I keep going.

The door was already half open. It was as if the butcher was expecting a young scientist. The very entrance to the laboratory looked unreal. In front of the scientist was a long corridor that was shrouded in complete darkness and stretched endlessly. The only thing that could be seen were the tiny, blue lights that were on the very edges of the corridor. There was no flow of air from the corridor, nor was there any sound. It was as if time stood still in the laboratory. However, the scientist has no other choice. The only thing he could do was to enter the laboratory and try to find the butcher. But where to start? Everything seemed hopeless at this point. However, the moment the scientist stepped into the hallway, the edge lights went off and all the tiles on the floor began to glow neon blue. The front door closed instantly and it was clear. There is no going back.

That's it. I can only go straight. This corridor seems to have no end. But there has to be an end, right? I have never entered this lab before. I visited various laboratories that specialized only in certain types of experiments. But I watched this laboratory only from a distance. I can't even imagine what kind of experiments are being done here.

His whole body felt great fear. But he mustered the strength to move on. The sounds of his footsteps were not heard. It seemed as if there were no sounds in this corridor. However, it didn't take long and some doors began to show themselves in the distance. A dim, white light emanated from them. The scientist stepped cautiously towards them. He couldn't have guessed what he would encounter next. And for the first time since he entered this laboratory, he felt the flow of air. Unfortunately, this air also carried with it a smell that the scientist found increasingly difficult to endure.

The smell of blood? No, this is something much stronger. I did various experiments. Bodies decay before death due to the loss of their energy. But I never smelled something like this. I think I'm going to throw up. But obviously, I have to go through this

room. Whatever experiments the butcher is conducting here, this is on a much larger level than I could have imagined.



As the scientist slowly approached the door, he suddenly felt as if an invisible hand grabbed him by the neck and pulled him towards the door. The very next moment he was in the middle of a room full of decaying organic material. The stench became unbearable. It seemed as if the walls and floor were made of flesh. The whole room was pulsating. Suddenly, the butcher appeared in front of the scientist. He was wearing a protective suit usually used in cases of radiation protection. "You saw him in your dream too, didn't you?" he spoke in a low voice. "Our savior".

Why can't I move? Telekinesis? Is that possible? And how does he know about my dream? What's going on here? What kind of experiments are conducted here?

As a thousand questions ran through the scientist's mind, the room grew brighter and brighter. The body was full of adrenaline. The light was getting so bright that he had to close his eyes. All this did not last long. Suddenly the light disappeared and the scientist found himself in a chair. There are metal belts around his legs, waist, and neck. They were very tight. But that wasn't the worst part. Across him was a decomposed body sitting in the same chair. The body looked more

like a pile of organs and tissues piled on top of each other. A bloody mass that barely represented any definite shape.



"This body was a good source of energy" came a soft voice. "This has to stop!" replied the scientist as he tried to free himself. At that moment, a butcher appeared in the middle of the room. This time he didn't have a protective suit on. His body was completely deformed, and pale, and looked more like a creature from a scientist's dream than the body of a human being. And the scientist again felt the smell he felt in his dream. But this was no time to think. The scientist knew that this was his last chance to kill the butcher.



What have you done?

"I've moved on to the next part of evolution," replied the butcher.

As I already told you during our earlier meeting, I am chosen, as an angel who will transfer his energy to a new planet and create a better, more advanced race from it. I am already more than the entire human race will ever be. I can clearly see past and present. I can enter your thoughts and experience everything that you have experienced up to this moment. I can see your dream. A dream in which you also saw an angel. But not the one who comes to choose one of us and make him his own, but the one whose small part of the energy we all have inside us.

What are you talking about? Out of all of us, why you? And what do you mean we all have a small part of that creature's energy within us?

Simply. Just as I evolved into one of them, someone before me from another planet has already done that earlier. An angel came to my dream. He appeared from the eclipse. He was much bigger than the one

you saw. It was as big as our entire planet. Its tentacles wrapped around our mountains.



He spoke to me, as a parent would speak to their child. He told me that they had been waiting for this moment for a long time. That one of them sent part of

his energy to our planet and gave it life. That they were watching us all the time and waiting for some living being to evolve enough to become one of them. An angel who will come among his own kind and send part of his energy to some new planet, so he would continue his specie. And then he told me that the Angel was me. They estimated that I was the only one who managed to show himself as someone who knows how to manipulate energy and develop it in a direction that no other being on our planet can do.

So our planet... It's just an egg from which some new being will hatch? And what if I prevent it? What if I stop you from becoming one of them?

With what? That little injection?

For a moment the scientist paused. Of course, the plan won't work. Butcher saw everything in his mind. What now? This really looks like the end. Still, what chance does a human being have against an Angel?

"I will take your energy," the butcher said. I don't need it, but certainly, my body can withstand the energy from one more body. You will be my last

sacrifice before I become what you people have worshiped and prayed for centuries.

The butcher laid his pale hand on the scientist and at that moment the scientist began to feel weaker and weaker. What now. The last plan he had failed.

It doesn't even matter anymore. I'm obviously late. Nothing makes sense anymore anyway. Is the butcher out of his mind or am I? Does he really believe in the existence of those, as he called them, angels? But, on the other hand, I saw one too. Although it happened in a dream... What if they really exist? We don't know the origin of the energy that gave us life anyway. If they really exist, then there is certainly no escape for us.

The scientist felt so weak that his vision slowly began to fade. But then he noticed something that gave him hope that maybe there was something he could do after all.

The Butcher... looks like he's feeling weak too. The hand he pointed at me began to tremble. But what does that mean... Maybe his body can't handle the

extra energy. However, he doesn't just take my energy, he takes the wolf's as well.

At that moment the scientist remembered that the butcher could see his thoughts. He knew he shouldn't think too much. He had to react impulsively before the butcher suspected something. He reached into his pocket, grabbed the syringe, stuck it in his leg, and injected its contents into himself. Now his body contained over two hundred different energies. And the butcher took it all in himself.

Will it work? I... I can't.... is this the end?

While the scientist could barely keep his eyes on the butcher, it seemed that all the energy the butcher was drawing into him began to overload his body. He may have been closer to the angels, but the basis of his body was still from this world. Suddenly there was a terrifying scream. The Butcher's body began to drain all the energy out of him as the Butcher became bloodier and bloodier. His body began to decompose. The flesh fell off his body piece by piece, slowly revealing the internal organs that fell to the floor. The butcher's screams as he disintegrated became unbearable. And then suddenly it was as if time stood

still. Everything was frozen and it looked like some three-dimensional horror picture. "Did I succeed? Did I save us?" thought the scientist as he was increasingly in a state of fever and general weakness. The wolf's body lost a lot of energy. Just when he thought it was over, an eclipse appeared in the sky. The same one from his dream. And out of the eclipse descended a creature that had the form of a man but was as tall as a mountain. It spoke but this time the scientist understood every word.



You have proven yourself worthy of our race. Your future is living among us. Come, take the energy of your home planet with you and give some of it to a new planet. Create a life and lead that life toward becoming one of us. Make yourself and us immortal, and present everywhere. Make us creators of life in this desolate universe.

"I just want this to be over," thought the scientist as he fell into a sleep caused by the loss of a large amount of energy. "If the universe works this way, then nothing I do will matter"... Those were the scientist's last thoughts. The room grew brighter and brighter. And the light that filled the room slowly swallowed the creature and the eclipse from which it came. The scientist no longer felt anything. He no longer knew whether his dream began, or ended here. Still, after everything that had happened, this was the first time he felt at peace. And he decided to surrender himself to that peace. Everything he could do for his planet, he did. And only the universe knows its future.



We are Alpha and Omega. The first and the last. We are the creators of life in the universe, but without the universe, we do not exist. This planet was chosen to be the cocoon from which one of us would be born. But with every birth, complications can arise. However, life must not be stopped. The universe is always moving forward. Time to create a new cocoon.



BONUS DIGITAL ART
- Made with A.I. Midjourney -



Owl brothers



Monument - In honor of all wolves whose bodies were used for scientific purposes.



A laboratory that was used to transplant energy from one body to another.



Skull from one of the artificially created wolfs.



A cloned wolf baby.



The wolf on which the experiments began. Due to the large number of experiments performed on him, his body was deformed beyond recognition.

