

Chapter 9: Generation

On the night before my fertile phase began, Duan and I cleared our schedule in preparation for conceiving a child. Under Luminar's twinkling ring and distant stars, we shared our intentions with each other in the ancient Ritual of Parenthood. A fire made from spent tree limbs grew hot before us – showering the sky with sparks.

We sat close, and remembered...

*Long before there was life
spirit sent itself far and wide like a multitude of sparks
germinating in the fertile folds of the cosmos*

A palpable sense of purpose circled us, drawn upward into the heavens with the column of sparks, connected to our surroundings... and to us.

The grass was moist from condensation, tickling me with cold fingers as we lay down together. The flickering golden firelight threw warmth carelessly wherever it reached.

With a thought, we opened individual hormonal paths for conceiving a female child.

As recommended in the inceptor libraries, Duan spent his first gametes in the grass. We laughed in sensual play, jesting that Luminar, if it wished, could bear our child's male sibling.

The fire's radiance stirred our inner flames to life, and a second union bore us into burning contact – and an invitation that one of the

sparks join us as a child. Energy grew between us like embracing logs, culminating in sparks of passionate release.

It was the fire's cooling that woke us to the inevitable need to separate.

We extinguished the fire and walked together along the path to our shelter vault. I felt quiet, and I wondered if a little afraid, too. I frequently looked up at Duan, trying to sense his thoughts, but all I got was quiet support. Did he know something was surfacing for me? Was something surfacing for him?

Our silence continued. Within it I began to piece things together, grateful for our ability to be close yet introspective. I remembered how I felt on the mother ship when I wanted to be alone while honoring my needs for community. Here, we could touch, but there was space for independent thoughts.

Out of this connected silence, a sudden rush of wonder filled me – another facet to the growing mystery of communication. A sensory statement of connection without cognitive nurturing. No words or Net, yet a sharing of time and space as if communication was perfect.

I was living outside the Net, and my view seemed infinite, unfathomable. From this perspective, my sense of awe and mystery buoyed my every step, and I longed for more. Was it the unpredictable nature of this life that drew me here?

I looked up at Duan again, this time smiling with delight. His expression woke instantly to mine, and our hands squeezed with a firmness we both understood. How precious, this sharing without words.

Two souls on a path to one heart.

By the time we reached shelter. The wind was kicking up leaves as if wanting to play mischief with the ground, and the sky gathered a deeper darkness that moved me to a protective state of mind. I began thinking about our garden and the clones and wondered if they shared my sense of foreboding.

I felt embarrassed about my mood change, and stole quietly into the null-gee to settle my fears privately. Opening up to the Net was simple, as always, but it struck me as strangely foreign, almost cold. With an inner sweep to expedite my mission, I focused, bringing my concerns forward, watching them condense into questions within my private consciousness, and aimed them at the Net.

Then the familiar warmth returned, powerfully, as if after a long absence. I felt the familiar support relax me – fill me with the knowledge that answers were nearby.

And they came: The winds posed only a minor threat to the garden; The clone vault was secure; the first generation was healthy – due to birth in 152 Luminar days.

I sighed deeply and let myself rest. Relief spilled in from all directions and I slipped into a conscious sleep – sensory input and mind active, body floating, immobile. A silent request to the Net, and I drifted with the flow.

Familiar sensations filled my awareness – tingling waves in my face and hands, deep relaxing exhales, and sudden ocular bursts. Taken by the transition, I did not notice it becoming part of an emerging dream.

I came out of the waking sequence feeling inspired. I wanted to burn what I felt into the walls around me – find a way for my thoughts to enter the physical world as a kind of solid reminder. But the obvious means seemed dry, inadequate. The Net could record my dream experience in minute detail, yet it was not enough. What I wanted was a compression – something I could hold: beautiful, whole, evocative, mysterious.

And then I knew. I was so excited about the answer I did not care about the source. While giving the mental command to come downNet I leapt out of the null-gee thinking to get some paper from the supplies locker. But I immediately found the impulse dangerous. I could do nothing but surrender to Luminar's gravity while my circulatory system battled the sudden incline.

The moments on my back were good. My excitement tempered under gravity, and, with calmed breath, I reached the paper in perfect time to burn my thoughts into permanence.

I rolled the page and started toward my personal alcove, privately excited about this physical thing I created. It was unique and precious, and I flushed from sheer wonder. I held a record known to no one else in the universe in this exact form – a practical example of the connection between value and uniqueness.

I felt the need to sit. A crescendo of excitement was coming and I wanted my full awareness available to flow with it.

The concept of uniqueness was haunting me with import, and I let it fill me, hoping to garner its special gift. Something about my very recent

life was resonating with uniqueness – precious independence, connection from a place of difference, an ability to give to others something entirely new... valuing every life for its creative potential.

Ahhh! The crescendo hit, then calmed into a gliding sensation of inner joy. *This is my life and purpose.* Distracted by excitement, my thoughts had circled and connected.

Birth is the act of a unique entity's emergence, as priceless a moment as any spawned from creative thoughts or bold dreams.

Pricelessness is an experience. I had felt it and longed to understand it. It rested in the heart of newness, and is the reason I came to Luminar. It is exactly why I chose to grow a child with Duan outside the expected norms of inceptors.

I sat in peace for several moments, letting tears run down my arms, feeling pricelessness surround me, realizing how intrinsic it was in the structure of the universe. Oh, how had life managed to hide this sense of wholeness from me?

My next movements seemed unbidden. I walked to the supplies locker, gathered many pieces of paper, fastened them beneath my freshly written words, and placed them in my personal alcove.

I stared at the pages. They held me, as if by some unknown force. I would be drawn here to write again. This paper could, alone, guard the essence of my priceless moments.

What power!