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Paul McKenzie

Extinction

by

Paul Mckenzie

http://www.myspace.com/extinction_novel

M-Y BOOKS

1 **The Attack**

The perimeter fence around the complex was scarcely illuminated by the moonlight. Careless guards smoked and their eyes had no time to adjust to the extreme light of the explosion that tore them from their sockets.

The enemy was already within the secondary defences and fast approaching the main structure that loomed in their path as the remnants of the dead guards fell to the flame-scorched earth. This was the first time that the attacking force had hit such a high profile target. In fact, it was the first time that they had launched a major offensive operation and apart from the stealth of their approach, there was little finesse in the attack. Skilled delicate hands worked furiously, placing explosives around the solid steel door that barred the way into the main building. Like most high security doors, this one was fitted with sturdy locks, but frail hinges, and with the charges positioned on the frame and directed towards the hinges, the door would be opened more easily than the cover on a paint pot. A soft fizz followed by a resonant pop was all that could be heard and in an instant the vast doors were levered out of place with an almighty crash as they slammed into the slate grey walkway.

The attacking force raced down numerous corridors carrying heavy steel cryogenic chambers. Each one was carried between two soldiers with another riding shotgun: five chambers in all. None of them was any bigger than five-six and appeared heavily built under their black and green fatigues. Their faces were not visible under their night fighting helmets. However, the soldiers could see perfectly

without the benefit of light, even though they had cut the site's electricity precisely at the moment when the first guards had died. Lack of power gave the soldiers one headache; it meant that they had little time to liberate their intended quarry and make good their escape. The lateness of the hour ensured that only essential personnel were on duty - and although the soldiers had no time to hunt them down, they summarily executed any that crossed their path.

The military unit arrived breathlessly at the womb of the building. Two guards appeared from the control room, confused in the darkness and groping their way forwards with weapons slung uselessly over their shoulders. Rapid and precise hand signals from the commanding soldier quickly passed orders to the rest of the following squad. Silence swarmed the corridor while two members of the unit crept forward as ordered, vision assured from their helmet visors. The leading soldier raised his pistol almost mechanically, within touching distance of the guards, until the icy barrel caressed the forehead of the one closest. Realising that the pressure he felt meant only one thing, he stopped suddenly and his comrade behind blindly stumbled into the back of him. Bang! The single shot dropped the stationary guard just as the other was seized from behind. The attackers held him so tight that he could hardly catch his breath, as they wrenched one arm up behind his back and twisted his wrist ready to break it. The restrained guard was forced back into the control room and, even in his panic, he managed to focus on the warm sweet flavours in his mouth, which came from the blood sliding down over the contours of his face. The soldiers began to work on the next stage of the operation and he knew that, in all probability, he would not get the opportunity to wash his dead companion's blood from his face.

The complex was dull and grey, as were most buildings now; as were most lives lived now. The main structure had been partially built into the side of a sheer rock face with

various other smaller buildings remotely connected by long glazed walkways that snaked their way across the finely manicured lawns. It was an easy target for the attacking soldiers, because those in power thought it not to be one.

The break away group of soldiers sent to destroy the power plant were now waiting tensely for the signal to reconnect their portable power units to the control circuits. The main generators, and also the back up ones, had been destroyed during the first attack, providing essential cover for the intruders. It was also a pathetic attempt to slow down the manufacturing process when normality returned. Any embryos and the more mature but not fully developed livestock would perish as a result of the power being severed for more than a couple of precious hours. It would take maybe a month or two to get the livestock farm back up to full production, but the soldiers knew that every obstacle they could put in the way of the normal breeding programme, however small, was worthwhile.

The radio crackled into life next to the soldiers waiting to re-connect the power, making more than a few of them flinch from their silent pause in proceedings.

'Tango-Charlotte-Four-Zero to Alpha-Rachel-Three-Zero are you receiving? Over,' asked the ranking soldier waiting in the cryo-womb, which was housed within the main complex.

The senior officer who stood lazily by the main circuit breakers replied, 'Alpha-Rachel-Three-Zero to Tango-Charlotte-Four-Zero, receiving you loud and clear. Please advise on reconnection status, over.'

Before the request to reconnect the power to the control circuits arrived, desperate screams leapt fearfully from the radio.

'Alpha-Rachel-Three-Zero to Tango-Charlotte-Four-Zero are you in need of assistance? Repeat. Are you in need of assistance? Over,' the officer repeated with renewed urgency.

Preceded simply by a single shot, the reply finally came as the screaming terminated.

'Tango-Charlotte-Four-Zero to Alpha Rachel-Three-Zero. Assistance not required. We were just being brought up to speed with the control panel operations, but as you know I never liked male instructors much,' replied the soldier at the cryo-womb doors.

The guard had divulged what little knowledge he had been entrusted with and was now dead, bundled into the corner like a discarded piece of information. The information that he'd given was not essential to the operation, but it had saved precious minutes in completing the final stage of the plan. Moreover, it had put a little entertainment into what was otherwise turning out to be a quiet night.

Two soldiers sat intently in the control room at the two mother panel desks while the rest of the unit moved into the entrance of the Cryo-womb. The soldier at the desk closest to the entrance entered the code 4398 followed by the word *Amazon* into the worn keyboard. The doors opened quietly and the waiting unit advanced eagerly into the defenceless room. The soldiers at the desks began throwing switches and entering further codes while they surveyed the chamber before them. It reminded them more of a mortuary than a place of creation. Located all around the walls of the Cryo-womb were silver coloured doors of varying sizes. A false ceiling concealed the pipes and control valves that fed the development chambers and the seductive lighting made for an extremely peaceful atmosphere. There was a low hum, much like that of a refrigerator. This soothed the soldiers' volatile tensions; but they still leapt for cover as the soft *whoosh* of seals opening on five of the wall-mounted cryogenic chambers broke the pervading peace. The soldiers pulled the trays of black flasks, now drained of fluid, from their frozen sanctuary. No orders were passed; they all knew the drill. They transferred flasks from their trays to the portable cryogenic chambers that they had

been carrying and, once full, sealed them. On each chamber there was a small chrome keypad used to input a start-up code; upon the 'enter' button being pressed they purred into life. Finally, with the portable chambers now waiting in the corridor, the soldiers returned to set the charges in the Cryo-womb leaving themselves a ten-minute window in which to evacuate the area. 'This is going to be the biggest bang this womb's ever gonna get' thought the soldier as he triggered the timer and then they were gone into the night, taking with them both guards' testicles, which they had neatly placed in sterilised containers.

2 History.

No one could recollect exactly when, where, or who had instigated the unthinkable attempt at the extermination of the female half of the human race. Over thousands of years of human existence women had been persecuted and denied basic human rights by a male society seeking to maintain the grip on power. Women had fought every step of the way to be treated as equals, they had suffered many setbacks, particularly when dealing with the primitive and draconian philosophies of certain religions and antiquated cultures. Nevertheless, their very existence had never been in doubt despite the never ending battle between equality and supremacy.

Had it all started in 2035 with the love drug, so called because when injected it removed a person's desire for love and companionship, allowing them to live their lives alone and independent of all the pain and joy that relationships bring? People had become accustomed to living alone and by the year 2050 an irreversible operation was being administered in place of the love drug. This was at first by choice, but with the population booming out of control, by the year 2150 the surgical procedure had become compulsory on the specific orders of the Eurostate Government. Human breeding farms were created to control the new population influx, releasing into society strictly controlled numbers of fully matured livestock. The farms used human eggs, secretly harvested from ovaries removed from exterminated women. The ovaries were kept alive and functioning in specially developed laboratory cylinders. Harvested eggs were fertilised using a perfected cloning

process that had been first developed in the last few years of the twentieth century. DNA-altered cells were injected into the eggs, which fooled them into believing that they had been fertilised by more traditional methods. Ultimately, this meant that a new human race had been selectively bred with no need or longing for companionship. Cloning had now not just become a reality; it had become the norm - and real human reproduction was nothing more than a pleasure left in the past like a discarded condom.

By the year 2350, male-controlled farms produced only male livestock and female existence was no longer seen as an essential part of everyday life in any capacity. Grades of male livestock were being produced specifically for various workplace functions. Genes were genetically altered in livestock so that they could be reared for the profession for which they had been earmarked. Any abnormalities were strictly controlled and eradicated by the quality control units that worked within the breeding regime. Marginalised, groups of females began to band together and sought sanctuary in the more remote parts of Europe, defending their very existence and defiantly resisting the single gender breeding programme. The renegade women soon realised that without new females to replenish their numbers their gender's days on Earth would end. So they started to recruit from the remaining female population in an effort to stop the male-dominated society from claiming the final victory in a battle that had never before come this perilously close to the extinction of women.

At the first signs of female resistance, male society seemed unconcerned and showed complete apathy to the token displays of defiance. After all, what could a bunch of women who were so dependent on centuries of male dominance achieve? Before long, male complacency had turned to anger and then to complete fear of an enemy that society had tolerated. All attempts to exterminate the renegade groups failed completely. Subsequently, the battle

progressed to a higher level; if only the male security forces could prevent all forms of female breeding, then they could extinguish the flame forever. The renegade females' initial attempts at reproduction were extremely unsophisticated. They did not have access to their male counterparts' cloning techniques and technology, and so they resorted to a more basic reproduction method. They began by imprisoning men that they had caught and extracting their semen, keeping them like chickens jailed in a battery farm. In time, they perfected the process so that they could do away with the roosters, artificially keeping alive the amputated testicles using antiquated laboratory equipment, just as the males had done with the ovaries of countless discarded women. Using their own eggs to produce new livestock the women would live to fight on, but for how long? The need for testicles led to the wonderful female pastime of removing them from any male who had the misfortune to be captured - and the practice was, understandably, much maligned by a terrified male population.

The abhorrent abuse of the human form and procreation then took further steps along the road of amorality. The Feman was initially an accident of nature; of mixed genitalia it was shunned and all but eradicated by male society. A no more caring, but more desperate female community harboured the few Femen that survived the male intolerance for mutation. The renegade female communities trained them to spy on their behalf because they could operate undetected in strictly male conurbations. Finally, society sank to new depths: perfect male and female livestock had their chemical balances altered to reverse their gender mentally and, with a small amount of brainwashing, the switch was complete, providing the ultimate disguise. Gender was no longer born of nature - but cynically manipulated by a human race bereft of basic morality.

3 The Morning After

The soldiers removed their night-fighting helmets now that they had arrived safely back at their base - a defunct nuclear bunker, forgotten in post-cold war euphoria, hidden in wasteland and discovered by chance. Rachel McDowell, the most senior of the group, left the dormitory to report to the leader of the female community. The darkened musty corridors were cold, so cold she thought that her sweat-drenched hair would freeze to her scalp. McDowell was drawn and pale from the previous evening's efforts, but warm with the thought that they had procured enough pre-fertilised eggs to supply their crude and makeshift cloning laboratory for many years to come.

Stopping in front of the shabby steel door, she sighed and took a deep breath. As she knocked the door creaked ajar and warm aromas of food and perfume exhausted through the gap.

'Come in,' a deep voice boomed.

McDowell entered the sumptuous office, only to see Jane Langton, her Commanding Officer, deep in conversation with Commune Leader Kefelnikov. The dry heat in the room scraped at McDowell's face and made her skin feel taut and desiccated. She stood to attention and waited silently in front of the vast dining table where her superiors sat, still conversing. Without consideration for their subordinate, the two women talked at length, before Kefelnikov finally deigned to address McDowell in her harsh strain of European English.

'Shut that fucking door, it's cold enough to freeze the balls off a chauvinist,' barked Kefelnikov.

McDowell knew Kefelnikov occasionally liked to use her acquired bar room slang, ironically just to be one of the 'boys', but it did not provoke even the slightest amount of respect within the soldiers in the commune. No one liked her, the infantile attempt to ingratiate herself with her subordinates through the use of basic language lasted only as long as she thought it prudent, before she reverted to her usual pretentious ways. Also, Kefelnikov seemed far too tolerant of the desperate situation in which they had found themselves, choosing not to go on the offensive when all the girls wanted to do was attack the egotistical and self-righteous enemy. After all, Kefelnikov was only the commune leader because it had been she who had inadvertently discovered the nuclear fallout shelter and now she sat on her fat arse in her warm office while others risked their lives.

Kefelnikov looked up as McDowell returned to the table after closing the ill-fitting door.

'Well? Your report. Did you complete the task you were set?' Kefelnikov asked.

'Sir, mission completed Sir. No casualties and the target has been acquired. We have now delivered it safely to the laboratory. Sir,' McDowell replied obediently.

That was the bizarre thing about Kefelnikov. She insisted on being called 'Sir'. She said that 'Miss' did not convey the appropriate amount of respect for her position. Fat and blonde, she was disliked by the troops but this had never seemed to undermine her authority.

McDowell now focused on Commander Langton, a dark handsome woman. Langton had that inane, mediocre, wind-filled smile, the type you get when you are drunk as a skunk.

'What the fuck was that all about?' McDowell thought, as Commander Langton began to speak in her soft annoying tones.

‘So, no problems then. Great, yes, good. Well I bet you would like a nice hot bath and bed Corporal McDowell?’ Langton said voicing her own feelings rather than her subordinate’s.

‘A fucking beer would be a start,’ McDowell thought immediately.

As she left, McDowell was convinced that the room, with its subtle lighting and sweet fragrance, looked and smelled more like a tart’s boudoir than a Commune Leader’s office. She did not know that for a fact but had read electronic books about tarts and prostitutes and the thought made her feel sick.

McDowell somehow found herself back at the door to her barracks after walking the squalid corridors for longer than she had intended. She felt the container nestling in her pocket and remembered the testicles that she had placed there during the attack. McDowell smiled - what fun they had had in getting them! But who the hell had the other pair?

‘Well,’ she thought, ‘I’d better take these to the lab now. They’ll be no good in a few hours.’

4 **The Investigation**

The dawn rose before any of the attacking military unit from the previous night had woken; they slept soundly, whilst groups of bureaucratic military men arrived at the breeding farm to survey and assess the damage. Major Robert Kellor, the most senior military intelligence officer available, had been assigned the complicated task of sorting out the disaster. At six-foot-three and 100 kilograms Kellor had an imposing frame, piercing blue eyes and dark brown cropped hair. As he peered through the murk of first morning light, Kellor could see the carnage below from his vantage point above the farm. Assorted shades of grey rubble and red brick lay in neat piles next to undamaged parts of the complex. Kellor began to trace in his mind the precise route that the enemy had taken through the fence and into the main building. He made his way down to the first point of contact to track the route for real on foot. During this time of investigation he could not believe what he saw. Kellor knew that the enemy had never been so brazen with their attacks in the past. As the minutes ticked by, one thought filled his head: *neat and tidy job!*. There was nothing extravagant about it; maximum damage and minimum fuss. *Impressive* and depressing.

Kellor entered the main building, carefully avoiding the destroyed security doors and intermittently stopping and hunting for evidence until he eventually stumbled upon the first dead guard. Kellor looked down at his boots and in the gloom found that they were squarely placed in a pool of thickly congealed blood. The deceased guard was laid face down in what was almost the recovery position. Sliding his

blood-tainted boot under the bruised hips of the stiffened guard, Kellor rolled him over with a swift flick. He winced as his torchlight revealed the guard's bloodied trousers, which had been torn down to his ankles. His shorts were cut away and there, where this fine specimen's testicles had been, was a gaping and gory wound. Closing his eyes, he smiled at the thought of some meathead muscle-bound grunt walking around with this guy's balls in her pocket. He would wager that she had always wanted a pair of them for her very own. Moving on, Kellor approached the cryo-womb and was abruptly halted by one of the many junior soldiers now guarding the base.

'Excuse me Sir. I need to see some ID,' the soldier ventured politely, recognising Major Kellor's rank.

Kellor glared at the young private. He did not have a problem with the request in the slightest, but he liked to keep his subordinates guessing about his disposition. As Kellor passed his Eurostate ID over he smiled.

'Will this do for you Private?'

'Yes Sir, fine, thank you Sir,'

Kellor immediately dropped his smile, huffed and looked over the soldier's shoulder into the blackened room.

'Sir, I have orders that nobody is to enter the Cryo-womb at this moment in time. Too many hazardous chemicals about, Sir'

'Let me be the judge of that private,' Kellor overruled.

Kellor strode forward, pushed past the soldier and entered the previously sealed Cryo-womb. While he stood there inspecting the surrounding damage, Kellor took a handkerchief from his pocket and held it over his nose and mouth. The sharp acrid air stabbed at his eyes. He felt the bile surge into his throat as the fumes seeped through the improvised cotton mask and down into his lungs. All manner of twisted metal bounded Kellor. There were cables and pipes hanging from the ceiling like vines in a jungle. In fact, as he negotiated his way through the room, he had to

crouch down to avoid them as he manoeuvred around the spoilt embryos that covered the floor. Before very long, Kellor's eyes were smarting and he thought that maybe the soldier was right about the chemical hazards within the cryo-womb. Kellor decided that it was best to leave, but as he attempted to do so a twisted embryonic chamber caught his eye in a darkened corner of the room. Upon closer inspection, Kellor was sure something was amiss – or more amiss than had been immediately obvious.

'Probably around sixteen fertilised egg flasks,' he thought to himself with a wry smile. By now his eyes were burning and tears ran down into his makeshift mask. Kellor left the room in a hurry; he had seen all he had needed to see.

The soldier relaxed as the Major walked past him and, without turning to speak, Kellor passed an order to the Private in a mildly choking voice, 'Don't let anyone in there Private, not without clearing it with me first and this time do it or I'll have your balls!'

With tears still streaming from his eyes, Kellor set out for the Incident Command Centre that had been hastily set up in the site canteen.

The heavily scuffed double doors swung gently back into position after Kellor had barged through them and found himself in the harsh fluorescent-lit, windowless canteen. The bright unnatural light bounced off the plastic surfaces that covered the whole room and his eyes began to sting once more, as if lulled into complacency after the relief of the cool, damp morning air. Squinting as he looked around and his gaze finally settled on the gaggle of men fussing around maps of the local area. Directly between them and Kellor sat none other than the top man himself. His back was facing Kellor, but he knew the outline very well indeed from the incessant state television broadcasts. European President James T. Wells was a small dark-skinned man of immense power and stature, the driving force behind male dominance. Sitting to his left at a respectful distance was

his so called 'Hatchet Man', the boyishly good-looking Callum Daniels, dressed in an expensive suit.

'A more complete pair of gangsters you could not hope to find,' thought Kellor.

The clock on the wall read 06:50 hours and Kellor knew from experience that it would be a very long day. He took a seat nearby and waited for the panic in front of him to die down. Closing his eyes, Kellor rested the back of his head against the canteen wall.

'A very long day indeed,' he thought once again and finally began to relax after his morning's efforts.

Kellor opened his eyes with a start as he sensed the presence of another close by. He quickly glanced back at the clock on the wall. The time now was only 06:57. As he got shakily to his feet, Kellor felt decidedly sick and he knew that he was not totally clear of the chemical fumes that he had inhaled in the cryo-womb. He faced the man in front of him, trying hard to regain his composure.

'You're the best we've got?' sneered Daniels as Kellor's drowning senses struggled slowly to the surface.

Kellor's teeth clenched in anger but somehow he managed to pull his lips into a pathetic smile.

'I'm afraid so Sir. Well the best that's available at this moment in time Sir,' he replied a little too sarcastically.

Looking around, Kellor now saw that the general panic had subsided and that President Wells was on his own, apart from some boffin in the standard issue white coat.

'Major Kellor, would you be so kind as to give President Wells some of your very valuable time. We are under the impression that you're here to do a job!'

Furious at being spoken to in such a demeaning manner Kellor began to think of a suitable riposte, but eventually decided just to nod submissively. He followed Daniels without further deliberation and, as they approached James Wells, he was introduced to the President and Professor

Alexander Chenenko. President Wells immediately began to speak, as if addressing the nation on state television.

‘We have a critical situation here Major. But we must prevail in the face of overwhelming odds,’ he explained dramatically.

Kellor found it an extreme turn-off to hear President Wells recite his on-message information in the stereotypical language of a politician, but listened all the same.

5 The State of Affairs

President Wells had come to power under a cloud of scandal. Vote-rigging, murder and blackmail were all on his increasingly less hidden agenda. As a multi-billionaire media and software tycoon, he had been ideally placed to arrange for the electronic vote casting system to be routed through his empire's vast computer networks. Hence, Wells had been voted in as the head of the ruling Eurostate Government by a landslide majority and his company, Medware IT, went from strength to strength with Eurostate contracts.

Europe, now under one banner and one leader since 2090, was the most powerful state in the world. Borders were long forgotten; English was now a common language, if a little broken in places. A common goal had been decided upon between the men of Europe, who were born of a tyrannical male ethos that drove them to unite and dominate what had previously been a second-rate and splintered continent. The USA and the Far East, for the most part, had shunned the fanatical wave of male dominance that had prevailed in Europe, choosing to breed livestock of both sexes equally. For this reason they were perceived as weak and untrustworthy by the ruling Eurostate party. The Eurostate politicians were sure that the female terrorists, or Femorists as they were known, who operated in their continent, were funded and supplied to a large extent by a sympathetic American population. Diplomatic relations between the two continents were at an all-time low and war seemed a distinct possibility. The Far East however, did

everything possible to avoid being drawn into a pointless conflict.

The Eurostate had grown all-powerful, initially on welfare cuts made possible by the new breeding programmes. When the second-generation of cloned livestock reached their twilight years, normal family groups had died out almost completely. Those families who had survived to see the transformation in society were interned and then erased from history. Thus, state benefits paid out, or not, to be more specific, saved billions of Euros. There were no single parent families, no divorce courts with legal aid bills. Gone were the days of unemployment, for the state controlled the breeding programme to meet exactly their manpower needs. Everybody had a job to do and for the most part they were stuck for the rest of their unnatural life with what they had been specifically bred for. Nobody retired; a biological clock inbred into all livestock meant that they ceased to function long before they were physically worn out. Any livestock that malfunctioned during its predetermined lifetime was disposed of without hesitation or argument. State pensions no longer had to be provided, nor child benefit, expensive vaccination programmes or free child health and dental care. There were no schools to fund and finally traffic gridlocks had been eased through the complete lack of mothers having to run their spoilt brats around to and from school. The welfare system had completely disappeared, because there were no customers left and state funds grew beyond all imagination. The Eurostate had been able to invest heavily in advanced technology for the breeding of new livestock and was far in advance of any other state in the world. The livestock was grown at an accelerated rate; from cloned egg to a fully trained indoctrinated man took around two weeks. The manufactured man was then ready to perform his role in life in the capacity for which he had been reared. Recently however, Eurostate scientists had developed an

extraordinary strain of livestock. The new breed was superior in strength, intelligence and exhibited limited forms of psychic power. They were able to communicate with fellow livestock of the same breeding strain and, it appeared, with no one else. The psychic powers had come about by pure chance, whereas the other enhancements were made possible by altering the genes that made up the MkII livestock's DNA string. Only one prototype of this improved livestock had ever been brought to full term, or so everybody believed, and currently it was incarcerated under evaluation. A flask of fertilised MkII eggs had been prepared for production purposes and had then been stored, ready and waiting for endorsement of the prototype. Once the lead scientists working on the project had given approval, the 16,000 fertilised eggs were to be brought to full term and unleashed on the unsuspecting Femorists.

President Wells swiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead but the persistent sweat still ran down into his tired dark brown eyes. His voice was still calm and assured as before, but his body language conveyed that he was not at ease. His small athletic frame did not seem to match the round flabby face and greying hair. Wells finally held eye contact with Kellor and began to furnish him with the exact details of the 'critical situation' that had been mentioned just a few moments before.

'Major Kellor, last night at 02:00 hours this breeding institute was attacked by Femorists conspiring to bring the very fabric of our civilisation to its knees. They must be stopped at all costs,'

President Wells was breathing heavily and looked like a man under severe strain. Still he continued in his calm and assured manner, 'During the course of the attack a large quantity of fertilized eggs was taken from the cryo-womb centre.'

Kellor knew all of this - he had seen it for himself - but he dare not interject. The President now sat down at one of the

plastic covered canteen tables and gestured to the Major to do the same.

'We know for a fact that somewhere in the region of one hundred flasks of eggs was taken. That equates to around eighty thousand fertilized eggs, give or take a few. Unfortunately, one of the cryogenic chambers that was raided contained eggs of a very special nature,' Wells continued.

Until now Kellor had been only half listening to the tedious facts, of which he was already aware, but now his attention sharpened and focused.

'Now Major Kellor, the following information I am about to impart is strictly for your ears only. Under no circumstances must it be repeated to anyone - and that would include your mother if you had one,'

Kellor smiled at the President's antiquated expression. He had not heard it for a long time - it seemed that only older men used it because they had been thoroughly educated in historical reproduction and parenting. However, education in this area had long since been forbidden, because the ruling party felt that to continue would risk undermining - or rather might reactivate - the hearts and minds of a new generation of livestock. President Wells leant forward, placed both elbows on the table and brought his clasped hands to his chin. His eyes narrowed as he continued with his simulated broadcast.

'The twenty of the flasks that came from this chamber, which equates to around 16,000 eggs, are quite unique. A small team of genetic scientists working in isolation and in secret at this very institute had developed those enhanced eggs. They are the only ones of their kind in existence and would have...' President Wells stopped and rephrased his last statement, 'And will give the Eurostate the edge in our battle against the Femorists.'

Kellor could contain his questions no longer and interjected without another thought for the consequences.

‘What’s so special about this batch of eggs exactly?’

‘Well, let’s just say they have enhanced physical and intellectual capabilities, but I will leave the exact details to Professor Chenenko,’ replied Wells, raising his eyes casually in the Professor’s general direction.

Kellor looked up at the Professor and then returned his gaze sharply to the President.

‘So, what you are saying is that you are not interested in the ordinary eggs that were stolen. It’s just the enhanced batch you want retrieved?’

‘Retrieved or destroyed. But you’re right; I care less about the ordinary eggs than for the welfare of the Femorists that perpetrated this despicable act. If you manage to retrieve all of the flasks then you will be doing the State a great service, beyond the call of duty some would say. At the very least as I said before, the special batch of eggs must be destroyed and I emphasize the MUST!’ replied Wells as he stood up and peered down at Kellor, who disrespectfully remained seated.

‘Now, if you’ll excuse me Major, unfortunately I have to return to report to the State Council in Berlin, but Daniels and Professor Chenenko will provide you with the rest of the details. Good luck and, if you are successful, I am sure you will find that the benefits will make the effort worthwhile,’ said Wells as he turned to speak to Daniels.

‘Right. I should have been long gone by now. Take it from here Daniels and anything Major Kellor requires, provide it, post haste,’

With his last statement the President swirled around and walked briskly towards the exit. His trailing hand grabbed a long black leather overcoat from an unused chair. He swung the coat around his bony shoulders, crashed through the swinging doors and was gone. The remaining men glanced at each other while the doors swung rapidly back and forth in the background.

‘Let’s get on shall we. Professor, if you’d take us to the prototype nursery - while we walk I can acquaint Major Kellor with the finer details of our situation,’ said Daniels as his domineering side resurfaced with the president’s absence.

‘Okay, but I’m afraid we will have to get there via the farm grounds. The lab leading to the nursery is inaccessible to say the least,’ Professor Chenenko replied.

The three men left the building; Daniels walked next to the Major with the Professor taking the lead. Outside, the scene had changed dramatically from that when they had all first arrived. Kellor looked at his watch; it was now 07:45 and the morning had dawned splendidly. Though still cold, the day was very bright indeed and the rubble around them, the ruins randomly interspersed with apparently untouched buildings, looked far less sinister in the daylight.

‘Let me continue Major,’ said Daniels as they walked on past the homogeneous groups of workers robotically clearing up the surrounding mess.

‘These special eggs: they produce mature livestock that’s faster, stronger and more intelligent than you. They’ve been produced with gene modifications to give twice the Special Forces’ aggression level. Hell, they could walk through brick walls if so ordered,’ enthused Daniels.

They began to walk down a steep grassy embankment, damp from the morning dew, and in between trying not to slip in his beautiful Italian antique leather shoes and vainly attempting not to get them wet, Daniels resumed his briefing.

‘We were just about to embark on a massive breeding programme of this new strain of livestock. In fact, we were just waiting for Professor Blaine, who was lead scientist on the project, to give the all clear with the prototype. As you can imagine, with genetic weapons such as these we have to be very careful that they are fully functional and

disciplined before we release them into service. We wouldn't want them turned against us now would we!'

Just as he finished his sentence, he lost his footing and weakly grabbed Kellor's arm to avoid any possibility of him crashing to the ground.

'Sorry. Thanks. I mean... Well anyway,' Daniels said uncomfortably as he struggled to regain his composure. He did not like to rely on anyone or anything and to be shown up in such a manner was almost his worst nightmare.

'Picture if you will a 16,000 strong army made up of this enhanced livestock on the march, incubated and indoctrinated with Femorist allegiance! It could spell the end of the male gender forever; at the very least the end of male domination,' he paused, 'Oh and I forgot to mention, the MkII livestock seem to have some psychic ability as well, but only between other livestock of the same strain,' Daniels added nonchalantly as if he were describing an optional extra on a new car.

The three men were now fast approaching the specialist research centre where the prototype nursery was located. Standing silently in front of a pile of charred, blackened rubble, they could just make out a secure route through to a smoke-tarnished steel door, which was clearly visible at the back of what had been the research lab. Eventually, the three contrasting men concluded their silent assessment and looked at each other for reassurance.

'Why don't you just rear another batch of MkIIs to cancel out the ones that we've lost?' Kellor asked, confused, while delaying their foray into the bombsite.

'It's not as easy as that. Apart from the devastation that such a large conflict would undoubtedly cause - don't forget we're effectively talking about an army of supermen - it may be, er, a little while before we are able to produce any more of them,' Daniels replied in a mildly embarrassed manner.

'Why the delay?' Kellor asked, not wanting to let Daniels hide his thoughts so easily.

‘Unfortunately, it seems that the development of the MkII had been done completely in isolation in this very laboratory and all information relating to the project was kept in this room that you see before you. And last night a series of unfortunate coincidences meant that the whole of the development team were in the room when the Femorists attacked – every last one of ‘em! Usually at that time of the morning the lab would be closed down for the night, but they were just about to complete the last phase of the prototype MkII’s education and training. The project staff that weren’t killed in the blast were burnt to death in the ensuing fire. The records and technical data relating to the project were either stolen or destroyed; so far we’ve no way of knowing which. So, all things considered, it’s been a monumental disaster. All we know is that the whole project went up in smoke last night and the eggs are the only things, apart from the prototype, that remain intact.’

‘How did the prototype survive the attack?’ Kellor asked, as he looked between Daniels and the Professor for his answer. The Professor was the first to reply.

‘The room where it’s receiving the condensed data and image input is behind that Kevanium door back there. Luckily, because of the enhanced features of the MkII prototype, we decided that a stronghold room would be the safest place for it till it had been thoroughly tested and trained – there’s no way even that thing could break out. And of course, the room was strong enough to withstand the blast and the fire. It’s also powered and air conditioned completely independently from the rest of the complex, so we could be sure the equipment wouldn’t crash during the condensed data and image input whatever happened elsewhere in the farm. As you’re probably aware, we’ve had some difficulties with livestock that have had interruptions during this final stage of their indoctrination. Consequently, they have to be taken out of service because of emotional

and mental problems that have manifested themselves later in life,'

Meanwhile, Daniels began to move cautiously through the shattered building. He beckoned Kellor to follow and he did so, with the Professor taking up the rear.

'Now, in there is the new MkII prototype, but we're not sure how ready it is. It would seem that programming had completed its full cycle - but we're not a hundred percent. Unfortunately, without any records or staff to confirm this Major you will have to be very, very careful with it.'

While Daniels finished his sentence he wiped a fist-sized patch of black smoke dust from the six-inch thick window that looked in upon the MkII's secure room. He used his white silk handkerchief and Kellor noticed the initials delicately stitched into the material: 'C.A.D'.

'Hold on one moment, my brief is not to act as mentor for this MkII but to retrieve the enhanced eggs. I really don't think it is...' Kellor verbally exploded, astounded that he was going to have to baby-sit this MkII.

'This is not up for negotiation Major Kellor. You will take this MkII and use it to retrieve those eggs, period. Now if you wish you may take a look inside. Then I want you to return to the canteen and provide me with a complete list of the equipment that you need to accomplish this mission,' Daniels said, cutting Kellor dead in mid-sentence.

Rebuked, Kellor moved closer to the window and his rapid angry breath misted the thick glass. Despite the pounding of blood in his temples, he managed to control his breathing. The moisture on the glass dissipated and he finally managed to focus on the impassive MkII that lay within the darkened strong room. Eventually, the creature's form became apparent, just discernible in the gloom, and Kellor's jaw plunged into a bewildered gape.

Marching purposefully through the doors to the canteen, closely followed by Daniels, Kellor was unable to hide his increasing resentment and violently kicked the chairs and

tables from his path with his hefty size tens. The once-highly polished combat boots were no longer shiny; mud had worked its way up from the sole during their little excursion and the impact with the chairs and tables had covered the polished surface with streaks of brown dirt. Finally, reaching the area of the canteen where the maps of the surrounding region stood, he turned fiercely as Daniels calmly approached.

‘Now, before you say anything you may regret Major Kellor I’d consider your position very carefully. You may think that you have no need for this cross breed, MkII or whatever you may want to call it but, it’s as good as any weapon we have in our armoury right now and will give you the edge when dealing with these Femorists,’ Daniels stated, clearly brooking no argument.

Kellor glared more intently now and for a time forgot with whom exactly it was that he was dealing.

‘That fucking cross breed or abomination, whatever YOU want to call it, is a time bomb waiting to go off! You don’t even know if it’s ready for combat. What if she turns out for the opposition team instead, just when I’m ready for the kill. No, you have no authority over me, I take orders from one man only and that’s not you!’

Daniels smirked. He was surprisingly unconcerned by Kellor’s outburst and turned to his laptop, which sat on the table next to him. After punching in various numbers, the words ‘uplink established’, followed by the flashing word ‘Connecting’ blazed upon the computer display. A few seconds later, the original screen was replaced with the benign-looking face of Colonel Martin Johnson. Johnson was a military veteran: early forties, blonde hair and baby blues. In fact he had everything needed to be the archetypal Californian surfing god, except he was not from California and had no surfing ability whatsoever. Daniels grinned and began to look directly into Kellor’s eyes as he conversed with the Colonel.

‘Martin, how the devil are you?’ he asked like an old friend, which he most definitely was not.

‘Fine Callum, what can I do for you?’ replied the submissive Colonel.

Kellor got that sinking feeling as his thoughts entered panic mode. The bastard had called his Commanding Officer and he knew the outcome was not going to be to his satisfaction. Kellor began to feel Daniels’ grip over him tightening.

‘Martin, I have one of your fine young officers here - a certain Major Kellor. Anyway, to cut a long story short, we just need a bit of clarification about the lines of authority concerning the situation here in Stablinka. Now, Major Kellor would like your approval for him to take his orders directly from me; you don’t have a problem with that now? Do you Martin?’

‘No, no. Not at all Callum, do as you see fit. All I would ask is for a quick word with Major Kellor before you assume authority. If there’s nothing else you need Callum?’

Kellor moved into the view of the laptop camera without daring to return Daniels’ constant stare. He knew the Colonel well and was convinced that he would not have sold him out to the politicians without good reason. Observing the Colonel carefully as he spoke, Kellor sensed the unease in his Commanding Officer’s demeanour.

‘Ah, there you are Major, I trust everything’s fine your end?’

Kellor knew something was amiss and he began to focus on calming his furious body. The Colonel was a man he could trust, he was sure of that, so he would have to go along with whatever the Colonel had in mind.

‘Yes Colonel, I’m okay. But we have a situation here,’ Kellor advised before the Colonel interrupted.

‘Yes Major, I fully understand the situation there, but I have full confidence in Mr Daniels to direct you in a manner conducive to rectifying this situation. I would remind you of

the Greenland siege that we served on together and ask you to employ some of the tactics and application that you used to resolve that situation. That's an order Major. Well, must be going now. We have a situation here as well, lunch. Good luck chaps!'

Without delay, the Colonel's image was replaced with the 3-D Eurostate logo revolving around the otherwise empty screen.

Silent deliberate looks passed between Daniels and Kellor, both now believing that they were in control of the personal battle between them.