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## THE AFTERLIFE TRAP PART 13 – THE AWAKENING

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Jamie sat on the edge of the cot, staring at the cracked, discolored tiles on the clinic floor. Her body felt heavy, like it didn't quite belong to her. A faint buzzing echoed in her head—persistent, unyielding. She pressed her palms to her temples and breathed deeply, trying to ground herself, but it felt like her own thoughts were pushing back against her.

Dr. Crowe's voice came through the intercom, soothing and clinical. "Jamie, can you hear me?"

She nodded before remembering he couldn't see her. "Yes," she mumbled.

A long pause. "How do you feel?"

Jamie hesitated, unsure of how to answer. How did she feel? Disoriented. Hollow. As if someone had stretched her skin over something foreign. "Tired," she finally said.

"That's to be expected," Crowe replied, his tone professional but detached. "We're running a few diagnostics. Just relax."

Jamie squinted at her hands, feeling disconnected from her own fingers. She clenched them experimentally, half-expecting them not to respond. But they did, stiff and sluggish, like they belonged to a mannequin.

Suddenly, something tugged at her thoughts, and a shiver ran down her spine. A voice echoed in the back of her mind, soft but urgent.

**“Where am I? Why can’t I move?”**

Jamie’s heart raced, and she forced herself to breathe slowly. The voice faded, but the unease lingered, like a shadow just out of sight.

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Hours passed, and Dr. Crowe finally entered the room, his presence cold and analytical. Jamie glanced up, struggling to focus. “What’s... happening to me?” she whispered.

Crowe offered a carefully composed smile. “You’ve been through a lot. Your body needs time to adjust. I’ll have someone bring you some food.”

She nodded weakly, grateful for any semblance of normalcy. As he left, her gaze drifted to the small window, high and narrow. A streak of pale sunlight cut through the gloom, and Jamie found herself mesmerized by it, aching for the outside world.

As she sat there, the voice returned, louder this time.

**“No... I have to get out of here... They’re lying to me...”**

Jamie jerked upright, clutching her head. “Who... who’s there?”

The voice grew sharper, almost desperate. **“I’m Naomi. This is my body. You have to let me out!”**

Jamie froze, terror squeezing her chest. “No... I’m Jamie. This is... this is my body.”

**“You’re not real,”** the voice insisted, tinged with panic. **“You’re just... a glitch. I’m the real one. Let me out!”**

Tears pricked Jamie’s eyes. “Stop it! Stop talking to me!”

Her door swung open, and a nurse stepped inside, carrying a tray of food. Jamie bit her lip, fighting back the tremors in her hands. The nurse gave her a tight smile, setting the tray on the small table.

“Eat something,” the nurse said gently. “You’ll feel better.”

Jamie managed a nod, but the minute the nurse left, she collapsed into quiet sobs, her hands trembling as she forced herself to pick up the sandwich on the tray. She took a bite, barely tasting it, her mind a chaotic whirl of fear and confusion.

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As the night fell, the voice became more persistent, slipping through the cracks of Jamie’s thoughts.

**“My family... I have to call them. They don’t know I’m here. Please! Let me through!”**

Jamie squeezed her eyes shut, pressing her palms hard against her temples. “Shut up... shut up...”

But the voice pushed harder, clawing at her consciousness. **“Listen to me! Go to my phone—find it. Call them. They need to know what happened!”**

Desperation gnawed at Jamie’s sanity. She stumbled from the cot to the small cabinet where the clinic staff had placed her belongings. As she dug through it, her fingers found a phone—a sleek model that she didn’t recognize. She stared at it, confusion coloring her thoughts.

**“It must be from another patient here,”** the voice insisted. **“Use it! You have to call my dad. Tell him I’m okay. Please.”**

Against her better judgment, Jamie unlocked the phone. A quick swipe revealed a photo of a young woman—dark hair, green eyes, smiling on a beach. A sick feeling twisted in Jamie’s stomach, as she wondered what happened to her that her phone would be stuck in this place. Regardless her fingers moved on their own, typing a number that she knew could only be Naomi’s father.

Before she could think, she pressed the call button. The phone rang, and her heart pounded painfully in her chest.

It went to voicemail. A gruff, tired voice spoke: **“Hey, you’ve reached Gary Evans. Leave a message.”**

Jamie swallowed hard, trying to summon words, but her throat felt thick and uncooperative. “Dad... it’s me. I... I’m okay. I just... I don’t know where I am. Something’s wrong. They did something to me, and I...”

The words choked off, and she ended the call, her breathing ragged.

Jamie dropped the phone, backing away as if it had bitten her. Tears streamed down her cheeks, and the voice grew louder, more forceful.

**“You have to let me out! Please! I’m real! I’m real!”**

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Meanwhile, in his office, Dr. Crowe monitored the readouts, frowning as the neural patterns spiked and dipped. His fingers hovered over the control panel, adjusting stabilization parameters. The transfer had seemed successful—Naomi’s consciousness fully integrated into the new host. But something was off.

He reviewed the brainwave recordings, noting irregularities in the resonance patterns. A hint of instability—like two signals overlapping. He cursed under his breath, leaning closer to the screen.

Just as he was about to call for assistance, his communicator buzzed. It was Alexander Voss.

Crowe composed himself and answered, projecting confidence. “The transfer was successful,” he reported. “The subject is acclimating. Early indications are positive.”

Voss raised an eyebrow, his holographic image cool and detached. “No complications?”

“Minor adjustment issues,” Crowe lied. “Expected during the initial integration period.”

“Make sure it works,” Voss replied sternly. “We’ve invested a fortune in this project, and we expect results.”

Crowe gave a short nod. “Understood.”

As the call ended, he couldn't suppress his growing unease. Something wasn't right. He stood and made his way back to the recovery room, where Jamie—no, Naomi—was supposed to be resting.

When he opened the door, Jamie was hunched on the floor, clutching her head and sobbing. The phone lay discarded nearby, screen cracked from where it had been dropped.

Crowe knelt beside her, his voice low and commanding. "Naomi, can you hear me?"

She looked up, but her eyes were wild and unfocused. "Who am I?" she whispered. "I'm... I'm Jamie... but I'm not..."

Crowe's jaw tightened. "You're Naomi. You're safe. Try to remember."

Jamie's hands shook as she pressed them to her head. "No... I was on the streets... I didn't want... I didn't ask for this..."

Crowe's mind raced. The residual personality was stronger than anticipated—anomalous overlap. He needed to suppress it before the investors found out. Quickly, he signaled for sedation, and two orderlies arrived to administer it.

As Jamie's body relaxed into unconsciousness, Crowe stared at her, the implications gnawing at him. Naomi's consciousness had taken root, but Jamie's mind had not fully relinquished control.

He needed to act fast. If Voss or the others got wind of this complication, they would shut him down. He couldn't let this happen—not after all he had achieved. He made a note to increase neural synchronization frequencies and ordered full isolation until the issue stabilized.

As he walked out of the room, a chill settled over him. The human brain was far more resilient than he had accounted for. He had thought the original consciousness would be erased, overwritten by the new one. Instead, Jamie's mind was fighting back, clawing its way to the surface.

He couldn't let doubt creep in—not now. Success demanded sacrifice, and he was too close to let morality cloud his judgment. Still, as he glanced back at the door, he couldn't ignore the unsettling realization that something far more complex and uncontrollable had taken root in that body.

And if Jamie reclaimed control, it wouldn't just be the project that failed—it would be Crowe's entire career.

End – Part 5