

Autism runs in your family. Looking back, they think your great uncle had it, though there were no diagnoses in those days. Your father's oldest sister had it in more mild form. But you best remember your cousin Jerome who was about your age, with his weird awkward behavior and the way it drove you crazy when you were around him.

How unkind and teasing you were to Jerome when his condition got too much on your nerves. You didn't mean anything by it, not really, you were just a stupid kid. You didn't understand how difficult he had it. All you knew was that he was twitchy, frustrating to talk to or interact with, and when he got upset he blew up in ways that made him seem like a five-year-old to you and all your cousins, who were in so-very-sophisticated junior high. And so when you should have been patient and compassionate, you took out your frustrations on a poor kid who already had it way too rough.

By the time you were adults you rarely saw Jerome except at family functions, and you didn't think about the condition that ran in your family anymore. But all that changed when your youngest son Nathan was born. Nathan, though born beautiful and healthy, didn't behave the same as other growing toddlers. When you took him to the doctor with your concerns, he told you that all the early signs were there. Nathan, like so many of your family before you, was also autistic.

Oh, God, the guilt when you heard the diagnosis. You knew this was all your fault; it's your flawed genes that made him this way. He would never be normal, never be free of challenges that most children would never have to face. And the thought that there were going to be others, ignorant as you were when you were a kid, who might treat your boy the way you treated poor Jerome... that was just too much to bear.

Nathan was nine when you first heard of Project Resonance, much discussed in military circles for its possible crowd control applications, but initially intended to design an autism cure. Reports were so good you became convinced that this was the best chance that Nathan had of someday leading a normal life. You used every bit of influence and pull you had to see that it was carried out. But still, you were concerned. You heard that the means of delivering the cure was an artificial retrovirus, a medical technology that was very new and not well understood. The things you heard were deeply unsettling, and you were not going to put Nathan in those trials. In fact, you went to lengths to conceal the fact that you had an autistic son. You did not want your opinions to be discounted as not objective, nor did you want your boy subjected to prodding and experimenting and surroundings that were unfamiliar and frightening. But by God, you were going to make sure those trials went forward. You were not about to allow anyone to administer to Nathan an unsafe cure, but you could not allow the chance that he someday might be normal to slip away.

### **Who You Know:**

**Dr. Yu** - One of the earlier pushers for the project. You felt a kinship with Yu because you both have autistic sons, but you were a little shocked when you learned of the doctor's willingness to test experimental findings on the boy.

**Vice President Richardson** - The vice president has never been comfortable with Project Resonance, and once argued with you over it before the Senate. Though sympathetic to the needs of the children, no one ever managed to totally convince Richardson that the experiments were safe or that the treatment of the subjects was humane.

**Secretary Gutierrez** - The secretary of state was another who never gave total approval to Project Resonance, sharing many of Richardson's suspicions of danger.

**Secretary Highmore** - The secretary of defense, who was always much more interested in Resonance's potential as a weapon than as an autism cure. You try not to let on your true interests in front of Highmore.

**Commander Garrity** - Garrity is more compassionate than many of the military establishment, and his interest

in Resonance as a weapon is at least due to its non-lethality. You respect the commander as a soldier of honor and principal.

**Major Hughes** - Once a good soldier with an impressive record, but in recent times seems to have deteriorated mentally. Poor old Hughes has become extremely paranoid, particularly in regards to Resonance.

**Major Roderick** - A born second-in-command who believes very strongly in service and honor on the battlefield. You are the major's direct superior.