

Numerology

By Freddie Clegg

Introduction

From "Tomorrow's Technology" magazine.....

Soft Cybernetics – The New Alchemy? By our science correspondent

Are we about to see first human robots? Can scientists create zombies?

"Soft Cybernetics" is a controversial new approach to the problem of creating intelligent systems, provides new ways to solve the problems of micro-behaviour management.

To date cybernetics has focused on the use of feed-back and control mechanisms to produce self-regulating systems using electromechanical devices. More recently, research work suggests that many of the problems associated with programming these devices can be solved by the use of biological organisms as an alternative to mechanisms. The combination of cloning technologies with soft-cybernetics offers the possibility of pre-programmed, designer life forms, able to carry out specific tasks or roles. Early experimentation in this field has attracted considerable ethical debate.

As one of the chief proponents of the concept, Dr Stuart Waring, of the University of Central England, is exploring the implications of soft-cybernetics through the use of a series of "thought-experiments" which examine the consequences of cybernetic intervention to adjust the behaviours of biological organisms. These thought-experiments alone have given rise to serious objections from a wide range of groups concerned about both animal and human rights.

Most recently the proposition by Waring and his collaborator, Dr Anna Fedorova of the Leningrad Centre for Neuroscience, that using by-products of effects of specific forms of synesthesia (where information perceived by one sense gives rise to a sensation in another - for example where numbers are seen as colours) has created alarm that behavioural engineering may become as controversial as its genetic cousin.

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Chapter 1: The Colour of Numbers

I see numbers in my head. And I know what they mean. Some people can hear colours. I see numbers. Suddenly. A seven. Or a four. And I know what they mean.

There aren't many numbers. Only zero to nine. But I see them. Bright; sudden; there in my mind; blotting out everything else.

I haven't always been able to do this. It is new for me. Since I came here, to the house. Before I came I couldn't see the numbers but now I can. I don't remember anything else before I came but I do know I couldn't see the numbers.

I can see a one. It's green. It's very bright. I know I have to find him. He is somewhere in the house and I have to find him. Where ever he is I have to go there. That's what it means when I see the one.

I find him in the library. He is with a woman. He smiles as I arrive and turns to her. "There, you see," he says. "Now do you believe me?"

"That doesn't prove anything," she replies. "There could be a bell, or a light. Remotely controlled. You might have agreed what she was to do."

I just stand there, listening, watching, waiting. There isn't anything for me to do. I have done what I had to do. I have found him.

"You try," he says. He passes a box to the woman. The box has buttons on it.

"OK, but not from here. She might watch me. I'll leave the room. Then we'll see." She gets up and goes out. The man is smiling at me. He doesn't say anything.

I see a five. It's purple. I have to undress. I take off my dress; my underwear; my shoes; my stockings. I'm naked. I have done what I had to do.

The woman comes back in. "OK," she says. "What else. Could be a lucky guess – there's only ten buttons. You could be colluding."

"Why do you think she would? Believe me this works."

The woman turns her back to me. "Yeah, maybe," she says. I see a six. It's white. I start to dress again. Six means I must put on the clothes I see.

The woman sits down. She hands the box back to the man. "Could be interesting," she says, "if it's for real."

"Oh, it's real," he replies. He juggles the box in his hand. "Would I lie to you?"

I have finished dressing. Suddenly I see a two. It's yellow, a wonderful, bright, clean, yellow. I know now that I have to go back to my room. That's what a two means. I wonder if the box has anything to do with the numbers?

Chapter 2: Friends

The woman is called Dr Anna. The man is called Dr Stuart. I sometimes think I knew them before I came here to the house, but I am not sure. Dr Anna and Dr Stuart have explained they are my friends. They say they are my friends but I am not sure. I feel there is some reason why I should not trust them but I cannot say what it is.

They say that they are here to help me with my numbers. If that is so they must be my friends. They know that I see the numbers and that I have to do what they tell me. They explain that this is good; that I will feel happy when I do what the numbers tell me to do.

I know this to be true. Perhaps they are my friends after all.

The numbers only tell me to do simple things at the moment. Dr Stuart tells me this is quite normal. He says I need to get used to the simple tasks first. I don't know why I must get used to it. I don't know why I do what the numbers tell me. But I do. And it makes me happy. I don't know why I do nothing apart from what the numbers tell me. But that is true as well.

Dr Anna is interested in how I feel about the numbers. I tell her that they are bright; that I like the light and the colours. She asks me how I feel about the tasks. I tell her that I am happy when I am asked to do them. When I finish them I know I have done what the numbers wanted. I believe that should make me happy too.

She asks me if I ever feel that I should not do a task but I explain that the tasks are easy to do and so there is no reason why I would not do what the numbers ask of me. Besides it makes me happy when I see the numbers, makes me happy when I do the tasks. Dr Anna is worried in case I am sad when I cannot see the numbers. I tell her that isn't so. I am happy when I see the numbers but I am not sad when they are not there. It's just that when there are no numbers, there is nothing. No happiness, no sadness, nothing to do, nothing. Except to wait for the numbers.

Dr Anna writes all my answers down. I wonder if she has numbers to tell her what to do?

Dr Stuart shows me the box. It is small and dark with many buttons on it. It has a small display. It looks a little like the telephones I sometimes see Dr Stuart and Dr Anna using, but it is larger. He tells me that this is where the numbers come from. He says he will take great care of the box so that I can feel safe. Only Dr Stuart or Dr Anna understands the box. Only they know how to make the numbers come. I feel safe as long as I can see the numbers. Safe and happy. I am only scared that the numbers will not come any more. Then what would I do?

If Dr Stuart and Dr Anna can make sure the numbers come then they must be my friends.

Chapter 3: Number 8

I am lying on my bed. I see the number 8. It's blue, a very peaceful blue. It tells me to sleep. I am doing my best. Dr Stuart and Dr Anna come into the room. They are concerned about me. I hear them talking.

"She seems to be settled now."

"Yes, I am pleased with how well she has recovered from the surgery. The connector seems to be healing well."

"The bruises on her wrists and ankles are going down."

"Yes. They will be gone in a few days. It was a shame that I had to restrain her but I wasn't sure how she would react. It wasn't a problem as it turned out but I'm not sure I could have predicted it."

Dr Stuart lifts the sheet that covers me and looks down at my naked body. There is no need for me to move. "I am particularly pleased at how well the synesthesia appears to have been taken up," he says. "It seems to work in both ways as predicted – the linkage between stimuli and response is fully effective and the absence of stimulus results in complete quiescence." He drops the sheet.

"So, what next?"

"The difficulty is in the tasks, I think. They seem to be of two kinds. The very simple that require constant intervention or the very complex that have too many variables. There needs to be a simpler way of structuring the tasks. There is something we can try, though. I have an idea."

It is good that Dr Stuart and Dr Anna show such concern. I am pleased that they are helping with the tasks. I haven't found it hard to do the tasks so far but what would happen if the numbers told me to do something I could not do? I find that scares me. I whimper.

"Hush, Natalie," Dr Anna, tries to reassure me. "Hush. It's all right. Sleep now."

I try to sleep. The numbers told me to sleep. I've been having nightmares. Dreams about before; before I came to the house; before I could see the numbers.

In the nightmares, Dr Stuart and Dr Anna are not my friends. They come to my room while I am sitting at a desk. I am swallowed up in a cloth. They pull the cloth over me. I cannot see them. I cannot move. I cannot speak. Dr Stuart and Dr Anna are talking but I cannot speak. I struggle but I cannot move. I cry out but there is no sound. Why do my friends do this to me? I fall asleep. And then I wake up.

I am in a white room. The light is bright. As bright as the numbers in my head but the light is above me. There are wizards in white. I cannot see their faces. They say, "It's all right Natalie." They tell me not to be afraid but somehow I am.

I am still afraid as I fall asleep again. It is frightening to fall asleep when in a dream. How can I know that I am awake now? Or that I am dreaming now? Or that I was dreaming then?

At least I am sure the numbers are real. They are so bright and so clear and so colourful. The numbers are too real to be dreams. The tasks are too real to be dreams.

Chapter 4: They Are Not The Same

I can see more numbers. I woke up this morning and I can see more numbers. As soon as I woke up there was twenty two – bright, yellow, brighter than anything else in my head And I knew what I had to do. I don't know how many more numbers I can see. Only fifteen and seventeen and twenty two. Those are the ones I have seen today and I knew what to do.

I wonder what the new numbers mean. I only know what a number means when I see it. Look, if I can see fifteen and seventeen then I guess that I can see sixteen too but I cannot guess what it means. And fifteen – I know I can see fifteen and I know it means something but it's only when I see it that I know what it means. I saw fifteen this morning and I know I had to do something and I did it but I don't know what it was.

That makes it much easier, only remembering when you see the numbers. Most of the time I do not remember the numbers and what they mean. If you had to remember all of the numbers all of the time it would be much harder. It's a useful trick. I wonder how I do it.

There isn't a number for now. Life is empty when there isn't a number. I just wait. Wait for the numbers, wait for the bright numbers. I feel happy when I see the numbers, I feel empty when they are not there.

Oh, there is fifteen now. Clear and orange. And I know what to do. I get up, I make my bed, I get the broom and the pan, I sweep my room, I dust my room, I clean the sink and bowl in my washroom. That's what 15 means – clean up. How could I not remember it? Then I saw a 1 and went to find Dr Stuart. He was in the lounge with the box. I saw 15 again and knew I had to clean up there too. Dr Stuart watched me do it. He seemed pleased at my work. I just know I was happy because the numbers asked me to do it.

Dr Anna has been talking to me about the numbers. She has been asking me how I feel about the numbers. She shows me some numbers which are written down. I tell her they are not the same. The numbers in my head are bright. The ones on paper are just, well, numbers. They do not have the meaning that the numbers in my head do. She shows me some colours and asks me if they make me think of numbers. I tell her they do not. The colours on the paper are not the same as the colours in my head, although they look the same.

She shows me a 15. It looks orange. I am sure I know what 15 means but I just cannot remember. Dr Anna is puzzled but she is very kind, She doesn't mind that I don't remember.

I heard Dr Anna and Dr Stuart talking. Dr Anna told Dr Stuart that she was surprised by some of the results. The effects of synesthesia seem to be interesting to her. She is surprised by the quiescence response. She suspects it may have something to do with endorphin receptors. I did not really understand what I heard but I think it has something to do with how I see the colour of the numbers. She is surprised that there I have no recollection of the time before I could see the numbers, but how could that be important? I don't remember then. There are only my dreams and I am happier without my dreams.

Chapter 5: On The Radio

When I woke up today there were new clothes. A plain black dress and tights. The dress is quite short, the skirt comes above my knees. It is shorter than I used to wear. How come I remember that? But the 6 just tells me to dress, I put on whatever is to hand and today it is the black dress. My life is so easy, I just do what the numbers say. Somehow it doesn't seem fair.

I was combing my hair this morning. It seems to be getting much longer. There is something strange at the back of my neck. I am sure it was not there before. Before when? Just, before.. It feels hard, metallic. Like an electrical socket. The sort you would find on a computer. It doesn't hurt but it doesn't feel like it should be there.

It is much later I am sitting in my room. Waiting. Dr Stuart comes into the room. He has the box. I see a 5, bright purple, and I undress. Dr. Stuart watches with interest. He is obviously interested to see how I respond to the numbers. I have finished undressing when Dr Anna comes into the room. She looks strangely at Dr Stuart, as if she disapproves of his interest and concern. I see an 8, a peaceful, blue 8. I lay down to sleep.

It is later still. I am lying on my bed, awake. Dr Anna is sitting beside me. She seems concerned about me. She turns on the radio beside my bed. The woman speaking has a quiet, Edinburgh accent.

"Hello and welcome to Science Now, your weekly look at the world of technology. First tonight I am joined this evening by Dr Stuart Waring who has been at the centre of the controversial thought experiments relating to soft-cybernetics. Dr Waring, good evening."

"Good evening, Kirstie."

"On one side, your soft-cybernetics theories have led you to be accused of being the Dr Frankenstein of the post-Freud era. On the other you've been condemned as a charlatan. Which is it – fiend or fraud?"

"Well, Kirstie, I hope I'll be able to convince you that I'm neither. What my team has been doing in soft-cybernetics is pure research, an exploration of what it might mean to combine biological systems and control/feed-back systems. We hope to learn what we can about both biology and the nature of cybernetic systems."

"There's no truth to the accusation that your work paves the way to human robots?"

"Our interest has been in thought experiments – conceptual assessments of the issues involved and the possible outcomes of actions in this area. Most experts agree that it would be a long way from these conceptual exercises to any form of practical application. The real purpose is to help us to understand the nature of control systems and of the ways in which the mind governs behaviour."

"So, no mindless zombies then?"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but no. The scientific research is much more mundane. Let me pose a problem to you that is typical of our thought experiments. Suppose you could control an animal's every movement. How could you translate that into making the animal perform useful tasks? It would be useless if you had to control it in real time like a radio controlled car – the effort to control it would be as great as if the task was carried out by yourself. But how can you provide the animal with a goal or set of actions to perform? And what is the mechanism that translates your requests into action? For example if I say 'Sit' to a dog and it sits, is the dog a robot?"

"No, clearly not."

"Well suppose that I were to create a tape of commands including 'Sit' and place it in a player fixed to the dog's back so that it played a series of commands in sequence. If the dog follows each command and then sits is it a robot?"

“Well, no.”

“But if I did the same thing with a mechanical representation of a dog and the same actions were to occur would that be a robot?”

“Yes, yes it would.”

“Now does this tell us more about the nature of dogs, the nature of mechanical toys, the nature of commands or the idea of robots? To me the issue seems to involve the freedom to behave otherwise. Some of my critics have suggested that my interest is in suppressing human free will. I would argue that I am interested in understanding what exactly it is that distinguishes us from the mechanical.”

“Dr Waring, thank you. I am sure that many people will have been both reassured and intrigued by your ideas. Now, for our second item this evening. New power for the motor car. Can the promise of electrical energy for reducing road pollution be realised.....”

Dr Anna leans forward and strokes my hair in a tender way as she turns the radio off. “There,” she says, “you see how Dr Waring thinks so carefully about these things?”

I say nothing. I used to have a dog that would sit when I said so. Dr Stuart didn’t mention the numbers, though. I wonder why he didn’t tell her about them. They are the most important thing we have.

Chapter 6: Upload

The girl is half sitting, half lying, sedated, barely awake, on a reclining couch. A net cap covers her scalp and carries an array of electrodes. Wires run from each, eventually joining up to form a thick, electrical umbilical cord running to the electro-encephalograph. A series of green lines on a display trace the activity detected by each electrode. Quiet beeps mark time for her pulse and respiration.

He checks the monitors. He opens a folder and checks the paper on the inside cover. He checks the small needle mark on the inside of her arm where the injection was administered.

Satisfied that temperature, pulse, respiration and brain functions all appear normal he nods to his collaborator. He reaches behind the girl's head and fastens the connector in place. A cable runs from the connector to the computer on the trolley beside the couch. He checks the monitors again. No change in the traces.

The woman starts the drive on the pen recorder of the encephalograph. She looks across at the girl on the couch. The man scrolls down a menu on the computer and selects "load". He presses enter.

On the couch the girl's eyes swing wide open. The monitors and the pens on the pen recorder swing into frenetic activity. Her eyes dart back and forth, unseeing. At times her hands clench and open again but apart from that she does not move. Her breathing becomes shallow, her breaths are shorter, she is almost panting, quietly.

It takes only a few minutes. The hourglass icon on the computer's screen stops spinning. The pen traces slip back to a steady line. The green fluorescent lines on the monitors slip back to their steady repetitive beat. The girl's eyes close. She is breathing easily, now, asleep.

He writes on the scroll of paper spilling from the pen recorder. "Natalie : Upload Nrs. 25 to 50 and scripts version 1.1 Beta." He adds the date and time and folds the paper neatly. He tucks it into the folder.

The woman carefully unfastens the connector from the back of the girl's head and then removes the scalp net, the pulse and respiration monitors. They wheel the girl back to her room and put her to bed.

Chapter 7: Natalie's Paper

I dreamt I was in a white room with the white wizards. The wizards brought me numbers. They gave me lists of things to do. Things to do when I see the numbers.

It is still dark but now I am awake. I can see two figures silhouetted in the doorway to my room. It is Dr Stuart and Dr Anna. I hear them talking.

"Is she awake yet?"

"Yes, I think so but she will lie still there until she has to respond."

"What are the new scripts?"

"Mainly domestic tasks, some of them are combos – concatenations of other scripts under a single number to make control easier. It's too much effort if you have to keep giving individual commands."

"Do we need to do anything about command reception?"

"No, I think it appears to be adequate within the building and the new transmitter will be slightly more powerful. I'd prefer to do things at this end rather than having to do any further surgery."

The two of them are still standing there, looking at me. I hear Dr Anna speak.

"I read it."

"What?"

"The paper – 'Induced Numerical Synesthesia as a Vector for Operant Conditioning.' Natalie Grahams' doctoral thesis."

"It was rather good wasn't it? I felt it delivered an excellent theoretical basis for a practical mechanism for soft-cybernetics."

"Yes. Yes, it was. Don't you wish you'd written it?"

"Well, perhaps. It's the curse of the teacher to be overtaken by their brightest students."

"She never foresaw this, you know. Not the application of her work. I don't think she ever thought it would really be possible to link into the frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex. Not in any practical way."

"So you'll allow me my contribution to this project then?"

"Of course, Stuart. It's extraordinary what you've done."

"Well, maybe." Dr Waring is looking at me again.

Dr Anna interrupts him. "She's lost it all, you know. Anything she ever knew, any memories. The intellect has gone. There's nothing left of her mind. Just the numbers and the tasks."

"Hmm? Oh, yes. That seems to be a side effect. A shame, I guess."

They go away, leaving me alone. How strange. For some reason I think that Natalie is my name.

Chapter 8: Number 5

It is afternoon. I am in my room, alone. I see a 5. I undress. That is unusual. I do not often see a 5 until late at night. There is usually a 5 and then an 8 to tell me to sleep. Oh, now I am remembering what some of the numbers mean. I wonder if I am supposed to do that? But now there is just a 5.

Dr Stuart appears. He is smiling. He approaches me and places a hand upon my naked breast. "You respond very well to your numbers. This is exactly how I expected to find you. Now, come and lay down. I will show you something." He leads me to the bed and lays me down with my arms by my sides, my legs slightly apart.

Dr Stuart is undressing. He is naked as well. He lies down beside me. I feel his fingers part my thighs. I feel his fingers inside me. He climbs on top of me. I feel him penetrate me. There isn't anything for me to do, there are no numbers now.

Dr Stuart is stroking my breasts. He tells me I am a perfect doll, I am his perfect doll, just a doll. His breathing becomes sharper, his voice is deeper, his muscles tense. I feel him cum, violently, inside of me. He lays there for a time but then gets up and leaves me. I see a 7. I take a shower. I see an 8 and lay down to sleep.

This time I do not dream.

It is later. I wake up. I hear Dr Stuart and Dr Anna. They are talking together again but now they are talking in loud voices. Dr Anna is shouting. She is shouting, "Pervert!" Dr Stuart is quieter. He is trying to calm Dr Anna, but she is still upset, still shouting. "Is that what this was all about really? It's nothing to do with the science! Is it?" I cannot hear everything she is shouting but she is very upset. The shouting seems to go on for a long time.

Much later I wake again. It is still dark. The shouting has stopped.

It is daylight. I awake. I see a 7 and a 6 and a 1. I shower, dress and go to find Dr Stuart. He is with Dr Anna but things are different. She is naked. She is sitting in a chair. She cannot get up. Straps hold her in the chair. She seems to want to get up but she cannot. She tries to talk as I enter but there is tape across her mouth and I cannot make out what she is saying.

Dr Stuart gives me some clothes, they are the clothes that Dr Anna was wearing last night. He presses a button. 27 – laundry. I know what I have to do. As I leave I see that Dr Stuart is playing with Dr Anna's breast as he played with mine. She struggles to resist him but the straps are holding her down. He smiles and tells her to be still. She tries to answer him but the tape stops any sound. He picks up a hypodermic syringe. Dr Anna's eyes are wide open. She shakes her head. I think she tries to scream behind the tape. I think she is really scared.

She doesn't look happy. Not happy like I am. As long as I can do what the numbers tell me.

But I see 27 and I must do as the numbers tell me.

Chapter 9: Pleasure Unit

I am sitting in the bedroom. Dr Stuart and Dr Anna are there as well. She is standing by the door, he is lounging on the bed. I'm wearing my simple uniform dress. She has on a long, black, evening gown. It is cut very low and shows her cleavage. There is a simple velvet band around her throat. Her long hair is dressed and piled high upon her head. She wears long evening gloves that match her dress. Her face is made up perfectly but she isn't smiling as she usually does.

Dr Stuart presses a button on his control box. I see a zero. I must smile and recite. "About: Soft Cybernetics Software Version 1.63 : Scripts Version 2.5 : Variant - Utility Unit" Dr Stuart says, "Thank you, Natalie." That's interesting he has not called me that before. I thought that was my name but he hasn't called me that before. I think I know something about Natalie but I cannot remember what it is.

He turns a small control on the box and presses the button again.

Dr Anna appears to jerk and stiffen and then she speaks. "About: Soft Cybernetics Software Version 1.63 : Scripts Version 2.75 : Variant - Pleasure Unit." She smiles as I smile but then I watch as a tear trickles down her cheek.

Dr Waring says, "Thank you, Anna." He presses another button and she turns to leave the room.

As Dr Anna turns her head I see that she has a small connector on the back of her neck. Like the ones you see on computers. I wonder, does my one look the same? I wonder if that is why Dr Anna can see the numbers now. I wonder if the numbers will make her happy. I think that Dr Stuart had something to do with helping Dr Anna be able to see the numbers. Do you think the numbers tell him what to do? I don't see a connector.

Chapter 10: Breaking News

From "Tomorrow's Technology" magazine.....

Brain Drain For Robot Champion Waring

Waring to take up new post in the USA

"Dr Stuart Waring is citing negative comment in the tabloid press as the reason for abandoning research into soft-cybernetics here in the UK. Protests surrounding the professor's work on "living robots" have rendered work at the University of Central England impossible. Dr Waring and his collaborator Dr Fedorova, together with Natalie Grahams, widely recognised as the post-graduate researcher responsible for many of the concepts underpinning Waring and Fedorova's thought experiments are to establish a new research facility in the USA.

"Dr Waring made the announcement at a press conference yesterday, confirming that Grahams and Fedorova had already left the country for the facility in Colorado.

"Dr Waring would not confirm or deny rumours that US Military funding was helping to establish the centre and gave no indication of future directions for the team's research."

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Chapter 11: Colorado

I have a new home. I can see mountains. We are a long way from England. We came on an aeroplane.

Anna and I share a room now. She is happier. I am sure the numbers have made her happier. She smiles much more but she still cries sometimes, crying while she smiles.

We each have different tasks to perform. I believe we both see the same numbers sometimes because we do things together. But we have different numbers too. There are some things that Anna does not do. Some things that I do not do. I wonder what Anna did before she came here, before she could see the numbers? I wonder what I did, too.

Dr Stuart has a new helper, Dr Wallis. She tells us that she is helping to make the numbers clearer for us. She says she is our friend. I believe her. She takes a lot of trouble to see that we can see the numbers. She is most interested in how we see the numbers. She shows me pictures of the numbers like... Like what? I think someone showed me pictures of the numbers before but I cannot remember.

Anna often sees numbers at night. I may be sleeping but sometimes I wake up when she leaves. It can only be because the numbers have told her to go. She often goes naked. That is strange because she has so many pretty clothes.

We both had new clothes when we came here. Mine are quite dark because of the work that the numbers tell me to do around the house but I still think they are nice. Dr Stuart thinks they are nice too. He tells me how attractive they make me look - that the short skirts show off my legs and the tight tops make my breasts look nice. I am pleased that he likes them. I just wear them because they are there when the numbers tell me to dress. Sometimes he will touch me, stroke my breasts or my legs. Dr Wallis does not seem to mind. Dr Wallis likes how my clothes look too. Sometimes she touches me as well.

Last night Anna dressed before she left. It was quite strange. She put on her clothes, I guess she saw a 6. That tells us to dress. The clothes are on the chairs beside our beds. Sometimes we put the clothes there. Sometimes they come from somewhere else. Anna put on her clothes. I watched as Anna put on her clothes. She has such pretty clothes. Her bra and pants are lacy. She puts on stockings. Her blouse is very tight, it clings to her breasts. Her skirt is very tight as well. Straight, and tight. She puts on shoes. The heels are high and spiked. But then something strange. She puts on more hair. It is a wig. Long and blonde over her own short dark hair. And then something else. A mask. It covers her face completely but it is a face itself. A perfect, doll face. Long eyelashes, perfect lips, blushed cheeks. Anna looks in the mirror and straightens her wig. She walks slowly from the room. I couldn't tell if she was smiling, I couldn't tell if she was crying.

I think she will be Dr Stuart's perfect doll tonight.

Chapter 12: Expansion

I think that Dr Stuart's work is going very well. I do not see him so often now, he is very busy. Mostly it is Dr Wallis who is helping me with the numbers. The numbers want me to help Dr Wallis. Today I saw a 1 and went to find her. She gave me a pile of clothes the numbers said 27 and I knew to launder and press them before returning them to her. The numbers said 18 and I knew that I had to wait until Dr Wallis told me what she would want.

"Fetch me a drink, please, Natalie," Dr Wallis said. "Some white wine would be fine."

I fetched the wine for her. 19 – I helped her to undress. 21 – I helped her to shower. 20 – I helped her to dress again. Dr Wallis presses the buttons on the box that lets me see the numbers. I wonder how Dr Wallis knows what the numbers want me to do.

But now there are more of us, more who can see the numbers and do their will.

Today I saw a new number. First there was a 1. When I found him he had three women with him. They were as Anna was, just before she started to see the numbers - naked and strapped and silenced. It must help them to prepare for the numbers; the straps and the silencing, I mean. They seemed alarmed when I appeared, I don't know why. I wonder how they got here?

I was smiling but that did not seem to reassure them. Dr Stuart tried to calm them. He explained how happy I am, now that I see the numbers. They could see I was smiling. It didn't seem to calm them.

I saw 51. A new number. As bright as the others. Bright and blue. I knew what I had to do. I took the leash that clipped to the collar of the first woman. I knew where I was leading them. I was not sure how but I knew. I took them to another part of the building. There was a small room for each of them. The rooms have no windows. The rooms have only a small bed. I put them into their rooms. Each of them has a tag to say who they are. Alice, and Crystal and Suzanne. The tags must be so that Dr Stuart and Dr Wallis know who they are. It is harder now there are more of us but the numbers always seem to know which one is needed. I closed the doors behind them. I locked the doors. I left the straps and tape upon them. I had to be sure that they would remain where they were otherwise they might not get to serve the numbers. They sobbed and tried to cry out. They cannot know how happy they will be when they are doing what the numbers tell them.

When I woke up this morning and the numbers told me to dress I had some nice new clothes. I have a new black dress. It has a square collar and short sleeves. It buttons at the back. The skirt is very short and flares a little. It has "Natalie" embroidered in small letters upon it. I have some new tights. They are much finer than the ones I wore before. And new shoes. With higher heels. Perhaps they are a present from the numbers.

I see a 1. I go to find Dr Wallis. She is in the large meeting room with Dr Stuart. There are four others there, Anna and the three newcomers. They are wearing the same dress that I do, the same tights, the same shoes. We all have our hair done identically. Each has a name embroidered on their dress as mine does. "Anna", "Alice", "Crystal" and "Suzanne". They are standing quite still with their hands by their sides. They are smiling. I join them. We are all smiling.

Dr Wallis turns a control on the box and presses a button. I see a 0 and start to recite, "About: Soft Cybernetics Software Version 2.54 : Scripts Version 3.8 "... I become aware that we are all reciting the same thing, simultaneously. How remarkable.

Dr Stuart is evidently pleased that we are all seeing the same number at the same time. He smiles. "Excellent," he says.

Another button. I see a 5 and start to undress. Again all five of us have seen the number together. I see a 10 and stop. We have all taken off our dresses and now just stand in bra, pants and tights. Dr Stuart is pleased and grins at Dr Wallis. "That is good," he says. How good that the numbers help us make Dr Stuart so pleased. He takes the trouble to touch each of us as Dr Wallis looks on. We

all stand still – that's what the 10 tells us. Dr Stuart strokes the cheek of Crystal who is standing next to me. She stands still while he does this. She is still smiling but somehow she does not seem happy.

It is nice that there are five of us now. Sometimes the numbers ask us to do things at the same time. Somehow that is better than when we do the alone. I like it when the numbers ask Anna and I to do things at the same time.

The numbers often ask Crystal and Suzanne to do things at the same time. Often at night. Sometimes they use the same doll face masks that Anna had. Sometimes they wear nothing but their masks and their wigs. The numbers don't seem to ask Anna to wear her mask and wig any more. I do not know if that makes her sad. She still smiles. We all smile.

Chapter 13: Limitations

Dr Wallis came to my room when I was lying on my bed last night. It was very late. She didn't put on a light. She told me not to be afraid. I am not afraid because I know that Dr Wallis is my friend. Then she did something strange. She put tape across my mouth. I don't know why, I never talk unless I am asked a question. I have seen the tape before but I only talk when I am asked.

She used metal bracelets to lock my wrists to the bed rail. I don't know why. I never move unless the numbers tell me too. I suppose she might have been worried that the numbers would suddenly take me away.

She had a small computer with her. I think the numbers come from inside computers. I have seen a bigger computer in the white room but she had a small one in my room. There was a cable. I felt her plug the cable into my connector. Dr Wallis could see that I was a little afraid. She told me not to worry. She told me that the numbers wanted me not to worry. That was strange because usually the numbers tell me themselves. But I believe Dr Wallis. She is my friend.

Dr Wallis pressed some keys on her computer. I felt a tingle in my head. Like when I am in the big white room with the big computer. But it was only a little tingle. I didn't cry out or struggle. Dr Wallis didn't need the tape and the bracelets after all. But I expect she was only being careful. She took them off and left me then. I fell asleep. I dreamt the same dreams that I dream when I have been in the big white room. I wonder if I will see some new numbers now.

It is some time later. It is dark I have been sleeping. I suddenly see a very bright number 1. I get up and go to find Dr Wallis. I am still naked, the numbers did not tell me to dress. Dr Wallis is with Dr Stuart. They are arguing. He is shouting, waving some papers at her. He says she has betrayed him. She asks him where he thought the funding was coming from. He says she is trying to cheat him. He says her friends are trying to steal his ideas. Dr Wallis lunges at the box. She presses a button. I see 90 glowing bright in gold. It looks so pretty but I don't like what it tells me. I must shoot Dr Waring. Can that be right?

The numbers have always been right before but I have never seen this one. It does glow brightly though, so it must be right. There is a gun on the table. I pick it up. As I pull the trigger Dr Stuart pulls Dr Wallis between us. The first bullet hits her in the throat. There is a lot of blood. I didn't mean to do that. I hope the numbers do not punish me. Dr Stuart pushes Dr Wallis away. She falls to the floor. I have not done what I was told to do. Dr Stuart tries to run. I pull the trigger again and again. The noise is terrible. The bullets hit Dr Stuart as he reaches the door. He collapses to the floor. He doesn't move. Neither does Dr Wallis.

I have done what the numbers told me but now what must I do? There are no numbers, nothing. I see the box has fallen from Dr Wallis' hand. It lies in pieces on the floor. There are no numbers. There is nothing for me to do. I just stand and wait. Nobody comes. I guess the numbers did not ask the others to come too.

Chapter 14: In The White Room

I am in a white room. It is like the one in my dreams, in my nightmares. There are no wizards in white here, just people; people in white. I think they know about the numbers but I don't see numbers any more. I think they know about the box – I have seen some of them with the box. But no one seems to want to use it any more. Perhaps they are frightened of what happened to Dr Wallis and Dr Stuart? Or perhaps the box is broken? Or perhaps the numbers will not come for them even if they have the box?

I was in the room with Dr Wallis and Dr Stuart for a long time. I saw no numbers to tell me to go. I watched them bleed and then they stopped bleeding and then the blood turned brown. I was still holding the gun when the policemen came. I didn't know to put it down. I think the policemen were quite frightened because they shouted so. They took the gun away from me. Then they took me away. And Crystal and Alice and Anna and Suzanne.

We each have a white room here. It's not as comfortable as our rooms at the house but it doesn't matter. I just hope that I can get to see the numbers again.

There is another doctor here, Doctor James. He tells me that I have nothing to worry about. I don't believe him. How can I be happy without the numbers? He has given me a special jacket with arms that lace behind my back. The jacket is very stiff. With buckles and straps. They remind me of the straps that Dr Stuart used. Why do I remember that?

Dr James says he is worried that I might hurt myself because I cannot see the numbers. That is why I have the jacket. And Crystal and Alice and Anna and Suzanne.

He tells me it wasn't my fault. About Dr Stuart and Dr Wallis. I know that of course. I only did what the numbers asked me.

He says he will help me to sleep. A nurse gives me an injection. It does help me to sleep. Doesn't he know he need only have asked the numbers to be an 8.

Chapter 15: Number 9 Dream

I can see the numbers again. Terrible things have happened but I can see the numbers again.

I was asleep. Well, not asleep like when I see an 8, but resting, resting after an injection. There were loud noises, like the sounds of the gun when I saw the number 90, the big gold 90. Men came into my room. They were wearing masks. They were carrying guns.

They put me on a trolley and wheeled me from my room. There was smoke in the corridor. There was blood in the corridor. I saw Dr James; he was lying in the corridor; he wasn't moving. I saw the nurse; she was lying in the corridor; she wasn't moving either. The doors at the end of the corridor were broken. The masked men pushed me through the doors to an ambulance. The driver was lying on the ground. There was a lot of blood. He wasn't moving. Crystal and Alice and Anna and Suzanne were there as well. They seemed safe but they were scared, just as I was. I saw Dr Stuart's computers and Dr Wallis' files. And the box.

The ambulance took us a long way. We went again in a plane but not a big plane. We are in a new house but it is not near mountains. The countryside is very dry and hot. But I do not mind because I see the numbers again. I see the numbers and I am happy.

I think that Anna and Crystal and Alice and Suzanne can see the numbers because they look happy too.

I have a new friend. He tells me he is Mr English. He knows how to make the numbers come and so he must be my friend. He has friends to help him. They are Mr French, Mr Dutch and Miss Scott. Mr English has made copies of the box so that all his friends can help us with the numbers.

Mr English says I must not worry about Dr Waring and Dr Wallis. He says Dr Wallis was helping Dr Waring so she could bring us here. Why would I worry about Dr Stuart and Dr Wallis? I did what the numbers told me, it must have been right.

We do not have to wear our jackets any more. I think that Mr English knows that we are happy now and will not hurt ourselves. We do not have any clothes but it is warm here so I do not mind. Mr English seems to like watching my body just as Dr Waring did. I do not mind, I have the numbers again and I am happy, I have not been Mr English's doll yet, I wonder if I shall be.

I was with Mr English today when something interesting happened. Mr Dutch and Miss Scott came into the room. They brought a woman with them. She didn't seem to want to be there. Her arms were strapped and she had a cloth in her mouth, She struggled when Mr Dutch sat her in a chair. Her clothes were torn. Mr Dutch seemed to like that.

Mr English said that she would help them with some programming. The woman shook her head. Mr English asked her if she would like to be like me. She shook her head again. She cannot know how good it feels to see the numbers. Mr English suggested that she think again, he asks if she would like to spend some more time with Mr Dutch. She shook her head again. It seems so hard for Mr English to get her to do what he wants. What a pity Mr English does not have a box for the woman, what a pity she does not have a connector.

Later on I was lying on my bed and she came to me with Mr Dutch. She has an identity badge clipped to the pocket of her torn blouse. It says "Heather Blanik, Research Assistant, Department of Computer Science, University of Colorado at Boulder". It has some numbers and a bar code on it. It has a photograph of her. It must have been taken before she came here. It doesn't show her black eye or the bruise on her cheek. It doesn't show her torn blouse or the burn marks on her right breast. She looks happier in the photograph. Do you suppose she could see the numbers then? Mr Dutch tells her that she will help me with my numbers. She nods but she doesn't look happy. I am sure she would be happy if she knew how good it is to see the numbers.

Heather is very kind to us. She works so hard to help us with our numbers. Mr Dutch gives her a lot of encouragement. He watches her all the time when she is working with us. She helps me and she

helps Anna and Crystal and Alice and Suzanne. Mr Dutch has found her some other clothes to wear. She doesn't have her torn blouse and skirt any more. She wears some metal bracelets too, they are joined by a short chain. They look to me as though they make it harder for her to do her work but Mr Dutch likes her to wear the bracelets.

I saw Heather later this morning. She was with Mr English when the numbers asked me to fetch him a drink. She was kneeling down in front of him. Her blouse is torn again. And her skirt. She has red marks on her legs, as if she has been struck with a cane or a stick. The chain between her bracelets runs behind her back now, she cannot really use her hands. She has her mouth around Mr English's... Mr English's what? She has her mouth around the thing that Dr Stuart used to push into me when I was Dr Stuart's doll. Mr English seems to enjoy having her mouth there. Mr English is smiling and holding her head against him. She doesn't seem to be enjoying it, I can hear her moaning. Mr English is talking to Heather. "Now do you get the idea?" he says. "Do you think you can get your little computer to tell these robo-chicks to do this? Hmm?"

Heather seems to think she can. I think she says yes but it is hard to tell. She seems to choke as Mr English thrusts against her mouth. He fills her mouth until she is choking. He seems to be enjoying it but I do not think Heather is. I wonder what a robo-chick is?

Mr English pushes her away. She is sobbing now. He takes his drink and picks up the box. I see a yellow 2, a nice bright yellow 2. I go back to my room, happy to have seen the number.

Chapter 16: We Can Remember It For You Wholesale

I see a 1, a bright, green one. I must find the controller. Miss Scott has the box. She straps me to a chair. I wonder why. I see Heather come into the room with her small computer. I think that she will give me some more numbers.

Heather has been crying. There are more red marks on her legs. She is still wearing her bracelets. She plugs a lead from her computer into the socket at the back of my neck. It feels strange. I think that this has happened before. It's very like what happens in my dreams, but I am asleep when it happens in my dreams. I am not sure that she should be doing this while I am awake but I am sure that Miss Scott knows what Heather should be doing.

Heather presses some keys on her computer. Suddenly my head is filled with numbers, whirling, spinning, terrifying numbers, bright and shining, one after another. I shake my head. I cry out. Miss Scott tries to hold me down. I am struggling in the chair as I feel my head filling with numbers. So many, all at once, so bright. They scare me there are so many. How can I hope to do all that they wish?

And then it stops. As soon as it started. I am calm again. There is no rush. My head no longer feels filled.

Heather says to Miss Scott, "There, I said she should have been sedated."

Miss Scott swings her hand around and slaps Heather's face. Heather cries out in pain and puts her hands up to defend herself but there are no more blows. "Don't get cute with me, cunt," Miss Scott says. "You just do as you're told or Mr Dutch will be back to pay you another visit."

Miss Scott is always kind to me. She unfastens my straps and reaches for the box. I see a 2. I leave to go back to my room and as I do I see Anna and Crystal and Alice and Suzanne in the corridor. I see an 8 and I sleep. I don't dream. Perhaps it is all to the good.

It is evening when I wake again. I see a 1 and go to find the controller. Miss Scott is waiting for me. I see 18, she asks me for a drink. I fetch it for her. As I am pouring the wine Mr Dutch brings Heather in again. I think that Heather must have upset Mr Dutch again. She has been tied up. The ropes look very tight. They criss-cross her chest and pull her arms back behind her. She has a cloth in her mouth again. This time it is stuffed deep into her mouth. There is a rope tied around her head to keep the cloth in place. The rope looks tight, I think it must be painful for her. She is squealing and struggling. Mr Dutch does not look concerned.

Miss Scott reaches for the box. I see a 60. I don't think I have seen that before but I know what I have to do. I kneel before Miss Scott and lift her skirt. I see she is not wearing panties. That is good because I know I have to kiss her, know I have to lick and tongue her. The 60 is very bright and I am happy to do what it tells me. Miss Scott is happy for me to do it too. Mr Dutch seems happy too. He is laughing. Heather is screaming into her cloth. I see a 10 and stop.

Miss Scott speaks to Heather. "See," she says. "Your programming skills are perfect."

I see a 51. I haven't seen that for a long time. I remember that it means I have to take Heather to her cell. Mr Dutch gives me the rope that is tied around her neck. "You'd better follow her," he says to Heather. It seems unfair to put Heather back into her cell. After all Heather has been so kind to me. It's unfair not to take off her ropes, unfair not to remove the cloth. But the numbers didn't ask me to do any of those things. They just said put her back in her cell. I guess they know what's best.

Chapter 17: Rewind & Reload

Something strange happened today. I saw a number and I didn't know what to do. I was with Mr English. He had his box. I saw the number 16. It wasn't as bright as the numbers usually are but I could still see it. It was grey. Usually the numbers are bright colours the same colour for the each number. But this was grey. I am sure that 16 was not grey before.

Mr English seemed angry. Angry with the box. He pressed the buttons again and again. I saw 16; the grey 16. But I still didn't know what to do. Then he pressed another button. It was 2. As bright and as yellow as before. And I knew what to do. I went back to my room. Mr English looked puzzled as I left. He put the box down and picked up the telephone.

I have been lying on my bed. I have been thinking about number 16. It was a very odd feeling. And then another thought came into my head. I cannot say I remembered it because I do not know where it came from. All of a sudden I heard myself say, "It is possible that prolonged excitement of the cortex through induced synesthesia could result in deterioration of higher brain functions (Jacobs, pp 17-19) while others (Mayerling, Fedorova, Castle) have suggested that the effects of induced synesthesia will decay over time."

What an extraordinary thing. Perhaps it is something I heard Dr Anna say before she became happy with the numbers. Perhaps it is something I heard Dr Waring say before... Before what? I wonder what happened to Dr Waring? How strange that I remember some things and not others. How strange that I said something like that. I really feel as though it was something that I knew really well.

I can see a 1. A big, bright, grey, 1. I wonder what it means. I still feel happy when I see the grey numbers. It's as though the numbers have decided that I have done enough tasks now. I don't need to do things any more. The grey numbers still come to comfort me but I do not have to do things any more.

I am lying on my bed. I can see an 8. It is grey. All the numbers are grey now. I am sure that the numbers used to be coloured. Then I hear myself say, "Synesthesia as a phenomenon has been observed in a number of different forms where individuals hear colours, taste shapes, or experience other sensory confusions. It is estimated that 1 in 25,000 individuals is borne with some aspect of (Cytowic, 1989, 1993). In this paper it is suggested that some forms of synesthesia can be artificially stimulated in higher mammals through electrical excitation of the frontal lobe of the cortex." Where can that be from?

It is strange that I am seeing these things now. Strange that the numbers no longer tell me what to do. Perhaps the numbers want me to decide what to do? That would be stranger still. Imagine, not having to wait for the numbers, just knowing what to do, deciding what to do. Can that be what is happening to me?

I hear voices at the door of my room. "You know what is happening?" It is Mr French.

"I know she's not responding to the box." Miss Scott is there too.

"Hmm, well I think I can fix it. It sounds like function decay."

"Function decay?"

"Uh huh. It's always a good idea to read help files you know. I had a look on the lap-top that we picked up. You know the upload programme?"

"Yeah, sure. Heather was using it yesterday to give the Anna unit some more domestic tasks."

"Well on the menu bar is a drop down labelled 'Tools'. The answer is in there."

I hear their voices recede as they walk away down the corridor. I remember more about Anna. She and I worked together. This was before the numbers. We worked in a big school. No, a university. She worked with Dr Waring and I worked with Dr Waring. He had been really impressed with something I'd done. I remember he was really excited. I saw him discussing it with Anna. I remember them both coming to my room. They wanted to explain something to me. They showed me some plans. I remember being very upset by their plans but I don't remember what they were. I just know that this was before the numbers.

I see an 8 again. I wish I knew what it meant. I only know that I feel tired. I only know that I want to sleep.

Chapter 18: The Right Format

Natalie is lying on the couch, naked. Straps hold her to the couch and she is trying to struggle. A Whitehead Gag has ratcheted her mouth open. Miss Scott is wearing a white coat and a surgical mask. She forces a hypodermic needle into Natalie's arm and watches as her struggles slowly subside. She is still conscious but heavily sedated.

She hears Miss Scott say. "I think we are doing this just in time. We had to force her on to the trolley. It wasn't easy. This had better work or we're really in trouble."

Miss Scott fastens the cable from the computer to the connector at the back of Natalie's. She walks across to where Mr French is working with the computer.

"You see," he says, calmly, "it's always worth reading the manual." He points with the cursor at the menu bar. He clicks and the tools menu opens. There are three tabs, 'Numbers', 'Scripts' and 'Target'. Under 'Target' there are four buttons. One says 'List'; one says 'Defrag'; one says 'Recharge' and one says 'Format'. He clicks on the last button.

Natalie twitches on the couch. A message appears on the computer screen. "Target is already operating under Soft Cybernetics software. Are you sure you wish to re-format."

Mr French clicks on 'YES'.

Another message, "Caution : Reformat will cause loss of all scripts and numbers in the target. Upload of scripts and numbers will be required. Do you wish to proceed?"

Mr French looks at Miss Scott. "Here we go." He clicks the button, 'YES'.

Natalie's eyes swing wide open. In spite of the gag; in spite of the sedative; she is screaming. She tries to lift herself up on the couch but the straps hold her down. The strap across her forehead ensures she cannot lift her head. The connector stays in place as the counter works its way across the screen of the computer. 15% ... 25% ... 50% ... 75%

The computer screen says, "Format Complete – Soft Cybernetics Tools Version 1.0a ©S. Waring 2003". Natalie is still twitching against the straps but slowly her struggles and her strangled screaming subside. The sedative takes over. Miss Scott checks the straps. Natalie's wrists and ankles are quite bruised but the straps are secure.

"Now the first numbers and scripts," says Mr French. He presses more keys and initiates the upload. This time Natalie hardly reacts.

"Finally we have to re-charge," says Mr. French. "Look here." he says pointing to an x-ray photograph hanging on a light box on the wall of the room. The x-ray is of a human skull, Natalie's skull. The connector is clearly visible as an opaque block at the nape of the neck. In front of it another opaque block, the receiver. And from the receiver thin lines stretch out through the brain into the frontal lobe of the cortex, the wires that carry the signals. "This is the receiver and this is the emitter," says French. "They're right behind the connector but their batteries only gets recharged when the cable is connected. We haven't uploaded or modified numbers for a while so the batteries in the receiver and the emitter are low. See, here." He points to the screen of the computer.

Miss Scott is looking at the panel labelled 'Receiver Power Status'. It is flashing red. A message says 'Low Power – Warning – Signal Reception or Command Interpretation May Be Impaired.' Mr French clicks on a button. The message changes to "Charging". Miss Scott checks the straps that hold Natalie to the couch. She removes the gag. Natalie is quiet now.

"We'd better run the others through this before they hit the same problem," Miss Scott says.

They leave Natalie, resting sedated, the cable still connected, the message still flashing "Charging" on the screen.

Chapter 19: Recycling

I see numbers in my head. And I know what they mean. Some people can hear colours. I see numbers. Suddenly. A seven. Or a four. And I know what they mean.

There aren't many numbers. Only zero to nineteen. But I see them. Bright; sudden; there in my mind; blotting out everything else.

I haven't always been able to do this. It is new for me. Not long ago I couldn't see the numbers but now I can. I don't remember many things from before I came here but I do know I couldn't see the numbers.

I can see a one. It's green. It's very bright. I know I have to find him. He is somewhere in the house and I have to find him. Where ever he is I have to go there. That's what it means when I see the one.

I find him on the patio. Mr English is with Miss Scott and four other women. Three of them are wearing black shiny jumpsuits. They are wearing ski-masks that cover their faces; all except for their eyes - their blank, passionless eyes. The fourth woman is wearing white. Perhaps she is another doctor come to help us with our numbers. She doesn't say anything. Tape covers her mouth. Ropes hold her wrists and arms. She is struggling but one of the masked women holds her tightly. Miss Scott is holding a box. She presses a button and the three take off their masks. It is Crystal and Alice and Suzanne.

Mr English asks Miss Scott, "How did it go?"

"Very neat," she answers. "Blanik did a good job on the scripts. It's quite scary to watch these three going through their paces in unison but it definitely works. They did the whole snatch pretty much solo. They jumped the doctor here, left two nurses trussed up and got the doc back to the van in ninety seconds. I didn't have to touch the box at all after I gave them the go code. I could have just sat in the van."

Mr English seems pleased. "So, no problems like the Waring event?"

"There will always be a risk," Miss Scott replies. "You cannot programme everything and they are only human after all. They didn't get any resistance, either. Everyone was terrified by them. Still, based on this trip, I reckon we won't have any problem equipping ourselves with new units. We just need the doctor to play her part."

The doctor doesn't look as though she is looking forward to this. Mr English picks up his box. I see 51. I am so happy to see the numbers, the bright, big numbers. She struggles to break free. Mr English grabs hold of her. He tells her that she had better cooperate. Her white coat and her blouse get torn. I think I see what must have happened to Heather's blouse, now. Mr English seems to like the fact that the Doctor's blouse is torn. He tells her that he has lots of friends who will want to take turns with her. She tries to struggle some more. The others look on.

I have to take the doctor to her cell. She does not want to come but I have to make her. If I did not I wouldn't be doing what the numbers tell me and then I couldn't be happy. Surely the doctor would want me to be happy?

It is a little later. I can see a one. It's green. It's very bright. I know I have to find him. It makes me so happy when I see the numbers, so happy that they are so bright.

I find him in his study. He is with another man I have not seen before. He smiles as I arrive and turns to the man. "Well what do you think?"

The man says, "You've solved the problem that you thought you had then?"

Mr English shrugs his shoulders. "It wasn't too hard. Fortunately Waring did a good job on documentation. We sorted it out and we picked up a useful little programmer from the Boulder campus. She's able to programme scripts but she needs a lot of encouragement. I've got some other resources I can call on to replace her."

"And further units?" the man asks.

"Not quite so easy but we'll have it cracked soon. The neurosurgery skills are not easy to come by although the procedure itself is apparently straight forward. Waring didn't have very complex facilities in back in the UK or in Colorado and we can replicate those. We've managed to find a competent surgeon and she has joined us now. It's just down to how quickly we can get her working."

He is holding the control box. He presses keys I see "18" pure and silver. I have to fetch something. "Bring us two glasses of wine" he says and I know what I have to do. It is so good to do what the numbers ask of me. I am so happy when I see the numbers, so happy when I do what they say.

I pass them their wine. Mr English passes the box across to the other man. "Here, you've paid for this," he says. "You might as well start now." He presses a button. I see a zero, a pale, beige zero. I must smile and recite. "About: Soft Cybernetics Software Version 1.63 : Scripts Version 2.5 : Variant - Utility Unit".

The man turns to Mr English. "Utility unit?" he says. "I thought this was a pleasure unit."

"That's OK we can easily update the scripts."

"Ha!" He responds. "That's always the way these days. I might have known that with a pirate like you, I'd need a patch!"

The two men are laughing. I wonder why? They seem happy. Perhaps they can see the numbers too.

+++++ THE END +++++

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