

Deep Mind
By
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The CANDO (Controlling Abnormal Network Dynamics using Optogenetics) project is a world-class, multi-site, cross-disciplinary project to develop a cortical implant for optogenetic neural control in people with focal epilepsy.

The implant will modulate abnormal activity and prevent the development of epileptic seizures, providing precisely timed stimulation by continuously monitoring brain waves via implanted electrodes and modifying them via implanted light sources. This requires that some cells within the brain are genetically altered using a safe virus to make them sensitive to light. The goal is to create a first-in-human trial in patients with focal epilepsy.

Operating Theatre has been making work about health and well being for 15 years, working with medical schools, health care providers, charities, researchers and industry to deliver heartfelt drama that aims to change how people think about health.

Their aim in the project is to respond, as theatre practitioners, to the challenges and opportunities that the CANDO project presents.

Deep Mind is their second response to the project following Making for the Light.

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DEEP MIND

Scene 1

We are in a pristine office. Clean lines, no papers lying about, a table, two stools.

MATT is running through the presentation in his head literally tapping on the table to bring up the slides on his lens display

A background video is playing throughout the piece.

BELLA

Matt are you there?

MATT

Yes.

BELLA

I'm a bit early. Am I okay to come in?

MATT

Of course. I'm running through them now as it happens. We could start with the newest ones or do you want to have a look at the whole thing.

BELLA

I think it's probably best if we start from the top.

MATT

Great. I'll reset and we can have a look. Oh right you're in. That was quick.

BELLA

I've got full access now. And I've accelerated some of the parsing. We agreed it would be easier for the launch. (PAUSE) And they've applied the new skin I see.

They are using their own lens displays but BELLA is the one scrolling through with her finger on the table.

MATT

Yeah. It looks good doesn't it. What is that, teal?

BELLA

Stone and Shadow apparently.

MATT

Nice.

BELLA

I've put all the compliance links in there as well. We could bring up a couple see how they look?

MATT

As long as they're public by the launch date we're covered. I think they have all been standardised now.

BELLA

I've had the legal team look at everything, particularly after the Lansing ruling, so I'm quietly confident we are back on schedule. It was a good job we've been thorough, we had inadvertently included some of the Kettering trial data, which, as you know, wouldn't be usable now.

MATT

Not even as an example?

BELLA

No. It's too contentious. Cameron was furious about it.

MATT

If there are any doubts about anything at all then let's get it out. You mentioned Lansing. Is that official then?

BELLA

Well, they've just appointed a new Minister so I guess it must be.

MATT

God that was quick. Any idea who?

BELLA

You won't be happy when I tell you.

MATT

Don't do this to me, just tell me.

BELLA

He once described you as a 'jumped up lab technician with a god complex' I believe.

MATT

Cundall, really? He must be so full of himself right now.

BELLA

I thought you might want to have a little listen to the statement he made. I was going to save it till we were done as a little treat, but you might as well hear it now.

MATT

Do I have to? Even the sound of his voice makes my skin crawl. Have you ever seen him try to drink water from a bottle?

Imitates the minister of Gove

BELLA

I'll get to the interesting bit.

BELLA uses her finger on the table to bring up an AUDIO TRACK. They listen to it intently

MINISTER (voiceover)

I am of course delighted to have been appointed Minister for Advanced Science and Technologies and whilst I will be publishing detailed guidelines in the light of the recent ruling on Lansing very soon, I would like to take this opportunity to assure the people of this country that I will do everything to safeguard the Republic and its citizens.

The time for irresponsible dabbling is over. If there is any danger of harm then we will act swiftly to have the particular Neural Interface, or any similar devices, deactivated immediately and those responsible will face the full force and extent of the laws agreed upon by the International Congress on Human Enhancement. There will be no more Lansings on my watch. And just a brief word on SPARTA who leaked all of the data in such an irresponsible manner. SPARTA is a dangerous, reckless and frankly criminal organisation. I will continue to preserve the data integrity of the Republic as Minister for Advanced Sciences and Technologies.

MATT

What a pompous ass. No mention of his predecessor I see

BELLA

Wise on his part...

MATT

He's clearly going to be looking for someone to haul over the coals at the first opportunity.

BELLA

Well he can try all he likes but Apogee is the safest NI around, we've proven that. All the modelling indicates near zero impact, and the in-human trials have confirmed that, so frankly he can do one.

MATT

I just wish we could be absolutely certain.

BELLA

How many launches have we done, since the Tech Park days?

MATT

I know, I know.

BELLA

You do this every time. We've all worked really hard and the data is rock solid, this is the one. This is our 'Apple' moment. You should be ecstatic.

MATT

We'll see. Let's carry on and then maybe I'll feel a bit calmer.

They go back to the presentation BELLA is scrolling through.

BELLA

Right, so all of that section is as was, except we've made the implant more visible, oh and I've added a couple of the newest imaging sequences.

MATT

They look fantastic, nicely done. Was that Robin and Dan?

BELLA

Yes. They were up all night. You know what they're like.

MATT

And there's an image of Paul I see. Was that your idea?

BELLA

I thought it would be a nice tribute, considering he worked on it for so long. Helen deserves that, and the kids.

MATT

He would have hated the idea. But he's not around to object so - yeah. It fits, his 'unified theory of everything idea.'

BELLA

'Well, not quite everything' as he was always keen to point out.

MATT

Exactly.

BELLA

Sorry, I'm getting an alert from the Data Team. Do you mind if I check it out?

MATT

Sure.

BELLA

Shall we pick this up later today?

MATT

Of course. It's clearly not just me that's getting a bit jittery.

BELLA leaves to speak to the Lab Team.

MATT closes down the presentation and pulls up a number by scrolling with his thumb and index finger, tapping them together to make the call

John, hi, it's Matt- don't worry it's a secure line. I presume you know why I'm calling. (PAUSE) Yes, I just heard his statement. (PAUSE) Well it's not quite sabre-rattling but he is going to want to be seen to be doing something. (PAUSE) That all makes sense, but is it going to affect our launch in any way? I know he has to come on strong but I have always been very clear, there can't be any reconfiguring at this stage. (PAUSE) Do you have any idea how expensive a full data audit would be? (PAUSE) I'm not annoyed, I'm just making sure I'm not walking into an elaborate trap. You know what a vindictive little shit he is. Okay, okay. I'm sorry. (PAUSE) No, that was it, anything at your end? OK. I'll keep in touch. By the way how many people are we expecting for the Launch dinner? Fine, but let me know soon though. Don't worry we are going for it this time. The food's going to be fantastic. OK. See you soon.

MATT leaves.

SCENE 2

MATT and BELLA are meeting to discuss their respective speeches for the launch event in ten days time. BELLA enters with a large box. She places it on the table right in front of MATT

MATT

What the hell have you got in there? I thought we weren't allowed to store paper copies anymore? How did you get them past Hazchem?

BELLA

I have my ways. Next week is going to be fraught so last night I thought I would have a go at finishing up my speech; and as is often the case I ended up doing a whole lot of sorting instead.

MATT

Accompanied by a little late night drinking perhaps?

BELLA

On this occasion, no. I was tempted though, as a tribute to the Tech Park days. There's stuff in here I had completely forgotten about. The first sequencing trials, all the closed loop work. Stuff that actually was way ahead of the competition, even if we didn't know it then.

MATT

Have we really got time for this?

BELLA

Bear with me, there's method in my madness.

BELLA begins to place several folders on the table.

When we started PNN what did we say we would never do?

MATT

We said that we would 'do no harm' - hence Primum Non Nocere-

BELLA

I don't mean that.

MATT

What do you mean then?

BELLA

We always said we wouldn't let anything get in the way of the science. We wouldn't be governed by the market. We wouldn't become another Lansing.

MATT

And what happened? Lansing, made a hell of a lot of money through research that we had instigated and stupidly allowed to be used without proper assurances.

BELLA

We were naive, and skint for a long time as a result, and we should have got advice a lot sooner than we did, but we stuck to that maxim, in spite of everything, and it's finally paid off. With Apogee. I think we can afford to give them a sense of the journey in the presentation.

MATT

I've no need to revisit the bad old days if that's what you mean.

BELLA

I just think it's time to put it into context. To make it clear that Apogee is as big as it is and as radical as it is because we stuck to our guns.

MATT

Most of the people there will want something pithy and easy to digest that they can disseminate to their readers. A neat little idea.

BELLA

The all seeing, eventually all-knowing diagnostic tool. What could be pithier? You've always handled the PR and commercial side and let me get on with the crunching for which I am eternally grateful. This is when it all comes together. Finally.

You are not looking forward to this at all are you? It's normally me that doesn't want to engage with that lot out there but you're really not feeling it are you?

MATT

I'm sorry. I'm tired. I've had a lot to sort out this morning. You're right of course. If there was ever a time to blow our own trumpet it's now. Did you manage to write anything at all?

BELLA

Funny you should ask.

She produces a hand written speech

MATT

Wow. You wrote all of that by hand? You really mustn't have been able to sleep.

BELLA

I actually enjoyed it. I couldn't get my hand to work at first but by the end I was right back.

MATT

Right, let's hear it.

BELLA

Wouldn't you rather just read it?

BELLA hands it to MATT who takes a quick look at the written speech

MATT

You were always a scrawler. You read it.

BELLA

Fine. Just let me get my head round it first.

PAUSE while BELLA reads the first couple of lines to herself

OK. Here goes. 'When we started PNN we had no idea we would be where we are today. We had no idea that the many discussions we had about the possibilities would lead us to a point where we can begin to talk about the reality. The reality of an integrated, full body and brain/mind diagnostic tool that will revolutionise how we treat all manner of conditions.

Apogee is now ready for extensive clinical trials and we have every confidence that with the support of a fantastic team of neuro scientists, engineers and quantum analysts, some of whom have been part of Apogee's development since its inception, we are on the verge of truly dynamic therapies that Apogee will identify, implement and evaluate with no ill effect on the patient. Apogee will revolutionise the way we treat patients and transform the way we train health practitioners'. (PAUSE)

I'm not sure about the body brain, body mind thing. What do you think?

MATT

Well, it will detect mood, we already know that from our own data, and it will monitor constantly and teach itself, from inside the patient's brain, so I think you can confidently say body and mind.

BELLA picks up where she left off

BELLA

Apogee will revolutionise the way we treat patients and transform the way we train health practitioners. When we started out there were three of us in a tiny lab on an industrial estate with practically no funding and whilst we were determined to harness the emerging technologies that had created some of the first neural interfaces, we knew that it would take years to refine. We shared a house, which meant that we rarely talked about anything other than 'the work' and slowly the ideas that have brought us to Apogee began to emerge.

MATT

Do they really need to know that we shared a house?

BELLA

I forgot to tell you. It's gone now. Helen went down there after Paul's funeral, she wanted to show the kids where they'd met, but it had gone. Some fancy modular build.

MATT

I see... Sorry, I interrupted. 'and slowly the ideas began to emerge, was that it?'

BELLA

'And slowly the ideas that have brought us to Apogee began to emerge.

And whilst our colleague and collaborator, Dr. Paul Summers, was not able to see the final version of Apogee, I know he would be delighted to know that all of the hard work and cold takeaway was worth it. I would like to thank Helen and Reg and Michael for being here to celebrate this truly significant moment with us.'

MATT

So they are coming. I thought you said they weren't.

BELLA

The boys wanted to be here for the launch.

MATT

You don't think people will assume it's some PR thing?

BELLA

God no.

MATT

It's good. Honestly. I'd better crack on and get mine done. I just need to check all of the acknowledgements, I don't want to miss anyone out.

BELLA starts gathering the folders

MATT

I might just have a little rummage. For old time's sake. To be honest my brain is fried, I can't really concentrate on much else right now.

BELLA

I had a feeling you might be tempted. Help yourself. I'll pick them up in the morning.

MATT

Just before you go. Would you mind putting up a gate for me on the Apogee folder tomorrow morning, say ten o'clock? I want to adjust a couple of details in the acknowledgements and I'd rather not have to field questions from the Data Team so close to the launch. It won't take me long.

BELLA

It's not what we agreed with Cameron and the Board.

MATT

I know, I'm just running out of time and I don't want to have to jump through all those bloody hoops.

BELLA

We insisted on the hoops, the hoops are there to ensure we don't get any unwelcome visitors/

MATT

I know. It's expediency, that's all. You can put everything back in place. Say midday tomorrow?

BELLA

It's too long. It will look... dodgy

MATT

It won't look dodgy, it won't even register

BELLA

Everything registers, every bloody thing registers. You of all people should know that.

MATT

OK. Forget it then. If it's so damned inconvenient. I just don't want Cameron pointing out something that I should have noticed.

BELLA

That's why we pay him as much as we do. The all seeing eye. God you are knackered aren't you. I think we'll all be relieved when it's over.

PAUSE while BELLA discreetly reprogrammes

It's done.

MATT

What?

BELLA

I've done it. You've got an hour- ten till eleven. And then you need to send me the log, securely. I'll make sure it isn't a problem.

MATT

Thank you

BELLA

Eleven. Sharp. We need a full week of data stasis or we won't get it past the MAST compliance unit.

Bella leaves. Matt waits and then reaches for a folder. As he does he clicks a finger and music appears. He settles down to read.

Scene 3

Launch Day

Minutes after the launch has concluded. By the end of the scene the room is bathed in red light.

BELLA

Thank god for the backup.

MATT

You won't hear me say this again, but thank god for Cameron. What was the issue?

BELLA

It's all that post Lansing stuff- most of it was so quickly put together by the MAST team it hadn't been tested properly.

MATT

So Cameron had a version without any of that stuff embedded?

BELLA

No, it was embedded. It's just that he compressed the bollocks out of it so as to render it practically useless, but legally compliant.

MATT

Nice one Cameron. I'll thank him tomorrow personally.

BELLA

He will appreciate that I'm sure. Although the smug look on his face makes me think you may have to work for it.

MATT

I don't care. We got through it and I wasn't imagining it, was I?

BELLA

No, it was a clearly audible gasp. I think once people realised what Apogee could do, I mean really do, and that we had the results to prove it beyond any doubt then it was...

MATT

Our 'Apple Moment'.

BELLA

Exactly.

MATT

So now what?

BELLA

We wait for the reviews. There's no-one out there that has anything at anywhere near this stage of development.

MATT

So am I now officially, finally and definitively allowed to lose my shit?

BELLA nods. MATT goes for it. Months of tension released.

BELLA

Better? Right, let's review the next phase.

MATT

You're joking, aren't you? I can't tell. You are joking?

BELLA

There will be a response. That's one of the reasons we got Cameron in for the last phase.

MATT

True.

BELLA

So we stay proactive and we publish the In-Human Trial data in full.

MATT

With enough redacted so as to render it/

BELLA

We don't need to alter it in any way

MATT

But we agreed, it might affect negotiations if we were too open with everything.

BELLA

People are going to want to rattle the cage a bit. If it were one of our rivals then so would we.

MATT

We're not an academic institution. We have to make it pay. And we have a lot of ground to make up. If we are too transparent...

BELLA

We will make it pay. We definitely will. But let's do the thing properly. I've made sure we're not exposed. It's all I've been thinking about for the last month.

MATT

Look. I generally trust your instincts on this but this is more important than ever. I mean this could mean we never have to go cap in hand to a funder. Ever again. This is like Shitsy Spitsy.

BELLA

What?

MATT

Shitsy Spitsy. Grimm Tales. The donkey that shits gold bars. You never heard of that? Shitsy Spitsy. I thought everyone had heard of that.

BELLA

The Golden Goose yeah, but Shitsy Spitsy the donkey, no.

MATT

The donkey isn't called Shitsy Spitsy. It's what the man says, the new owner of the donkey. It's a phrase like 'abracadabra'. It's what prompts the donkey to produce the gold bars. Out of his...

BELLA

I get it. Enough. I get it. Shitsy Spitsy.

MATT

We should be discreet. That's what I'm trying to say. People will be queuing up to get on board. If we sell it too hard then people will think it's brittle somehow.

BELLA

So you agree it was worth keeping everything locked down till now?

MATT

Absolutely. We can now take our time and ensure that it is developed in the right way and for the right market.

BELLA

For the right purpose you mean?

MATT

Yes of course. Purpose. For the right purpose.

BELLA

Good. So we're in agreement? It has to be the right purpose? You didn't mean market. When you said market. You didn't mean, market. You meant...

MATT

Purpose. Yes, purpose. Bloody Hell.

BELLA

Right. So there is no ambiguity. There is no grey area. There is nothing that I should be concerned about. Nothing untoward has been going on?

MATT

I'm not exactly certain what you're on about but if that's what you... Hang on a minute. Just hold on. Is this because I asked you to put a gate up?

BELLA

This is so much more than the bloody gate Matt.

MATT

We're supposed to be making some big decisions about the future of PNN and you're giving me grief because I misspoke? Purpose. I meant bloody purpose. The gate was for the acknowledgements. That was it. You logged it.

BELLA

Are you getting this Cameron?

PAUSE

Very funny. The picture of the donkey is not necessary. Nice touch though. Oh that's a 'go' by the way.

MATT

What are you doing B?

BELLA

Don't call me B.

MATT

It's not what you think. Seriously, let's talk about this. It really isn't what you think.

BELLA

You don't want to know what I think. You really don't want to know what I think.

MATT

Just tell me what is going on. Because I can assure you there is nothing to get so bloody agitated about.

BELLA

If Paul were here he'd have you half way down the corridor by now. But then I wouldn't get to see your expression when it all blows up in your stupid fucking face. A face I have had to look at for the last week knowing what I know.

MATT

B... For God's sake.

BELLA

Have I said anything out of turn? Well, have I?

MATT

All right. Let's start again. Full disclosure. From you as well. Let's sort this out once and for all.

BELLA

It's sorted. I've sorted it. Me and SPARTA.

MATT

SPARTA are you insane? Bella Listen to me. There is still time to stop this. Let's talk about it. You have to understand. I was acting in our best interests. SPARTA will wreak havoc. We will be totally discredited.

BELLA

We are done Matt. Don't you understand? The moment you agreed to let the crunchers from Black Creek in to have a look around, to undermine the architecture, you destroyed Apogee. And if you say the words 'aggressive bid' or 'strategic partner' then I might just have to punch you in the throat.

MATT

If we agree to go with Black Creek then we can get back to what we do well. We can dedicate the PNN team to pure research. That's how much we're talking about here. We won't have to pitch to another client, ever.

BELLA

There'll be nothing to sell.

MATT

What?

BELLA

Apogee. It will be an empty shell. Or a snakeskin.

MATT

A snakeskin?

BELLA

Yes. When the snake sheds its skin and leaves a dry husk, that looks like a snake but isn't in fact a snake. It's just a dry useless piece of scaly skin. It's not even a snake, crawling on its belly. Like you.

MATT

Don't Bella I'm begging you. This will ruin us. We won't be able to come back from this.

BELLA

We aren't coming back from anything. You and I are done. Do you understand? If you contact me, or Paul's family or anyone, anyone who is currently in the building. I will know. We're done.

MATT

I did what I thought was right. For PNN.

BELLA

John, Black Creek John. He's a criminal. He's a sodding carpetbagger. He is going to take Apogee and sell it to whoever he wants, for them to do whatever they want.

MATT

I was given every assurance that it would be strictly non-military. No intelligence gathering. It would never be used for enhancement.

BELLA

Apogee would have transformed lives. You know that. A chance to diagnose with pinpoint accuracy, a 'full life therapy tool'. Maybe even the beginning of the end for Big Pharma. That's why people responded the way they did just now. Because they could see the possibilities...

MATT

Do you actually believe, did you ever believe this bunch of fools was going to roll Apogee out to every hospital?

BELLA

Why not? Eventually with our help, with a lot of help, yes.

MATT

Oh come on. They have been in government for all of our time at PNN and we have seen nothing from them to indicate they have the nouse to implement something like Apogee properly, or even realise what they are getting. The IT will fail. They will be swamped with data they won't be able to process. Six months of trials and they'd abandon all hope.

BELLA

You don't know that. We had to at least try.

MATT

Red Star, Locust, IT frameworks dismantled right in front of their eyes, contracts to unqualified speculators, imaginary hospitals, paying that idiot Brandon millions not to take up contracts.

BELLA

Branson. His name was Branson.

MATT

I don't care what his name was. I care about us, I care about Apogee, I care about all the people that could benefit.

BELLA

Who? The rich? Your shadowy Hedge Fund Manager at Black Creek and his pals?

MATT

It's not a hedge fund. They want to get it out into the world. That's what they want. They know it will die a death in the public sector.

BELLA

We said. No leaks. No compromising the system. Nothing gets shared with anyone until we can share it with everyone.

MATT

You said that. Not me. Half of the commissioners don't understand what a neural interface really can do. I couldn't let it die a death.

BELLA

Paul told me. He'd been clicking away at the morphine drip. I think he probably didn't even realise he was telling me.

MATT

Paul told you what?

BELLA

That you persuaded him to try Apogee. When it was hot. Before we sorted it. When it wasn't safe to trial properly. When you knew he would be risking his life.

MATT

That's not true. Absolutely not. I told him that it was too risky and that it was way too soon.

BELLA

So how did he manage to have it implanted without my knowledge... and who handled the data because I have been trawling our banks for days now and nothing has come up. You must have had help.

MATT

Paul told me to ditch it all. To have it buried. He knew you would be furious. And he knew Helen would never forgive him, so I got someone to excise everything and fill the hole with white noise.

BELLA

One of your intelligence contacts no doubt.

Was some of that the Kettering Trial data by any chance? Is that how the Kettering data got in there? Because no one in my team would do something so monumentally stupid.

MATT

It's not what killed him. The implant I mean.

BELLA

You can't say that. You can't honestly say that with any certainty.

MATT

The NI picked up the developing clot. Well one of them at least. It just didn't relay the data correctly. The point is it was already too late.

BELLA

That's not the point Matt. If Apogee is not in the public domain then it will be used by anyone who has the money for whatever purpose they choose. The Ministry can't do a thing once it has been procured. I don't know why I ever thought Cundall and the rest of them would try and protect Apogee in the first place. They're all shareholders. Most of our board as you well know have got money in Black Creek. They know the government don't really care who gets Apogee. At least if we had been able to get it out there, uncompromised, Apogee might have/

MATT

If you are going to burn the house down then just get on with it. I can't listen to any more of this crap. You always were a brilliant scientist but with no idea about the real world. Nobody was going to let Apogee do what it was designed to do. They need the poor to die sooner, they need the 'burden' to be lifted. They wasted all of that money on HS2 and Bridges over the Irish Sea and

Festivals of Fucking Britain and left the Homeless to die of exposure. They don't want Apogee or anything like it because all it does is remind them that they are immoral. We are not Finland. We were never going to be anything like Finland. That was never their intention. We were never going to cut that Gordian knot. Deep down you know that just as well as I do. So just do it. Go on, do it.

BELLA

Did you get that Cameron? I think that's a green light, don't you? We've certainly got enough to play back to the Board or MAST or whoever else we need to.

PAUSE

The Gordian Knot? It's a knot that Alexander the Great cut with his sword. Yeah, the guy who loved his horse. I know, I know. Cameron says you're a pretentious - I'm not going to use that word Cameron- you can tell him yourself.

PAUSE

You may have problems retrieving stuff. For a few days at least. SPARTA couldn't guarantee it wouldn't leach into some of our personal data banks. Sorry about that. I hope you've got plenty of tins in the cupboard.

MATT

What are they using? What did you let them use to get in?

BELLA

Does it matter?

MATT

Not really I suppose. That was never my area. That was all you.

BELLA

It's self-perpetuating and impregnable. Nobody is going to be able to retrieve anything. Ever. If Paul were here he would be laughing right in your face.

MATT

Do No Harm. Stupid bloody name, stupid bloody idea

BELLA

What?

MATT

Primum Non Nocere. I always thought it was a stupid name. Stupid, lofty and thoroughly unrealistic. Someone is always going to be harmed. It's unrealistic to think that

we can help everyone. And now we don't get to have any say at all in the matter. And you are responsible, not me. You.

MATT leaves

BELLA

Cameron, he's just left his office. All of his permissions have been revoked so make sure he leaves. SPARTA have given us a ten minute window once the data burn is completed. Is everyone on their way to the restaurant? No, no. Don't hold back, say whatever you want to him. I'm serious go for it, after everything he's said about you. When you're done meet me out front. I want to go and speak my mind in a full and frank manner to the Board. I don't think they're going to want to stay for dinner when I'm done with them, but I want to thank you and the team properly. Matt is paying for it all. He insisted. I'm getting a notification from SPARTA so I'd better get going. See you down there.

BELLA watches the background graphic for a moment, back to the audience. Just before she disappears she claps her hands. The lights go out.

END