

Joel S. Williams

# Regular Hero

A “Dark Wonderland” Story

By Joel S. Williams, aka Mr. Ogunberry

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Behold the Dark Wonderland, a place where humanity is thrust into contact with people, places and things of the supernatural variety. This tale is one of many accounts of men and women coming face to face with agents of the paranormal world. We hope you enjoy this story. And remember, it can happen to you, if you believe it.

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## Chapter One

Raymond made sure to survey the storage room once more before bringing his eyes back to his cellphone screen. The area was filled to the brim with objects from all sorts, whether home tools, workout equipment, furniture or even tinned groceries. The room had adequate objects for Raymond to hide behind.

Seated behind a shelf of pottery, the dark-skinned man affixed his eyes at the image of the man furiously pounding the woman with her legs spread open. Raymond made sure to turn down the volume on the porn video, so he could hear the creak of the door if it opened, for even though Raymond was hidden from the single camera above, he had to make sure he was on his toes in case another employee walked in.

As the film progressed and the excited man and woman switched positions on the bed, Raymond began stroking his bulging manhood. He winced as the increased blood flow made a painful throb. “Ahh...” he said. “That’s it...”

Beside Raymond sat his stout friend Barry, also admiring the ecstasy-molded expression on the woman’s face.

“That’s right, take it,” said Barry.

In the dim blue room, only the light of Raymond’s phone was predominant. But suddenly, the door leading into the storage space opened abruptly. The light washed over the various items, triggering Raymond and Barry into action.

Raymond turned down the face of the phone and dove towards a crate of tinned goods. Barry hobbled over to where a stack of gardening equipment stood and fiddled with them.

A short, blonde woman with puffy hair, bright eyes and a quick moving pace strode into the room. All three of the employees wore red vests along with a blue shirt, but varying pants.

The woman saw the frantic movements of the men and said, “What the hell are you two doing?”

“Nothing...” said Raymond.

“What does it look like?” said Barry, “We’re working here.”

The woman frowned. She looked around and said, “Yeah right. Like I don’t know you two were watching porn in here...”

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Raymond moved around the crates and said, “Oh, so you’re accusing us of sexual harassment now, Mary?”

Mary said, “Look, I don’t really care what you two are doing. Just don’t let the boss catch you. Anyways, I need some fertilizer out front. You have any inside here?”

Raymond spotted the items first, piled atop each other in one section. He went to a corner where the trolleys were parked and pulled out one of them. As he brought the trolley over to where the fertilizers were kept, Barry began eyeing Mary curiously.

Mary caught Barry’s glare and recoiled slightly. “What?” she said. “I got something on my face?”

Barry said, “When’s your birthday again? It’s next month, right?”

“Why’re you asking?” she said, folding her arms. “You wanna give me something?”

“I was thinking you could invite over some girls,” said Barry, “and Ray and I could come over and do a little striptease for you all.”

Raymond chuckled as he packed the last of the four fertilizers in the trolley and pushed it towards Mary.

Mary scoffed. As she took the trolley from Raymond she said, “Maybe if you lost fifty pounds and Raymond worked out a little, it could work.”

Barry scowled slightly and waved as Mary headed towards the door. “Bye bitch!” he said.

Raymond opened the door for the woman, and she said as she exited the room, “Later boys! Make sure to wipe up the cum stains after you’re all finished!”

“Get the hell outta here,” said Raymond. He closed the door behind her and went back to his spot after a little while. As he and Barry seated themselves once more, Raymond played the video. But before the men could get back into the mood, Raymond noticed a message icon at the top of the screen.

“Who sent you that?” said Barry.

Raymond, being twenty-three years old, didn’t have much friends beside his few co-workers, so he easily replied, “Must be my school or something?” As Raymond pressed the message icon the image shifted to a blank screen loading up his email account.

“You’re still serious about that school thing?” said Barry quizzically.

“Yeah,” said Raymond. “I can’t spend all my time here, y’know.”

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Barry was seven years older than Raymond, but the two could still maintain a friendship based on their love for everyday activities. In particular viewing pornography. As Raymond accessed his inbox he saw that the latest email was not from his school, but another organization he was in contact with.

“The shipper?” said Raymond incredulously.

“What?” Barry said.

Raymond opened the email. “I ordered something online,” he said. “Some textbooks.”

Raymond opened the email and read its contents along with Barry. An expression of elation and confusion appeared on Raymond’s face.

“They dropped it off already?” Raymond said, “But I wasn’t expecting it until Thursday.”

Barry grinned and said, “Today’s Tuesday. Things always get better after Monday.”

Raymond said, “I was planning on calling in sick on Thursday, so I could be there when it came. Crap! I don’t want anyone to steal.”

Barry took his phone out and accessed his own video files, while saying, “You said you live in a quiet neighborhood. Won’t your neighbors watch it for you?”

Raymond checked the rest of his emails and said, “I don’t really like depending on those guys. But I wonder if I can leave a little early today?”

Barry immediately said, “I don’t think I can cover for you today, that’s for sure!”

Raymond closed his eyes, threw back his head and groaned. He sat forward and said after a while, “Ah screw it! I’ll just finish work and see what happens later.”

So Raymond ended up working the rest of his shift until four-thirty in the evening when the store closed. When five o’ clock arrived, and he and Barry were finished counting off the remaining goods in the storage room, Raymond punched out his timecard and headed for the front of the store.

It was summer time in *Pansa Square*, a small town in Maine. The sun was just powering down and the last of its light splashed warm colors across the skies and through the windows into the store. Raymond walked across the far back of the store next to a wall studded with electrical equipment and headed for the employee’s entrance. With almost everyone gone, the building had an eerie silence that was almost reminiscent of Raymond’s house. Once outside, Raymond unchained his bicycle and rode out of the parking lot.

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Riding onto the street, there was little to no traffic that evening. The town only had a population of around three thousand. It was only a few decades back that the government had chopped down a some of the forest and established the town, so amongst the buildings there was still a few small trees scattered around, dotting the streets with sun-dried leaves.

A few minutes later, Raymond entered his neighborhood. Most homes here rarely got above a single story. But Raymond's house was one of those exceptions, having been built by his parents seventeen years ago when they were still together.

The construction of the house was simple, painted in a tan color with weathered, tiled rooves. Most of the homes were also bordered by mesh fences or a simple hedge with friendlier neighbors.

Raymond rode up to his lawn and was immediately met by a lonely box at his front door. As Raymond got off his bicycle and walked up to the door, he shook his head. There were plenty of small bushes in the yard where the package could have been hidden, but the driver chose to put it out in the open.

Raymond took out his key and opened the door. He quickly took the box inside and parked his bicycle in the corridor. Closing the door behind him, Raymond carried the box into his peach colored living room and placed it on the table in the middle of the room. Raymond took off his shoes and his shirt and walked into the kitchen, where he washed his hands. He poured himself some orange juice out of the fridge and walked back to the living room as he took a drink.

Apart from the table, only a sofa, rocking chair, a small desk and a cabinet were the only furniture present. Raymond sat in his couch and reached forward for the box. He pulled apart the tape at the top and ripped open its insides.

But as he did so, he spotted something that made him pause and stare horridly.

"Crap..." he said.

Raymond reached inside for the package and took it out to better inspect it. As his eyes told him, it wasn't a book. Apart from the obvious shape, the package was rectangular and long, and the label on its read "Royal Jelly Lubricant".

But when Raymond read the name on the package he gawked.

"Mika Tokuyomi?" he said.

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Raymond knew the name well, as it was his next-door neighbor. Raymond swallowed a nervous lump and swore. The woman in question had moved into the neighborhood two years ago after the previous tenants rented the house. His first experience with her was when he accidentally left the hose on in his backyard. That evening, Mika had climbed onto the top of the fence, and he and her engaged in a combat of insults.

But to Raymond's delight he finally had some dirt on her, in a sense. Raymond read the rest of the label, "For us as sexual lubricant...Also come in a vanilla flavor and is totally edible!"

Raymond covered his face and chuckled. "Oh shit," he said.

Raymond controlled himself and opened the box. He was pretty sure that if Mika was expecting the box today, she would have seen it prior and taken it already. If she came knocking with inquiries for her package, he could simple deny it.

Raymond tossed the empty packet on the table and held a cool, blue container in his hands. It was around twelve inches long and thick as a tin of tuna. Raymond eagerly uncorked the top as was immediately hit with an exotic fragrance that made his nerves melt and his penis throb.

After Raymond savored the smell a little longer he peered into the container at the pale substance. He tested it with two fingers, and found that the substance was extremely thick, almost like rubber.

"Huh?" he said. "What the hell's this?"

Raymond read the label again, and found where it said: "Apply a small amount of water to lubricant and let it sit for five minutes. Keep refrigerated after opening."

Raymond exhaled like a deflated balloon. "Forget this."

Raymond decided he had better things to do. He went to the kitchen sink and caught a few ounces of water in the container. He corked on back the lid and left it there on the kitchen counter.

When Raymond wasn't working, most of his time was spent either playing video games, watching porn or checking on good schools to apply to. He went to the refrigerator and took out a pot with some leftover stew from yesterday. After lighting the stove and placing it there he went to the shower and quickly scrubbed off.

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A few minutes later he came downstairs dressed in a simple shirt and shorts and took his heated meal off the stove. As he sat in the kitchen around the counter he watched a video on accounting courses on his laptop while he ate.

He had paused the video for a brief moment to check on the lubricant. He scowled as he tested it once more and found that it was barely changing its state.

“Mika you’ve got bad taste in sex toys, that’s for sure,” he said.

When Raymond was finished with his meal he washed up and carried his laptop upstairs. The hallway was painted in a bland white with an only a few pictures of his broken family on the wall and a pink carpet his mother had left behind. He went to his room door and opened it. He stopped upon feeling a few dirt grains under his foot but decided to sweep the house tomorrow before work.

Lying in the white spread on his bed, Raymond typed the name of a dating website. His finger hovered over the “ENTER” button on his computer, and finally Raymond directed them to erase the title and type in the name of his usually porn website.

As usually with his routine, Raymond jerked off to a few videos, usually two or three times, before switching to various videos on YouTube. He didn’t feel in the mood for video games seeing as how Barry and a few others weren’t online tonight, and he simple watched a few clips on “how to make money online” before going to bed.

But as Raymond slept soundly with a few drops of dried semen on his stomach, something afoot stirred in his kitchen. With the lights in the house out and the temperature decreased, this, coupled with the water in the container, stirred it into a shuddering motion.

The top of the container slowly uncorked itself with slime seeping from the creases. On its last twist the top popped off and clattered onto the floor with wads of slime. Something writhed out of the container and plopped onto the kitchen counter.

It resembled something between the cross of a slug and a man’s tongue, writhing aimlessly until it came to a still. It slowly lifted half its body and two beady eyes popped out along with two wispy antennae. Its feelers waved around in the air until it stopped, pointing at the fruits on the table.

The blue bodied creature slithered with the speed of a snake off the counter, across the floor and up the table’s foot, leaving a thick trail of glistening slime. Reaching the table top, it

tested the fruits with its feelers. It paused, whether appalled or contemplating it was not sure; until a hole beneath its eyes opened, widening into a toothy gape that was its mouth.

It threw its jaws over the apple like a tarp and regurgitated its stomach acids over the fruit. As the fruit dissolved and the creature drank the soup, its body grew slightly, triggering stubby legs to sprout from its sides. Upon eating a banana, the creature developed toes on its longer legs and its head developed into a rounded lump with its mouth beneath.

It crawled back from the bowl and shuddered. It's form had now deviated into something more akin to a lizard, albeit a slimy one.

The creature observed the kitchen cautiously until its attention was caught from the light of a passing car playing against the window.

With purpose the creature compacted its body and extended it into a leaping motion. It landed back on the kitchen counter and scurried to the window. But even though it was locked, it still had a small gap in the side. The creature forced itself into the space, using all its body muscles to move apart the window sheets and expand the opening.

Successful at last, the thing slithered outside into the darkness.

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## Chapter Two

The next morning, Raymond woke up, brushed his teeth and took a bath, and went downstairs to fix himself some breakfast. He had only an hour before he had to leave for work at seven.

Dressed in just his boxers and a merino, Raymond contemplated calling the shipping company about the whereabouts of his real package. But fixing the hunger in his gut from burning up all those calories last night took precedence.

He went into the living room and opened the windows to illuminate the gloomy room. But he walked into the kitchen around to the cupboard he was immediately met with an unnerving sight.

“...The hell?” Raymond said, cringing at the sticky mess slathered on the counter, floor and on the table near his fruits. The smell was a mix of a woman’s sweaty crotch and baby powder, making Raymond unsure whether to recoil in disgust or jerk off.

But Raymond noticed the empty lubricant container and the lid on the floor and became even more alarmed. He was trying to use his common sense now. Based on what he was seeing something, clearly got out of the lubricant canister, crawled around his kitchen and went through the window where he saw the trail of slime end.

Raymond paced around the kitchen, scratching his head and folding his arms in agitation. He had heard stories about people getting animals in their packages when they opened it. But this thing was clearly alive and well. It suddenly triggered his memories about the times he watched Animal Planet, where he saw the documentaries on hibernating animals that could sleep for months but only needed environmental stimuli to awaken.

But as he thought about the creature running around his kitchen, Raymond began to feel disgusted—violated even!

Soon anger settled within Raymond. Not enough for him to go thrashing about, but the annoyed kind that made him take up the broom in the corner and head into the living room. He unlocked the door with his key and raced into the yard.

The sun was just peeking over the horizon, yet to dispel the cold in the air. But Raymond ignored the wind and the things sticking in the bottom of his feet as he raced to the back of his house.

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The backyard was less verdant than his lawn, with large patches of soil present. Raymond checked the outside of the kitchen window and saw the sticky trail stretched onto the ground. He traced it with a steady, intent glare all the way to the fence. He got closer and peered over it. He saw a few bushes on the other side and the rest of his community. He entertained the idle thought of boiling some water to throw it in the bushes, but quickly quashed it and marched back inside.

“Looks like you dodge a shitload a trouble there, Mika...” Raymond whispered as he glanced over the side-fence at his neighbor’s house. Mika’s house was smaller than his, however it was painted in a strange shade of green with a sloping roof resembling the top of a hut.

Raymond went inside and immediately began cleaning his kitchen. After he was sure that none of the creature’s residue was left, he finally made himself some cereal, got dressed and pushed his bicycle outside.

The sun was a little higher, and its light and warmth squeezed through the houses and trees into sections of radiant patches over the neighborhood. As Raymond got off his property and hopped onto his bicycle, he noticed out of the corner of his eye a familiar person standing at the edge of the sidewalk. He turned to her and realized it was Mika. The woman was stocky built with a lean figure. She glanced around the community at the people just getting out of their homes to start their day. However, it was slow and deliberate, as if she was searching for something. She also had an angular face and cropped sharp hair. Her breasts weren’t that big, but she had an admirable ass that would make professional strippers jealous.

When she looked in Raymond’s direction, she paused before offering him a scowl Raymond felt a shiver shoot through his body. The lubricant quickly crossed his mind and he casually yawned and looked away. He quickly pedaled off.

Despite her mean looking demeanor, many a times Raymond has masturbated to the image of himself mounting Mika. He would tighten his grip on his cock each time he envisioned Mika’s grimace when he squeezed into her wet hole. But he knew that’s as far he would ever get with her.

Raymond relaxed, however, content in his mind to just work today and check on the whereabouts on his real package. He rode pass a black woman jogging and went on his way.

The jogger, however, went down the street pass Mika and two men in formal clothes and turned onto another street. It led into a lane bordered by high shrubs. It was her usual path each day from her house to the end of entrance to the community.

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Dressed in nothing but her red tights and blouse soaked in her sweat, her large breasts bounced with each stride she took.

This particular spot was out of the sun's path, so it was still nestled in the shadows of the houses. But as the woman went down the stony path, a glimmering light on one of the bushes caught her eyes. She turned to it and noticed a thick glistening slime on some of the plants and stopped. As she her breasts rose in rhythm with her breathe she crept closer to the substance to get a better look.

She furrowed her forehead at the smell and the substance's existence. She lifted a hand to touch it but quickly thought against it. She didn't know what it was, but the first thing that came to her mind was either semen or grool. She grimaced and looked at the looming, two story house.

She looked back at the slime and said, "These folks are freaky as hell..."

Two eyes popped out of the bushes. As the image hit the woman and she opened her mouth to swear, the creature shot out of its cover and into her gaping mouth. With her screams muffled the creature wriggled down her gullet. She fell and thrashed about as she tried to grab the wriggling assailant, but the slime it produced loosened her grip each time. Choking sounds escaped her throat, and the further the creature went the more she flailed. Finally, it slipped out of her hands and down out of sight. The woman fell on her back and began to steadily convulse to the point where her eyes rolled into her head. Seconds later her body went still.

First were her arms; which started twitching, then her feet. Her body went still once more, and she opened her eyes, revealing brightly colored irises. She slowly got up and dusted herself. She examined her hands and the rest of her body, caressing every inch of her. She smirked, and shoved a hand down her pants. She forcefully inserted two fingers inside her and wriggled them around. She jerked with each ripple that tugged on her nerves. After a good while she took out her fingers and examined the contents left on it. A thick, clear fluid appeared between them.

She sucked on her fingers and savored the taste. And, after swallowing and licking her lips, she said, "Perfect."

"Really?" said Barry, "Something really came out of the package?"

"I know, right?" said Raymond. "It was the craziest shit!"

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Both men were in the storage room at their work place, however unlike yesterday, today they got in a batch of new goods that they had to count off. Raymond was stocking a shelf with welding tools from a cart while Barry was counting off a few wrenches he just stocked.

“Did you get a look at it?” said Barry.

“Nope,” said Raymond. “I was asleep when it got out of the container. It messed up my kitchen with slime...”

Barry chuckled. “Man,” he said, “that neighbor of yours looks like she’s a closet pervert though.”

“...I’m not sure,” said Raymond. “Maybe if she orders a dildo. But then again, that’s the last time I take anything into my house without checking it.”

As soon as Raymond was finished packing a few boxes he felt his phone vibrate. He stopped and checked it and saw an email notification. He pursed his lips, and accessed his email. He saw a message from the carrier and quickly opened it.

He read the letter and saw that is an apology for the wrong package being sent, and also that his real package actually arrived today. He sighed, then frowned. “This better be it man...” he said.

When his work was finished, Raymond quickly sped back home that evening. Sure enough, he found the package at the door again. He exhaled exasperatedly and marched towards it. But this time, Raymond leaned his bicycle beside the door and knelt over the box. He lifted it and shook it around. He checked the label and smiled when he saw his name written on it. He carried the box and his bicycle inside one after the other. He quickly took off his shirt to cool down and sat in the couch. Raymond ripped his way into the package and sighed in relief when he saw his accounting textbook.

Satisfied, he put the book down and went to the kitchen. He hesitated for a while and crept to the window. He looked around the kitchen, but didn’t see any more slime. Relieved that whatever animal had escaped might not make a return, Raymond washed his hands and began to prepare his dinner. After cooking a fine stew of beef and vegetables, he went upstairs and took a bath as he let the stew simmer for a few more minutes.

He got dressed in his usual t-shirt and shorts and bounced back down into the kitchen. He made his way to the stove, and suddenly halted.

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The stove was turned off. He quickly went to the knob on the oven and saw that it was twisted on zero.

*I'm sure I left it on, he thought. Maybe I turned it down a bit too low in a hurry.*

But Raymond didn't think much about it. He finally had his textbooks, and could begin studying for his college courses. The next step was to just wait on the acceptance letter from the college, and he'd be all set. He had already saved thirty-six thousand dollars to cover the expenses of the first year. The final year he was sure he could figure out down the line.

Raymond swept and dusted the entire first floor of his house, and later that evening retired to his living room where he lay with the textbook opened before him. He turned on the television just to hear what was going on. He left in on the news just in case any other program would take too much of his attention. However, there was an intriguing report about a woman being attacked by the raik.

Raymond looked up briefly and saw a weeping woman covered in scratching cradling her left arm. As she told her story to the reporter about her ordeal, Raymond looked away and smirked. "It probably was a rabid coyote or something," he said. However, he had noticed the in last month there was a spike in supernatural incidents appearing on the news.

But Raymond went back to his book. He had already gone through ten pages by then. He was trying to memorize what he was seeing, but most of it was just the images. But the prospect of knowing that he would soon be released of his nine-to-five job was elating. He would be out of his small town and in the big city in about two months. And all of this would be thanks to the money he had saved on his own after years of working.

Raymond suddenly felt an urge to turn to the cabinet in the living room, decked with photographs and small figurines that reflected the changing lights off the television. There he spotted a photo of what used to be his family; himself when he was much younger with his mother and father behind him.

But all that was gone now.

Raymond wondered if he would be able to call his parents and let them know when he got enrolled into college, then he remembered he didn't even have his mother's number anymore. His father was busy working out of the country, but Raymond doubted he would even care.

The elation Raymond felt earlier began to vanish. And his grip on his book loosened.

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*Like I even need you guys*, he thought. Raymond closed his eyes and bit back his emotions. He clutched his book and lifted his head. “I don’t need you anyways...” he said. Raymond opened his eyes, feeling refreshed, and as he did so his eyes spotted the shadowy outline of someone standing in the doorway to the kitchen.

“Fuck!” said Raymond.

The young man hurled the textbook towards the figure, leaped out of the couch and sprinted up the stairs. He bolted for his room and flew open the door. Slamming it shut behind him, Raymond backpedaled into his room. His heart pumped so hard he felt his blood surging in his ears like hoses. He quickly gathered his wits and headed under his bed for a small crowbar he had confiscated from work.

He got up and took out his cellphone, immediately dialing the police. His trembling fingers fought to swipe open the phone icon on his smartphone, and he heard a thud on the door that made him flinch.

“Shit!” he said. “Get the hell outta my house! I’m calling the police!”

Raymond saw the knob twisting frantically and inched his way closer to the window. He put the phone in his pocket and tried to pull the window open, but as he did, the door wash smashed inward, revealing the figure standing in the doorframe.

“Help!” Raymond shouted, then driven by pure instinct, he ran towards his attacker with his weapon poised.

Raymond was sure that at the speed and force he was coming with, it would allow him to dent in his assailant’s head, but to his disbelief the person, who he now could make out as a woman, moved her hand with blinding speed and grabbed his arm.

She tightened her grip. Raymond winced and groaned and his grasp on the crowbar loosened. And as the man’s weapon fell the woman shoved Raymond across the room as if he were nothing. But Raymond quickly got up, clutching his arm against his chest, and pried open the window.

“Wait! Hold on!” said the woman.

“Hell no, bitch!” said Raymond.

As Raymond got one foot outside the woman held onto him and yanked him back inside onto the floor. Raymond uttered a tight squeal and the woman closed the window.

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Spotting his weapon on the floor, Raymond reached for it. As the woman turned to him Raymond got up.

“Come here!” he said. And with a foul blow Raymond embedded the curved end into the woman’s breast. She yelped and staggered back so forcefully that the crowbar was yanked from Raymond’s hand.

He retreated to the open door, watching expectantly for the woman to fall down crying in tears. But the intruder remained standing. The woman gave Raymond a dreadful stare that sent chills down his back. She held onto the weapon in her chest and yanked it out. Raymond cringed at the sight of thick, pale green fluid dangling from the end of the crowbar.

The woman threw it aside and straightened herself.

“That was a nasty thing to do...” she said.

“No shit...” said Raymond, flabbergasted as to what he was seeing. He never heard anyone that had blood like that coming out of their body. Unless this wasn’t just anyone.

He realized the woman was wearing what looked like exercise wear, but what captivated him the most was the strange color in her eyes.

The woman slowly raised her hands and said calmly, “...I’m not going to hurt you...”

Stepping back, Raymond said, “What the hell are you doing in my house?”

“You brought me here, remember?” she said.

“What?” said Raymond, now inching closer to the crowbar? “What the hell are you talking about?”

The woman saw Raymond’s slight movement towards the weapon. She hesitantly kicked it towards him. Raymond was dumbfounded by the act for a moment, then quickly knelt for the weapon and pointed it stiffly at the intruder. “You start talking or I start whacking!” he said.

The woman’s face relaxed, and a smile appeared. “Yesterday,” she said. “You brought me home. Don’t you remember?”

As Raymond’s face contorted in confusion, the woman slowly extended her hand. Her manicured fingers glistened with moisture. Slime dripped off, and her digits elongated to wet, leathery claws.

Raymond stood in silence by what took place. He looked at the strange hand and the woman’s face; her peculiar eyes.

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And it dawned upon the young man what it meant. He lowered the weapon, and said, “You mean...you came out...of the jerk-off gel?”

The woman reverted her mutated hand back to regular fingers. She relaxed and chuckled. “I wouldn’t call it that, but yes,” she said. “I am an alien...”

“...Alien?” said Raymond.

The woman nodded.

Raymond quickly raised his weapon and said, “...This is bullshit...”

There was a muffled knock coming from downstairs, then someone shouting his name, “Raymond!”

Raymond retreated into the hallway and turned his attention downstairs. He looked at the supposed alien woman and said, “Stay here...”

“As you wish,” said the woman.

Raymond reluctantly hurried downstairs and into the living room. He hid the crowbar behind him and opened the front door. He jerked when he saw the person standing before him.

“Mika?” he said loudly. “W-what—”

“Have you seen my package?” Mika said, her tone flat.

She stood in the light of the lamp next to the door, wearing some sleeveless blouse and tights that Raymond for the most part always saw her in. But with her hands on her hips and her steady expression, Raymond could tell she was in no mood for a conversation.

“I...no....no I haven’t...” he said.

Mika paused as if analyzing Raymond’s words like a lie detector. Only Raymond’s upper body was visible. His eyes gaped at Mika, looked around frantically and then back at her.

“You sure?” she said. “I was supposed to get a package yesterday. But I didn’t. I couldn’t help but notice that you got two packages between today and yesterday.”

“Well...” Raymond looked inside and spotted the woman’s head peeping from upstairs, he mouthed something to her and she smiled and went back up. He turned to Mika; who eyed him curiously, “...Well I ordered two packages, but they got sent by different shippers. I don’t know where your box is Mika!”

Mika stepped to the side to peer inside Raymond’s house. The man in turn raised his head higher and tightened the gap in the door. “I said it isn’t here!”

“I know you took it, Raymond?” she said.

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“What?” Raymond said, “Just because I accidentally left the hose on and it ran into your yard I’m a thief now?”

Mika said, “Yes, you son of a bitch!”

Raymond said, “Go call the damn company that has your package and ask them for it bitch! And stop watching my house!”

Raymond closed the door with the key. He turned to the staircase and purposely ascended it, and halted when he saw the woman sitting at the end of it. His arm with the crowbar twitched.

“What the—didn’t I tell you to wait in the room?” he said.

“I got bored inside,” she said. She rose to her feet and retreated so Raymond could pass. As he did he stared at her like a gift he didn’t know what to do with.

He stood in the hallway and said, “So...you really an alien?”

“Do you want any more demonstrations?” she said.

“Not anywhere near me though!” Raymond quickly said.

The woman lifted her hands and secreted a strange moisture in her palms. She leapt and touched the ceiling, anchoring herself without any visible grip of her fingers. She hung four feet off the floor. Raymond backed away with a startled look. The woman placed her bare feet on the ceiling as well, and she began to crawl along the surface to the very end of the hall where the bathroom was.

Raymond’s skepticism turned into intrigue. He smiled and said, “No way!”

The woman fell from the ceiling and landed on her feet. She turned to him and said, “Is that enough?”

Raymond nodded. Now relaxed somewhat, he took the time to admire her athletic frame; especially her gorgeous breasts. He noticed that her clothes were dirtied as if she had been through an ordeal. But above all, he wanted answers.

“So...” he said. “What’s your name?”

“Actoamosa Snadenchouf,” she said. She saw Raymond’s uncomfortable attempt to pronounce her name and said, “You can just call me Actoa.”

“Okay,” he said. Raymond sighed and rubbed his head. “Man. I can’t believe this...A actually E.T. lady in my house.”

“Perhaps I can answer your questions when you’re more relaxed,” Actoa said.

Raymond nodded, and they headed back to Raymond's room. There he watched Actoa walk over to the foot of his bed and sit-crossed legged. She looked at him expectantly, and he slowly did the same before her.

He put the crowbar in his lap, then reluctantly put it aside, "I guess I don't need this then..."

"You might if that woman you were talking to comes back," said Actoa.

Raymond began to chuckle. "Damn," he said, "you even got jokes."

Satisfied with Raymond's composure, Actoa said, "My apologies for scaring you."

"Ah, it's fine," Raymond said. "But you could've gone a little easier instead of tossing me around."

"I didn't know any other way to speak to you," she continued. "But I needed to take on a suitable form before I could make contact with you."

"Yeah..." said Raymond, eyeing her up and down. "How did you get this body?"

"I had to copy the physical appearance of the first human I came in contact with," said Actoa. "Don't worry, the person I met is still fine. I only briefly made them unconscious to copy their skin with my slime."

Raymond nodded his approval, pleased to hear that at least this being before him wasn't murderous. "Okay," he said. "So, you mind telling me how you got in a container full of lube in the first place?"

Actoa chuckled. "Yes," she said. "I had no other choice. I was being chased by them."

"Who?" said Raymond.

"The government," Actoa said. "I'm not the only one, or the only species out there, Raymond. There are thousands of extraterrestrial beings living in the shadows on this planet. Some came here by choice for their own reasons. Others, like myself, were forced to come here. In my case I had to flee a Galactic Ruler who wanted my species extinct."

"...Whoa!" said Raymond. "This whole thing sounds a bit Star Wars all of a sudden..."

"Yes," Actoa said. "The Emperor is on a rampage. A few of my kind managed to escape. I ended up here. But I'm being hunted. I wish to leave this planet."

Raymond maintained his silence while he assessed the situation, after a while, he said, "I'm not really sure I know how to help with that, though."

“Its fine,” said Actoa. “Now that I’m safe from the government, I’m sure I can figure out a way myself.”

But Raymond suddenly said, “Then, where would you get a spaceship?”

Actoa said, “...There are ways. This planet has small pockets of alien communities.”

“Really,” said Raymond, shifting uncomfortably. “Man, it’s like I’ve been living in a bubble all this time.”

“But don’t worry,” said Actoa. “I will explain everything to you later, when you are better in the head. I’m sure I scared you enough.”

Actoa got up and Raymond quickly followed. “Where are you going?”

Actoa looked at him and said, “I figured it would be best if I stayed outside, if you’re not comfortable with me in here.”

“Oh, no, umm...that’s fine!” said Raymond. “You can stay inside. You might get some unwanted attention. You can sleep in the couch downstairs or in the other room if you want.”

Actoa smiled, making Raymond blush. “Thank you,” she said. Actoa then lifted her blouse and said, “I should probably take a bath.”

As Actoa went into the bathroom, Raymond lay in his bed with a million thoughts racing through his head. Every few minutes he had to check himself to make he was not dreaming. He had experienced some strange things before, but never on a scale like this.

*But an alien woman in my house?* Raymond thought.

As he heard the woman walk through the hall, the man picked up her arousing scent. He suddenly felt blood rushing to his groin. He grabbed his penis and began to massage it. He entertained the thought of sleeping with the woman.

*Who wouldn’t?* he thought. *Alien or not, that chick is sexy!*

And for the first time, Raymond began to think that maybe the world wasn’t against him after all. Raymond rolled over and slept with a smile on his face.

Joel S. Williams

## Chapter Three

Raymond's eyes snapped open, darting around the gloom of his room. From last night's ordeal, he couldn't even sleep properly. All the excitement still lingered in his blood. He suddenly felt something on his bed and looked over to see Actoa beside him. One leg was set across him and she pressed herself delicately against his back.

Raymond felt her breasts against his back and quickly rolled out of the bed. As he looked on at the woman in the silky night gown, she slowly woke up, rubbing her eyes. She noticed Raymond and said, "...What time is it? Are...you alright?"

"Uh?" he said, eyeing her bulging nipples. "Yeah! I'm fine!"

Actoa smiled and slowly got out of the bed. "I guess I should make you breakfast..."

"You can cook?" Raymond said as he followed Actoa to the door.

"I have been on earth for a while," she said.

"Okay," said Raymond. "I'll go take a bath then."

Actoa turned and smiled at Raymond and went into the hall. As she left, Raymond leaped around and punched the air. "Yes!" he said. "I got a alien chick making me breakfast! I've gotta tell Barry!"

Raymond then stopped with a startled look. "Oh crap!" he said. "Work!"

Raymond quickly took off his clothes and threw them into the corner of the room. He ran into the bathroom with his manhood dangling and quickly brushed his teeth. After rinsing his mouth he put the toothbrush into the small cup and pulled the pink curtains of the shower and stepped inside.

He instantly flinched as the cold water consumed him, but he soon relaxed, feeling his nerves rejuvenating themselves. As he rubbed the soapy liquid onto his body with a sponge, he heard the creak of the door through the patter of the shower. He wiped the foam from off his face and listened carefully, after which he heard the door close.

A hand suddenly pulled away the shower curtain and revealed Actoa.

Raymond threw himself against the wall as if he wanted to vanish through it. Actoa stared back at him so intensely that Raymond contemplated throwing the bottle of shower gel at her.

"Eggs and bacon or tuna and salad?" Actoa said.

Joel S. Williams

Raymond's mouth fluttered.

"For breakfast?" said Actoa.

Raymond said forcefully, "Eggs!"

"You got it?" said Actoa, and walked away.

Once Raymond heard the door close he sighed and relaxed, feeling a knife being removed from his throat. "What's up with that lady?" he said. The way she looked at him seemed to him she had more than breakfast on her mind. Realizing that, Raymond giggled. "She's freaky!"

A few minutes later, Raymond came down stairs dressed in his work clothes. He could already smell a mouthwatering scent wafting from the kitchen, mixed with the scent of Actoa. With a perky smile Raymond went into the kitchen, and was instantly met with the firm ass of the woman turned to him as she busied herself with the items on the kitchen counter.

Raymond quickly got a hold of himself and said, "Excuse me."

Actoa turned around and said, "Oh, you're just time."

She took up a plate and a glass of orange juice and placed it on the table. Raymond hurried to the table before she could see the bulge in his pants and pressed against one of the chairs.

"Everything smells good," he said.

"There's no need for compliments," she said. "I'm sure you can make yours just the same." She pulled out a chair gestured to it.

*Wow! Raymond thought. She's so nice! JACKPOT!*

Raymond seated himself just as Actoa pushed the chair beneath him. He immediately began eating as if he were starved for days.

Actoa went to the other side opposite Raymond and sat and observed him. She watched intently as the man ate, waiting patiently. She saw him reach for the glass of orange juice and leaned closer. Her pupils contracted. Raymond took a huge chug and Actoa's mouth corners twitched into a smile.

*Yes! Actoa thought*

Raymond swallowed, frowned a little and inspected the glass. He looked at Actoa and said, "What's in this?"

Joel S. Williams

“Oh,” she said, “I put in some vinegar. It’s supposed to help with your bowels.” She suddenly sat up with a hastily crafted surprised look. “I’m sorry. I hope you don’t mind?”

After studying her face for a few seconds, Raymond said, “No, not really. Thanks for thinking about my health.”

Actoa nodded. But as she watch Raymond continue to eat, her expression dampen slightly. *Nothing’s happening...* she thought.

Raymond looked at her and said, “Aren’t you gonna eat?”

Actoa said, “I prefer to do so once you leave. I don’t want to get too familiar. Plus we have to discuss a few things when you get back.”

“Oh yeah, that,” said Raymond, hoping she wouldn’t have to bring it up. She made a hell of a first impression so far.

After finishing his meal, Raymond got up and Actoa followed. She hurried to take up the plate and glass and put it in the sink.

“Well,” said Raymond as he took his bag off the edge of the chair, “I’m going off now.”

Actoa turned to Raymond and handed him a large, wrapped up foil. “Here’s lunch,” she said.

Raymond took it with a toothy grin and put it in his bag. “Thanks,” he said. He looked at her admirably for a while and said, “You can eat whatever you want until I come back. By then I should figure something out on how to help you.”

Actoa smiled and nodded. “Thank you for your help, Raymond.”

Raymond smiled and walked towards the front door. He opened it and marched his bicycle ahead of him. Before leaving he turned to her and said, “And make sure not to answer the door for anyone. Stay safe.”

“I will,” she said.

And Raymond left the house.

Mika stepped out of her back door into the yard, where a clutter of open boxes were. Most were packed into columns, ready to be discarded when the garbage men came on the weekend.

Joel S. Williams

She wore her usually undergarment attire as she walked on the cobblestones in her yard. She had a pistol in a steady hand as she headed towards the fence bordering her and Raymond's house.

Unlike most of the residents' properties, Mika's had a small fence at the front of her yard to maximize privacy. But thanks to that scoundrel Raymond, that privacy had now been invaded. She was pretty sure that Raymond had her package, and probably laughed his ass off like a goof when he saw what she ordered.

The thought made Mika scowl slightly. She went to the wooden fence and peered into a hole. She caressed her finger over the trigger of the pistol as she looked. She stood there for a while, she was searching to see if Raymond had thrown out the box, but so far she didn't see any indication. After standing there for three minutes, Mika was just about to leave, when she saw the knob on the door twist.

"So you're home today," she said quietly.

But Mika suddenly gaped when she saw a woman step outside. She wore a simple dress, and with the frame of an incredible physique underneath. But Mika instantly recognized her face as the woman she saw yesterday morning.

"What the hell...?" Mika said.

The woman stepped outside with something in her hand. She uncorked the container and began to empty its contents into the grass. It was powdery with a bright sheen. But Mika, having studied what to expect from her package, knew exactly what the woman was throwing away.

"Salt..." Mika said. Her body suddenly tensed like a tiger who spotted its prey. Her grip on the gun tightened. She frowned and shook her head as the woman emptied the last ounce of salt and went back inside. "Raymond...you jackass."

Mika slowly stepped away. Her plan wasn't to fight it like this, but now she had no choice. And as she walked back into the house, the first thing came to mind was how many bullets it would take to kill her target.

Back at work, Raymond moved with a rapid pace. Excited by last night's events, he had to get a grip on the situation at home, and would need some time to do so.

Joel S. Williams

The first thing he did after punching in was to visit his boss. He walked through a series of corridors until he was at the boss' door. He knocked on it and waited until he heard the reply of "come in".

Raymond carefully opened the door and entered the room. Inside an elderly man was seated behind a lavish table. He wore a pink dress shirt with a grandiose watch. He looked up from his work at the visitor and said, "Oh, Raymond. What is it?"

"Hey, boss," said Raymond. He carefully walked in and steeple his fingers before him. "I need to ask a favor?"

"Can't a supervisor help?" the man said, eyeing Raymond cautiously.

"Umm..." Raymond relaxed and said, "I don't think they have that kind a jurisdiction."

The boss furrowed his forehead. He put down the pen and said, "What are you asking for?"

"I have some problems at my house," said Raymond. "There was this big leakage in the pipes with me and my neighbor's yard. Sewage is everywhere in our yard and stuff..."

The man before Raymond shoulder's suddenly slumped. A genuine look of interest appeared on his face. "Oh, ahh...I'm so sorry to hear that Raymond."

"Yeah," Raymond said. "It happened last night. We managed to clog the pipes a little but the water's still spewing out. I was wondering if a can get about two days to take care of it?"

"Two days?" said the boss. He wasn't doubting Raymond's statement. The young man had been a hard worker since he started here two years ago. As a result, he wasn't too keen on having his working staff out for so long. "Are you sure you need that much time?"

Raymond nodded with a sly smile. "Trust me," he said, "If you saw the crap that's in my yard, you'd think about moving. I don't have any money to hire someone. I'll just see if the neighbor and I can well it back together."

The boss looked away of is admiring the potted plant in the corner. After a while he sighed and said, "Okay. I'll put it in the system."

Raymond gave him a thumbs up and said, "Thanks."

Successful, Raymond comfortably went back to work. He tried to make small talk with his co-workers that day, and had to actually force himself to talk to them as his mind was still set on the task of carrying the alien woman to her destination. A few times that day he contemplated telling Barry his secret about the sexy alien woman living in his house and cooking for him, but

he digressed. Barry usually frequented the strip clubs in town, unlike him. Raymond in his entire life never had a girlfriend. It wasn't for a lack of trying, but he just couldn't due to certain circumstances.

This alien woman, however, seemed willing if Raymond asked. Probably if he played his cards right he could get a change to sleep with her. So Raymond kept a tight lip, only mentioning to Barry that he got his textbooks and the videos he watched last night.

When his shift ended, Raymond hurried with the stock-checking and quickly rode home, fearing that the woman might not even be there when he arrived. Arriving ten minutes earlier than usual, Raymond rode all the way up to the front door and got off of his bicycle.

He opened the door and said into the empty living room, "Actoa?"

"I'm in here!" he heard her voice reply from the kitchen.

Raymond sighed in relief. He took the bicycle inside and hurried into the kitchen. There he was met with the delectable scent of the stew from last night being heated and a steaming pot of freshly cooked rice. Actoa was just filling a plate as if she had been deliberately waiting in the kitchen for him to arrive.

She turned to Raymond, smiled and said, "I'm pretty sure your mother told you to wash your hands before you eat."

Raymond chuckled and walked away. He went upstairs and took off his clothes. After washing his hands he came back down stairs in his merino and underpants to find the meal waiting on the table before him.

But Raymond's stomach wasn't on his mind. He took up the fork, but suddenly said, "You know about human money, right?"

Actoa nodded. "Of course," she said. "...Why do you ask?"

Raymond said, "I'm not rich, but, I can give you a thousand dollars to help you."

Actoa gawked at Raymond. "Okay...thank you...Wait, are you sure about that?"

"Won't it be a long way before you reach wherever you're going?" said Raymond.

"Kind of," said Actoa. "The base is located in Kansas. But are you sure you want to use all that money?"

"It's no problem, I can afford it," he said.

"Thank you," said Actoa.

Joel S. Williams

Raymond began eating. As he did Actoa got up and slowly walked over to him. She bent over him in the chair and wrapped her arms around him. She kissed his lips, sending erratic waves through his skull. Raymond dropped the fork as his muscles stiffened.

Actoa pulled away and said, “You know, I should probably make it up to you with more than just dinner.”

Actoa watched Raymond’s eyes go almost blank, and felt his muscles weaken beneath her. Her hand ran down his thigh and gripped his penis, feeling him flinch. She kissed him again as her dainty fingers slowly stroked him. She felt him becoming harder in her grasp. *He’s quiet the male*, she thought. *The higher dosage seemed to work on him this time, however.*

As she worked her tongue in his mouth Actoa lifted her blouse, exposing her breasts.

Raymond ran his hand up to her stone hard nipples and squeezed, immediately triggering fluids to seep into the woman’s underwear.

*That’s it*, Actoa thought. *You’re mine now!*

Inside Actoa’s body two muscular appendages raced up her gullet and into her mouth. She positioned them in a striking manner. She pulled away from Raymond’s lips and smiled devilishly at him. But as she opened her mouth, Raymond’s eyes lit up and he pushed her away.

Actoa staggered back and Raymond sprung out of his seat. He looked at Actoa as if he just saw a living nightmare.

Actoa stared back at his ashen face, scowling. *Shit!* Actoa thought. *Did he realize what I was doing?* One of her hands slowly morphed into claws.

“Ahh,” Raymond said. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry!”

Raymond ran out of the kitchen, into the living room and up the stairs. Actoa watched the man as he disappeared out of her sight. After processing what just happened, Actoa had to rethink. *No, he wasn’t aware of what I was doing. Something else must have startled him.*

A few minutes after the situation, Raymond lay in his bed staring dejectedly at the ceiling.

*I had my chance and blew it*, he thought. *I could’ve gotten sex right there, and I blew it! All thanks to dad and that bitch!*

Raymond pounded the bed and sighed. He couldn't possible think of just going back downstairs to smooth things over. That courage had gone out the window. Raymond finally conditioned himself to just help the woman escape her situation,

"Maybe I'll just buy sex like Barry does," he whispered.

Raymond rolled over and closed his eyes.

It was two hours later, and Raymond had occasionally woken up due to his uneasiness. He still felt his penis throbbing hungrily, and he rubbed it and groaned. The evening had become quite with only the occasional passing of a vehicle in the street.

However, vehicles were not the only thing to stir Raymond's ears. He heard something like the lock on his door creaking, but he ignored it. He heard the door close, but he didn't think anything off it. He assumed Actoa was just checking up on him.

He rolled over onto his back and felt two depressions on the bed next to him. His nose suddenly picked up a strange, yet familiar scent. The hairs on his body recoiled, sensing a dastardly aura above him.

Finally alerted by the tug on his senses, Raymond opened his eyes, and spotted a horrid sight he would soon never forget.

Directly over his head stood Actoa with her dress raised to her waist. At first Raymond thought it was a belt dangling in front of her from her waist, but instantly Raymond's eyes revealed that the thing was a long, pulsing fleshy appendage as if the woman's vagina had been pulled out. Not to mention the raw smell that hinted of cooked meat and vanilla.

Raymond gaped, and said, "What the hell?"

The muscular appendage lurched into Raymond's gaping mouth. The man choked and gargled as he tried to yank the thing from out of his throat. The bittersweet taste of it against his tongue made his penis lurch forward. He bit down to stop it from going any further, but Actoa grabbed his head and pushed against her crotch.

Raymond uttered a blood-curdling choking sound as the fluids from the tube spilled into his throat. Dizziness started to overtake the man, and the strength in his muscles and mind began to fade.

"That's it," said Actoa balefully, "drink up."

Joel S. Williams

The window shattered, throwing into the room shards of glass and a figure. Actoa snapped her head in the direction of the intruder, and witnessed a woman with a leather jacket point something cold and metallic at her.

“What?” Actoa uttered.

“Get off him you whore!” said Mika.

Mika pulled the trigger on the peculiar, rectangular rifle. The gun bucked slightly and the muzzle sparked. Something hit Actoa in the shoulder with so much force it through her back and tore off her limb in burst of blood and foam.

A hellish scream spewed out of Actoa’s throat. What remained of her shoulder sizzled and dripped a foul fluid. Her survival instincts kicked in and she leapt onto the ceiling. Mika aimed at the alien in the ceiling and fired, but this time Actoa leaped out of the way.

Actoa landed and lunged at Mika with her clawed hand. With catlike reflexes Mika dove beneath the alien, spun and came back up with her rifle ready, but the only thing she saw were Actoa’s feet disappearing out the window.

“Shit!” Mika said. She hurried to the window and peered outside along the iron sights of her weapon. She saw Actoa leap over a fence, run through Mika’s yard and over another fence out of sight.

Mika clenched her jaw and quickly pulled away from the window. She headed over to Raymond who was still gurgling froth from his mouth. His eyes were rolled into his head, but Mika couldn’t help but scowl at his pitiful sight.

Mika released her weapon and let it hang at her side by a strap. She lifted Raymond into a seated position and reached into her coat for a vile of some pale liquid. She stuck it down Raymond’s throat and injected its contents down his gullet. Within seconds Raymond threw up a pint worth of smelly liquid onto the bed.

Mika seemed impervious to the imagery, and watched Raymond careful as he slowly breathed and spat what was in his mouth. She rubbed his back delicately, despite her hard expression, to settle his nerves.

After a while Raymond took steady breaths. As he came around, he noticed Mika and motioned to get up.

Mika pushed him back down. “Stay still for a while,” she said.

“...What happened?” said Raymond with a dazed face.

Joel S. Williams

“That’s what happens when you steal from me,” said Mika.

Raymond gave her a questioning expression, but upon remembering Actoa, he quickly said, “Oh shit! Where is she?”

Mika held him steady once more and said, “She’s gone. Don’t worry about that, I’ll take care of it?”

“That bitch!” said Raymond. “She tried to kill me!”

Mika slowly stood up and eyed Raymond with a scolding expression. “No,” she said. “She was trying to take control of her mind. That fluid she was squirting down your throat it a cerebral altering drug.”

Raymond looked away from Mika’s stare glumly. He ran a hand over his face and sighed. “Damn,” he said. “I can’t believe what just happened.” Raymond thought back on the entire situation. “I can’t believe...I thought she...”

“That’s what her species does,” said Mika. “Find a suitable host, take over its body and begin to spread.”

Raymond noticed the rifle at Mika’s hip, widening his eyes in surprise. He looked at Mika’s face, finding it almost comical she was trying to be tough with her angry expression. But Raymond quickly realized the magnitude of what was going on nonetheless.

“I’m sorry,” he said.

Mika’s face relaxed, and in a low voice, she said, “Forget it.” She cradled the weapon in her arms. “I’ll go finished what you started.” And she turned and leapt out of the window.

Joel S. Williams

## Chapter Four

Raymond couldn't forget about it. It would be stupid to think he could just ease over what happened with a good night sleep.

*An Alien woman tried to choke me with her snatch!* Raymond thought as he stripped down.

He hurriedly searched through his wardrobe for a new set of clothes. He put on a grey and red shirt and pants. He hopped into his shoes and reached under his bed for the crowbar. After taking up his house key and five hundred dollars out of the drawer, Raymond threw the mattress against the shattered window, tiptoeing on the glass beneath his shoes. He pushed the dresser against it and left his room.

He ran down the stairs to the kitchen and took out a few knives, placing them in his backpack. He grabbed his bicycle and shoved it out the front door. Closing it behind him he rode towed the bicycle alongside him across the lawn into the street.

The moon was bright above like an eerie beacon. A slight wind ruffled the leaves into excited whispers, and already a few of the neighbors were outside of their houses looking intently in the direction of Raymond's house.

"Nothing to worry about folks?" said Raymond. "Ahh...the stove...just blew out. I'm gonna get a new one!" But Raymond already noticed some of them on their cellphones. He winced and murmured, "Ahh dammit."

Raymond quickened his pace along the sidewalk towards Mika's gate. He hefted the bicycle and groaned as he threw it over her fence. He hopped over it and ran across the darkened lawn towards the front door.

He knocked on the door. "Mika! Mika open up!" Without a moment's thought Raymond twisted the knob and pushed, and was immediately relieved and shocked when the door opened.

He hesitated before swearing and stepping inside. He paused and looked around the tan painted room, dimly lit by a crooked Chandelier in the ceiling. The room had less furniture than his, with a small TV on the wooden table. There were no pictures on the walls, and only a few atheistic crockeries on the shelves.

"...Mika?" he said.

Joel S. Williams

Raymond cautiously walked across the flashy rug to the nearest room on his right. He peeped inside and saw a few boxes in one corner filled with containers. He tilted his head at them, noticing something familiar. But not seeing Mika, he turned away—and stared down the dark barrel of Mika’s rifle.

Raymond jerked. “Fuck!” he said.

“What’re you doing inside my house?” said Mika.

With his trembling hands near his face, Raymond said, “I came over here to help you?”

“I don’t need your help,” said Mika. She lowered her weapon. “Get outta my house.”

But the man suddenly straightened his spine and dropped his hands into clenched fists. “No,” he said. “I’m not running away from this. That bitch played me. She’s not getting away.”

Mika said, “You don’t what you’re up against,” and walked away.

Raymond followed her down a hallway, saying, “Look, you’re not gonna—”

Mika spun around and pointed in Raymond’s frightened face. “You little jackass!” she sneered. “You don’t get it, do you?” Mika lowered her hand. “You didn’t just make a mistake. You put millions of lives at stake here!”

“What...?” said Raymond.

Mika pointed with the intention as if she meant the street out the front door. “That alien you released is a *snekelosa*. It’s a walking extinction machine that alters the DNA of any sapient species it infects. My people spent years tracking her down after she escaped. I managed to follow her to this state, but your stupid ass set her free! Now she’ll restart her plans again; breed out the entire human species and take over the planet! All thanks to your dumb ass!”

Mika’s word effectively silenced Raymond, but for a while. After a reflective moment, Raymond said in a humble voice, “Then let me help...”

Mika said, “What? Did you hear what I just said?”

“Yeah Mika, I heard!” said Raymond. “I heard that I fucked up; like I always do! I don’t wanna keep on doing it! I need to make things right this time!” When Mika didn’t respond right away to his outburst, Raymond gently added, “I need to clean my shit I made in your house...”

After a tense minute of the two of them staring at each other, Mika broke the silence with her words, “...If you die, Raymond, that’s on you...”

Raymond made a silly grin. “So...” he said, “I’m in?”

“No,” said Mika, she turned and opened the door in the hallway. “But you can watch the door.”

She opened the door and stepped inside. She lifted her firm hand into the dark and turned on the switch. The lights snapped on, exposing to Raymond what seemed to be a study of sorts. There were charts and pictures of all sorts on the walls. One side of the room had what looked like a welding station with a few guns, while the other had a shelf with gores, papers and other strange objects.

Raymond stepped inside with his eyes scouring the room. It was the size of his bedroom, but the comforts of a personal quarters were replaced by what seemed to be the combination of a gun store, a stalker’s cave and a witch’s hut.

“What in the actually hell?” said Raymond.

Mika went to a shelf and took up a crate of thumb-sized bullets. “Touch anything and I’ll chop off your hands.”

Raymond felt a jolt in his wrists and rubbed them. He went to one of the walls and peered at the photographs. There were images of men in black suits, barren towns and creepy rooms, a few UFO drawings, and even those relating to strange creatures.

“So,” said Raymond as he observed an image of Bigfoot shaking hands with a man in brown uniform, “what kind of work do you do, exactly?”

Mika took a knife sheath and clipped it onto her waist. “If I told you, I would have to kill you,” she said.

Raymond looked from the image of a scaly baby snarling in a cage and turned to Mika. “I’m pretty sure the alien has both our names at the top of her list.”

Mika paused, looked at Raymond with annoyed eyes, and went back to putting in the bullets into a small pack around her waist. “I work for a secret organization,” she said.

“The government?” said Raymond.

“No,” said Mika as she took two of the bullets and shoved them into the clip. “Basically it’s what you would probably call the illuminati. More specifically, our task force is call Ark.”

A cold chill crawled up Raymond’s back. “Oh shit,” he said. “You’re not gonna kill me like how you told me your secret, are you?”

Mika checked a little valve on the clip and saw that it was pushed up to the edge. With the maximum of fourteen bullets inside, she jammed it into the base of her rifle and said, “Not

unless you threaten to willingly expose our existence.” Mika hefted gently aimed the rifle at Raymond. The man quickly mimed zipping his mouth, and Mika lowered her weapon. “Good,” she said.

“So, you hunt aliens?” Raymond said.

“And ghosts, cryptids, crazy occult people that want to merge our universe with the other one, and loose cannon agents,” said Mika. She headed over to the armory section and took up a nine-millimeter pistol. “We usually just document their existence. If they pose a threat to humans, like the snekelosa, we exterminate them.”

Raymond rubbed the back of his head, feeling a tingly sensation. “Wow,” he said. “All this shit. It’s a bit too much, man.”

Mika gestured the handgun to Raymond, “So,” she said, “you still wanna join in the hunt?”

Raymond saw Mika’s slight smile, and realized she told him all of that to test him. He frowned and quickly snatched the gun out of her grasp. “Hell yeah I’m ready!” He put the gun in the back of his pants in his waist.

“Okay then,” said Mika.

“Wait,” said Raymond. “How’ll we find Actoa? She must be long gone by now.”

“Don’t fret about that,” said Mika. She reached into her coat and took out smartphone, however it was well thick, with a design Raymond never saw mainstream.

He got closer to look at it and said, “What’s that?”

Mika pulled out a small slot at the side of the phone, touched it with a slime coated swab and closed the slot. “It’s a Biotic Energy Scanner,” she said. “Or BES for short. We can track the energy from her cells with this.”

Raymond saw a radar with a blue background appear on the screen. A pulse emanated from a dot in the center, which each time it did so a small arrow appeared in the upper left-hand corner of the screen.

“Sweet,” said Raymond. “Can I get one of those?”

“No,” said Mika. “We have to hurry. It only last for fifteen minutes until it needs another sample.”

Raymond and Mika exited the room and Mika closed it with a latch. As Raymond headed outside he saw a group of people standing in the street. Some close to Mika’s property. Raymond

took up his bicycle, and was alerted to the sudden kick of a car's engine. He turned to the house and saw Mika's small minivan driving out of the garage.

Raymond opened both sides of the gate and went to the vehicle. He opened the back door and propped his bicycle inside. As Mika and drove outside Raymond closed the gates and hopped into the vehicle next to Mika. As he closed the door Mika took off, guided by the BES hooked onto the dashboard.

Raymond took one more glance back at the shrinking community and turned away as Mika brought them onto the main road. Apart from the signs over stores and the light from a few vehicles on the street, the night was almost dark, as the moon as hidden behind a few clouds.

"Where would she go?" said Raymond.

"She has two goals to complete," said Mika said as she sped down the street. "She first needs servants to help her. And she'll need a large body of water too."

"Why?" Raymond said, gripping the seat as Mika swerved onto another street. He noticed her eyes switched from the road to the device every few seconds.

"She plans to repopulate her species," said Mika, "so she'll need to sacrifice a few people to awaken the God of Birth to impregnate her."

Raymond's eyebrows lifted. "Wait?" he said. "A god?"

Mika noticed the arrow changed position and she turned the car in that path. "There're a lot of things in this world, Raymond," said Mika as she spotted a dot appear on the device. "Some of it, I wish you won't ever have to see."

The *Sinners Strip Club* was thriving with music, drinks and women, as usual. Located on the northeast of the town, it was one of three places like this in the entire town, but it was the most famous. It was located in a tourist area that incorporated other natural attractions and businesses. But inside the Sinners, more freedom could be granted.

The doors were wide open, leading into a vast lounge with dazzling lights, head throbbing music and waiters catering to the customers. But of course, the main attraction were the scantily clad women gyrating on the stages and grinding against the poles.

The air stunk of alcohol and the expelled genital fluids. And that in itself was cause for more of it to take place.

Joel S. Williams

Seated in a lavish pink couch, a round-bellied man in a colorful shirt and shorts, conversed with a lovely young woman beside him. They exchanged words and laughed in between, mostly the young woman. Dressed in nothing but fishnets that exposed her nipples and a few pubic hairs, the man gently stroked her thigh. He then whispered something in her ear that made her giggle.

She turned to him and nodded, and the man took her by the hand and they rose out of their seats. They walked through the crowded spaces that was slowly becoming a dancefloor congested with mostly tourists and the local strippers, and headed into a series of corridors at the back. On the way they passed a woman squatting over a crouched man's face and a man jerking himself off in a corner.

The pair found the back door where two guards sat watch. The man showed them his pass-ticket and they allowed him to leave.

When the door swung close behind them, they found themselves in a back alley. The man handed the woman a wad of cash and she knelt and began unzipping his pants. The man stepped back into the shadows to hide himself most of all.

As the woman pulled out his erect manhood and stroked it, she looked up at him with glittered eyes and said, "Do you want it fast or slow?"

"Slow," he said. "Definitely."

The woman smiled and swallowed him, wrapping her tongue around him. The man tensed and winced. He made a soft ground and the woman threw her head back and forth.

In the midst of it, the man opened his eyes as the wondrous sensation consumed him, and spotted a feminine shape coming down the alley. He noticed something strange about her, as if apart of her was missing, but he was too focused on stopping himself from exploding in the woman's mouth too soon. He curled his toes upon feeling her tongue whiplash against the tip of penis.

Suddenly the strange woman stopped near them, and the man noticed something else about her. Her clothes were soaked in some strange, smelly fluid. And she was missing an arm. The man's mouth opened, contemplating whether to scream or not. He vigorously tapped the woman kneeling before him and she stopped and looked up.

"What?" she said sharply.

"Is she okay?" the man said in a shaky voice.

The almost naked woman got up and turned to the person behind her. She noticed the woman missing an arm and squirmed. "Oh my god!" The stripper looked at the woman's ashen face and noticed the bright glare in her eyes.

At that was when Actoa struck.

With one solid punch Actoa snapped back the woman's head and sent her into the wall. Before the man could scream, Actoa delivered a chopping blow to his throat. As both of them crumpled to the ground, Actoa reached for the dazed woman kneeling on the ground and squatted over her face. A muscular tube lurched from beneath Actoa's dress and wriggled into the woman's mouth.

Actoa bit her lip as shivers raced up her back at the release of her fluids into the woman's throat. She stood up and left her victim coughing and reached for the man. He tried to crawl away but Actoa plated her foot in his back, sending a sharp jolt into his spine that stunned him.

As the man whimpered Actoa rolled him over and administered the same procedure as she did the woman.

Actoa stepped away, watching the two shiver with drool running from their mouths. But suddenly they stood up with blank stares. They steadied themselves before Actoa and bowed their heads.

Actoa then opened her mouth and two barded tubes lurched out, striking both of the dazed individuals in their necks. Actoa retracted her weapons and watched as the black holes in their necks spread like dark veins along their bodies.

The man and the woman hunched over and convulsed. The smaller woman fell to the ground flailed. Their skin got moister and took on a grey-green coloration. Their eyes darkened with blue dots and their mouths widened into frowns.

They stood once more and turned to Actoa. "...*Mother*..." they both said.

Actoa looked at the mutated humans before her and smiled. "Now," she said, "let's have some fun."

Actoa headed towards the back door with her two slaves following closely behind. She pushed open the door and entered, immediately eliciting a response from the guards who got up and approached her.

The muscular men in black shirts looked at each other and back at Actoa.

“Miss...are you okay?” said one of the guards. When Actoa didn’t answer he said again, “Should I call the police, mam?”

Actoa’s servants came to her side, and the two men recoiled in horror at their horrid appearances.

“Oh shit!” said the other guard as he attempted to run. Actoa opened her mouth and released her barbs into the back of his head. They punctured his skull and yanked out a chunk of his brain. As Actoa knelt and feasted from the twitching corpse’s gaping wound, her servants subdued the other guard and brought him to the floor.

Actoa got up with the man’s skull hollowed and the severed end of her arm sprouting muscular tendrils. Her vagina extended from beneath her dress, dripping fluids, and she said to the frightened man, “We need some cups, be a good dear and fetch them for us.”

“A damn strip club?” said Raymond as the car pulled into the parking lot.

Mika killed the engine and took the BES off the dashboard. Next to the red dot in the center was a fading red icon. “This is the perfect place,” Mika said. “Lots of sexed up people who she can easily manipulate.”

Mika got out and reached for a rectangular bag between the front seats. She strung it over her shoulder and headed to the club’s front door with Raymond hastily catching up to her.

“What will we do when we reach inside?” said Raymond as he and Mika waited for the guard at the door to give a man a ticket.

“We act normal until we see her,” said Mika. “Once we do, we take her out.”

Mika was about to reach in her wallet when Raymond stepped forward with a handful of cash. The guard took two hundred dollars and handed them both tickets. He pulled away a tape at the door and Mika and Raymond entered.

As they walked inside Raymond looked uncomfortably at the women on the stage. As his eyes got snippets of breasts, crotch and ass he felt his groin throb and he tucked his penis between his legs.

Mika turned to Raymond and said, “We’ll split up. I’ll take to right.”

“Okay,” said Raymond.

Mika noticed the nervousness in his voice and especially on his face. She touched his warm hand and said, “Be careful, Raymond.”

Raymond nodded. Mika walked off.

Raymond took a deep breath and exhaled. He touched the gun in his waist discreetly and hefted his backpack. He walked along a row of couches, and noticed one woman with her face buried in a man's pants. Raymond looked away but was quickly met by two women kissing each other.

Raymond hurried over to a small table and sat in the chair around it. He placed his backpack over his lap, as he was too excited.

Raymond sat forward and observed what was going on around him. He rubbed his head, thinking what he'd gotten himself into. He then noticed Mika just looking away from him. He smiled, thinking how he ended up on some life and death adventure with his worst neighbor who turned out to be a monster hunter.

*This is some rich shit right here,* Raymond thought.

Raymond felt somewhat better with that thought, and he sat back. He noticed some activity on the stage. He sat forward again and saw a few women sitting at the foot of the stage with their legs wide open. Between them were men with their heads eagerly buried in their crotches.

Raymond felt an intense rush of blood in his penis and winced. He rubbed, saying, "Dammit..."

As he discretely began to stroke himself, he saw one of the men pull his head away from the woman's wet groin and wipe his lips. The man slapped the woman's breast and she scurried back onto the stage. The man turned around, and Raymond gawked in disbelief.

"Barry?" Raymond said.

Barry's elated face and physique were unmistakable, but it wasn't that Raymond was surprised to see him in a place like this. It was the fact that his friend would be involved in what was about to go down tonight.

Raymond got up with his rapidly decreasing erection and hurried over to Barry. Upon reaching his friend he shoved him gently to get his attention. Barry turned around with a pissed off expression that suddenly lit up.

"Raymond?" Barry said. "What the hell? What are you doing here?"

"Hey...uh..." Raymond couldn't find the correct way to explain it. He wanted his friend safe, but he still had to try. "Barry, we can't stay here?"

“What?” said the man.

“I heard some people whispering that there’s gonna be a police raid here soon,” said Raymond.

A waitress stopped near the two of them with a tray containing cups of water. Barry took one and drank, but Raymond waved off the waitress. Barry swallowed the water, noted a strange but delightful taste, and grimaced.

“Ray what the hell are you talking about?” said Barry. “Sure, the cops come in here from time to time when things get outta hand, but that never shuts the club down!”

Raymond frowned. He turned away for a brief moment before going back to his friend and say, “Yeah, you’re right, but come on dude! To how I hear these guys talking it sounds serious.”

Barry got up, staggered for a moment, and turned to Raymond. His friend quickly helped him under his arms to prevent him from falling.

“See,” said Raymond. “You’re even drunk!”

“I’m...not,” said Barry, smiling and drooling. He held onto Raymond’s shoulders and said, “Look, I know what’s wrong with you...?”

“What?” said Raymond incredulously?

“You’re a virgin,” said Barry.

“N-no I’m not!” said Raymond.

“It’s okay,” said Barry. “It’s cool...Girls like fresh guys. Look, I’ll hook you up...”

As Barry patted Raymond two women suddenly slipped around them.

Raymond took notice of the strippers with colorful hair glaring at him and said, “What? Can I help you women with something?”

Barry began to wobble. Raymond sat him down, and Barry replied, “See Ray, they heard my prayers.”

Raymond ignored his dazed friend and turned to the women. As he did he picked up a strange, familiar scent coming from their breath. He noticed a dazed look in their eyes as if they were on drugs.

It was then Raymond realized it was the same features with Barry, and as he turned to his seated friend, Raymond recoiled in terror.

Standing behind Barry with an arm gracefully around him, was Actoa

Mika seated herself around the bar along with a man and ordered herself a glass of water. She took a sip and scanned the surroundings for any signs of her alien prey. But suddenly something in her compelled her to look elsewhere, for Raymond. She did so, and spotted the man sitting around a table by himself. She noted the uneasy look on his face and frowned.

*I shouldn't have brought him along, Mika thought. Now I have to worry about him too.*

Mika took another sip and put the glass down. She looked at her left hand and felt an unsettling feeling in her increasing. She clenched her fist and blotted it out before it became too strong.

She noticed the man next to her bobbing his head. She noticed the half empty cup of water a waitress had given to him. However, Mika ignored the drunken man and took out her biotic energy scanner. She took another stained swab out of her coat and placed it in the scanner. She reactivated the device, expecting to see the pulsating screen and an arrow.

But instead, she was met with several red dots around her.

An anchor suddenly fell in Mika's gut. Her mind froze. Her eyes were fixated on the targets that seemingly surrounded her. Mika had the scanner discreetly in her lap, and memorizing the targets from her central position on the screen of the scanner, she looked up. And sure enough, out of the potential targets she spotted Actoa. The alien woman had a fresh change of clothes, probably from someone she either entranced or killed. Mika followed Actoa's path and saw her heading to where Raymond was conversing with another man.

"Oh shit..." Mika said. She motioned out of her seat but quickly stopped. She took note of the other targets around her. Mika turned and looked at the back entrance where a man and woman stood in the shadows. Mika matched the other targets with the waitress walking around, a security guard who walked idly around, two women near Raymond and the man he was talking to, and the man seated next to Mika around the bar.

Mika's gaze shifted to the man next to her. He was still with the cup in his hand, his head hung. But Mika clearly noticed his dilated stare focused on her. Mika slowly reached for the bag at her side with her free hand, and that was when it kicked off.

"Mika!" Raymond screamed.

Mika took her eyes off the man for a split second and saw Raymond being subdued by the two women next to him. Actoa hauled Barry onto the stage like a ragdoll.

But out of the corner of her eye, Mika saw the man launched himself at her. Mika kicked off against the bar and moved out of his way. They both fell and the bartender looked over at what was going on. Mika kicked her assailant across the head, scurried to her feet and kicked him in the gut. So hard was the blow that the man slid into the side of the bar.

With violence sprouting in two different places it garnered the attention of the club goers and workers who stirred into excited shouts and murmurs and distances themselves.

Mika dipped her hand into her bag and fingered for the trigger of her concealed weapon, hurrying towards Actoa.

Raymond kicked and punched frantically off his back but the women seemed impervious to his blows as they tried to pin him down. Finally they took hold of his arms and hauled him onto his knees. One of the women punched him in the face and stunned him.

As Actoa hurried over she noticed the waitress and a security guard coming her way. The man who she had downed before got up and made for her as well.

Suddenly Mika angled her bag at the stage and said, "Hey, bitch! Let him go!"

The security guards who weren't afflicted by Actoa's juices went for Actoa on the stage and Mika.

Actoa turned to Mika with her arm around Barry's neck and said, "Ah, so glad you could make it! *Ark Hunter!* I wondered how long it would be before you caught onto me..."

Mika held her bag firmly, blotting out the chatter and erratic movement around her. The music had already died as even the DJ had taken notice of the fracas.

"Actoa!" said Raymond.

The alien woman looked down at Raymond kneeling dejectedly. "Oh, hello Raymond." "Let my friend go..." Raymond said. "He's not involved with this. Please...just let him go..."

Actoa smiled, caressed Barry's face, and said, "...You really are a kind man, Raymond. But I'm sorry. I have to make sure my species thrives once more. I really wanted you for my ceremony, Raymond. But, I just can't seem to control you. I guess you're of no use to me then."

A security guard not under Actoa's spell leapt onto the stage. He was a muscular specimen with thick arms. Actoa would've loved to have had him in her small force, but circumstances seemed it wouldn't be so.

"Bitch, get off the fucking stage!" snarled the man as he reached for her.

Joel S. Williams

Actoa opened her mouth and her two, barbed radula shot out. They jammed into the man's eyes, and his body suddenly bucked and careened over. As the crowd erupted into fear induced hysteria and scattered about, Actoa hooked her barbs into Barry's neck.

"Nooooo!" said Raymond, quickly silenced by a blow to the head from one of the women. The other one took hold of his neck as if to twist it.

"God dammit!" said Mika. Reluctantly, she swerved the bag away from Actoa and laid her aim upon the women around Raymond.

Mika pulled the trigger and the bag bucked. The front of it blew open. The woman with her hands around Raymond's head flew back with a huge, bloody hole in her chest.

As Raymond shuddered under the blood that splashed onto him the other woman took off just as Mika fired another round. Unfortunately for her, Mika's aim was dead on. The explosive round hit her right in the mid-section of her torso. Her upper body hit the floor with her intestines rolling out, but her lower half managed to go four more steps before falling.

Mika fought her way through the scrabbling crowd and made her way for Raymond. Raymond quickly got to his feet but was quickly knocked over by the crowd. Mika then ignored Raymond, took the entire body of her weapon out of her bag and pointed it at the stage. There she saw Actoa kneeling over a convulsing Barry.

Mika's finger grazed the trigger, but the infected waitress pushed her and sent her shot off course into the ceiling.

Mika snarled and elbowed the waitress. Mika sprung her foot into the assailant and sent the waitress sprawling back. Mika felt four hands latch onto her and bring her to the floor. She felt the entire weight of someone on her hand, subduing her weapon.

Mika looked into the two faces before, and shivered. It was the man and woman who were infected earlier. drool dripped from their misshapen mouths. The man opened his mouth in a gape that could swallow a melon whole. A stench of sweaty vagina and vanilla wafted off his breath into Mika's face that made the muscles in her uterus contract

As the man set his pike-like teeth to encompass Mika's head, there was a loud explosion and a sticky hole polled in the mutated man's head.

Raymond, now on his feet and holding the gun firmly in both hands, walked forward as he fired repeatedly. His shots were wild with a few missing the target. But two more ended up in the man's mouth and chest.

Joel S. Williams

The man fell upon Mika and the woman took off.

Mika rolled the corpse off her and stood up with her rifle prepped to deliver more death.

“Are you alright?” said Raymond as she stood next to her.

Mika turned to the stage and saw no one there but the corpse of the dead security guard.

Mika exhaled in despair. “Come on!” she said as she grabbed Raymond’s hand and dragged him along with her.

As Mika tried to find an exit, there in the back she saw Actoa, along with her infected security guard, Barry and the stripper who had attacked Mika, were darting into the hallway leading to the back exit.

“There they are!” said Mika.

Some of the crowd went in that same direction as well. In the onrush of frightened civilians Raymond and Mika were pressed against each other. Mika held her rifle up as not to accidentally shoot someone. Finally they could see the back door wide open as people piled through.

*Come on!* Mika thought as she hurried.

They stepped outside, immediately caressed by the cool, fresh breeze. With their weapons still visible to everyone, the crowd hastened away from the gun-wielding duo.

Mika suddenly spotted movement above and looked. There she saw the four targets heading up the wall and out of sight.

“Barry!” said Raymond as he saw his friend go up the side of the building.

Mika held onto Raymond and ran. Raymond’s body reluctantly followed, almost unwilling to comprehend the situation.

They head out of the alley and back onto the main street. Raymond freed his hand from Mika and said, “What are we gonna do now? They got away?”

“They only thing we can do,” she said. Mika and Raymond made their way to the front of the club and made for Mika’s van. “We’re gonna end this bitch once and for all.”

Joel S. Williams

## Chapter Five

Mika drove them a great distance from the scene of the crime until they couldn't hear the screams and the sirens any more. With the club a bit far from the main body of the city, Mika managed to bring them close to the highway at full speed in less than twenty minutes.

With the clouds gone from beneath the moon, it lit the streets below and created shadows that lurched and crawled across the land.

The highway was a hilly area surround by a thin forest. Mika parked the van off the side of the road. She turned off the engine and threw herself back in her seat. She closed her eyes and steadied her breathing. Hers and Raymond's were the only things besides the crickets that could be heard that night.

With the blood surging in her body slowed, Mika opened her eyes and looked across at Raymond.

The man rested his head in his hand. His eyes fixed at the nothingness outside. They remained silent until a lonely car drove past. Its light flashing against their blood and sweat stricken faces. Mika's mind was focused on the next plan of action, but it seemed to her Raymond's head was somewhere else.

"Are you okay?" Mika said softly.

Raymond slowly shook his head with a depressed look. "Why do I keep on doing this?" he said.

"What are you talking about?" said Mika.

"...Ruining good things," Raymond said. "I have things easy, but I just keep on screwing up."

Mika exhaled deeply and sat forward, she leaned a little closer and said, "It's okay Raymond. We'll make it through this."

"It's not just that," said Raymond. He took his hand off his head and hunched over. He contemplated telling Mika what was running through his mind. He shook his head, "Nah, forget it"

Mika pursed her lips. She said, "Well...we've been this far together. I've told you things about me if regular people know they would be dead by now. I don't see what could be any worse that the shit we're in now?"

Joel S. Williams

Raymond glanced over at Mika's smile and looked away. But, though reluctantly, he said, "I'm responsible for my mother and father getting a divorce."

Mika's smile slowly melted into a frown. "...Oh," she said. "How did it happen?"

"When I was young, I walked in on my father with another woman in bed," said Raymond with a dejected expression, his voice almost hollow. "My father never knew that I saw him. But when my mother came home, I told her."

Mika sunk back in her chair. "Raymond...you didn't know any better," she said.

Raymond rubbed his head. "I should have," he said. "If I'd just kept my mouth shut, maybe they would've still been together by now."

Mika said, "Wait, then you've been living on your own since then?"

Raymond shook his head. "I stayed with my dad," he said. "He still took care of me but he never really looked at me like his son since then. When I started working he threw the bills on me and took off. I haven't heard from him since."

Mika sighed and shook her head in defiance. "Raymond, you aren't responsible for where your father puts his dick," she said. Mika slowly reached over and grasped Raymond's hand. The man slowly looked over at her. "Don't go beating yourself up over it."

"Don't you get it?" Raymond said. "It's the same shit I did here. I couldn't keep my nose out of people's business. If I'd just given you the package and let you kill the alien, people wouldn't have gotten hurt. Now my friend got turned into a fucking monster."

"And I should've taken a better shot when I had the chance," Mika said. "Raymond, you're not alone in this. We've all made mistakes. At least now you're trying to correct it."

Mika gently touched Raymond's face. She looked at her innocently with his bright brown eyes. He began to relax under her warmth, and found himself smiling.

Mika smiled back, and suddenly pulled away. "Wait, Raymond?"

"...Yeah?" he said. He sat up a little.

"Are you a virgin?" she said.

Raymond grunted and looked away.

"No! I'm not trying to be funny!" Mika said. "I just realized something."

"Yeah, I am," Raymond said. "So what?"

Mika clapped her hands and smiled. "So that's it!" she said. "That's why the alien's mind control didn't work on you."

Joel S. Williams

Raymond gave her a quizzical gesture, and Mika replied saying, “The alien’s vaginal juices act as her mind control agent. Its potency is based on how sexually active the person’s mind is. Raymond, the reason why it didn’t work on you is because you must still be experiencing some sexual repression coming from when you walked in on your father.”

Raymond was about to protest but withheld his tongue. The more he ran his mind across it, the more it made sense. “I think so,” he said. “Actoa even tried to have sex with me once. But then I remembered seeing my father and that woman, and what came afterwards.”

“The purity of a virgin,” Mika said with a gleeful smile. “Ah, to think myths like that can turn out to be true! Raymond, I don’t believe in luck, but it seems the universe put you through that circumstance for a reason. You’re my perfect partner.”

Raymond smirked and chuckled. Mika patted him and said, “Come on, Ray, we have work to do. We need to finish Actoa off.”

“But where would we even go?” he said.

Mika said, “Remember what I said? She needs a large body of water to make the sacrifice to summon the God of Birth. Like a river...”

Raymond’s forehead furrowed, and he said coldly, “Or a lake...”

“What?” said Mika.

Raymond turned to her and said, “You’re new to this town, so you don’t know. But there’s a lake near my workplace. From here it would be the closest large body of water.”

“Okay,” said Mika as she opened the door and unslung her rifle. “Let’s go.”

Raymond got out and said, “Hey, Mika, what’re we gonna do about the club? I mean...we were shooting at people. And they got our faces on camera!”

“No problem,” said Mika as she went to back of her van and popped it open. As Raymond stared at the large duffle bag Mika took out her cellphone and pressed a number on speed dial. After a while someone in a deep voice answered the phone, and Mika said, “Crow, it’s me, Mockingbird. Yeah...I know...Listen, I was in a bit of a pickle with a snekelosa in a nightclub in Pansa Square...Exactly...Yup...It’s the Sinner’s strip club...Found it...? Okay. Hey, you see that black guy shooting at stuff; he’s with me, okay? Thanks...”

Mika hung up the phone and looked at Raymond’s confused expression. “It’s okay. We’ll confiscate the video footage in the next twenty-four hours.”

Joel S. Williams

Raymond fought his reluctance and said, “So, the illuminati is gonna keep what we did a secret?”

“Not the *illuminati*,” said Mika testily as she opened the bag, “*Ark* will. And stop saying *illuminati*. It sounds outdated.”

Mika exposed a number of weapons in the bag. Raymond gaped at them and said, “Damn. Mika you’re strapped.”

Mika took out another rifle similar to hers and gave it to Raymond. “It’s just standard procedure,” she said. As Raymond examined the weapon, Mika showed him the ammunition and said, “These are specially developed explosive rounds that contain a solution of salt, citric acid and pepper. The mixture’s extremely effective against aliens like *snekelosa*. It melts away at their bodies.”

“Okay,” said Raymond. “That’s some nasty shit.”

After Mika showed Raymond how to operate the rifle and how to administer the ammunition, she showed him mustard and ketchup tubes she had replaced with the acidic compound and fitted with metallic spouts that can easily puncture the toughest skin.

After briefly acquainting Raymond with her arsenal, Mika drove them back into the city towards the location of the lake. The trek took over twenty minutes as they tried to evade the streets that the police cars where on, until finally they neared the location.

The destination itself led them through the center of Pansa Square and into a thin patch of woods some four miles from Raymond’s place of work. The light from the moon was modest, but the two still equipped themselves with flashlights on their rifles.

They stopped the vehicle as they neared the woods of the grassy trail and got out. Mika and Raymond had bags filled with ammunition and close-quarters weapons of death on their waists as well; in Raymond’s case his crowbar.

Mika took the lead with Raymond close by. With a slight wind the shadows lurched back and forth in a taunting manner. The sharp cries of insects and amphibians rang in their ears, but they tried to keep focus. Mika more so out of the two.

“Mika?” Raymond whispered as he took cautious steps. “You sure you couldn’t call for back up?”

“Not unless you’re assigned to a mission,” she said. “I chose this mission, so I have to finish it myself...How far until we can spot the lake?”

Raymond halted upon seeing a frog jump pass him and continued. “Just a couple more yards,” he said.

But as they continued, a large shape caught their attention. When they got close they found it out to be a small, abandoned shack.

Raymond shivered upon seeing the building. “I’ve never seen this before.”

Mika reached in her jacket as she stepped over a log and observed the decaying building. “I though you knew about this area?” she said.

“I never came from this side before?” said Raymond.

Half the top of the shack was missing, and the door was pulled off. However the windows were boarded up. They peered inside with their lights and found nothing but rusted pots and dried bed of sticks and leaves.

“Must’ve been a hobo who lived here,” said Raymond.

“Raymond!” Mika said stiffly.

Raymond inched closer to her side and peered at the scanner’s screen and suddenly felt a stifling grip on his throat.

On the screen several red dots were approaching from the opposite direction at great speed.

“They’re here,” Mika said. “Run!”

The two of them retreated from the shack and back the way they came. Behind them they could hear the pace of their pursuers getting louder.

“How the hell did she know we were coming?” Raymond said as he ran.

“She’s been hunted before,” said Mika as she easily maintained her pace. “The last time she wasn’t successful! My brother stopped her!”

Raymond panned across at her. “Your brother?”

Once Mika got them far enough out of the density of the woods, she said, “Stop! Make a stand here!” and spun around.

She bent one knee and angled her weapon. Raymond stood up with wobbling feet and aimed in the gloom of the woods. They saw the silhouettes and outlines of their pursuers entering the light; dozens of mutated beings with agonized faces eagerly moving towards them. Some of the assailants even had mundane objects in their grasps with the intent of murder. Guttural screams and grunts escaped their throats.

“How the hell did she infect so many people?” said Raymond.

“Just shoot!” said Mika as she let off the first shot.

The round hit an infected right in the gut, knocking the woman back with her entrails exploding out on both sides. One of her next three shots missed, but the other two found their mark. One infected lost his head and the other was abruptly spun head-over-heels with a football-sized hole in his chest.

One of the infected threw a pickaxe near Raymond, but luckily the tree before him took the blow. Raymond flinched and rapidly pressed the trigger. The weapon thud in his hands and the muzzle exploded in sparks. The bullets hit around his target until one struck an infect in the thigh, tearing off his leg.

“Yes!” said Raymond.

“Steady your shots!” said Mika as she fired once more, hitting an infected man in the center of his chest, ripping off his right shoulder.

Raymond held his breath and fired, punching a hole in the chest of another target. But as the women fell with foam frothing from her gaping wound, more of the infected ran over her towards them.

Raymond lowered his gun in disbelief. “Holy shit!” he said. “It’s like she turned an entire town. There’re so many of them!”

Mika reached into her pocket and turned to Raymond. “Hey!” she said, and threw her car keys at him. “Take my van and get the hell outta here!”

“What the hell you saying?” said Raymond. “I’m not going anywhere?”

Mika moved from behind her cover and into the open. “Raymond I’m not gonna fricking argue with you! Get moving! Now!”

The infected were mere meters away. Mika released her rifle and reached for mini-uzi at her side. She unsheathed the knife in her left hand, with the solution dripping off it that had been slathered inside the sheathe.

Raymond reluctantly backpedaled, eventually turned and ran. “Fuck!”

Mika rested the gun on her forearm and opened fire in a sweeping arc, striking the infected that swarmed her. The high velocity bullets at this close range spewed blood from their wounds. It took more regular bullets to drop the enemies, but Mika had no choice against such numbers.

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Those that still survived the onslaught ran at her, but some headed for Raymond speeding away.

Mika stomped an infected in the gut and sent him on his back. She cut open another infected's throat, ducked beneath one's swiping axe and cut him from the gut up, spilling his intestines on the grass. Mika swung her arm into an infected with such unworldly force that mutant attacker's eye popped out and his neck broke. She lifted her gun once more and got off a few more shots until she heard the hollow click of the empty magazine. She swore and tossed the weapon aside, charging into her attackers with just two knives. But soon they began to land deadly blows on her.

Raymond took brief glances behind him to see Mika being overwhelmed by her attackers. "Dammit!" he said, then noticed four infected chasing him and quickened his pace.

Raymond opened the driver side and hopped inside. But just as Raymond sat down and stuck the key into the ignition, a vicious blow shattered the glass. Raymond screamed and struggled to bring his rifle around to shoot. Once he did he saw a large infected man standing before the door. The man had the sledge hammer ready to deal another blow, but Raymond fired first. The blast sent foam and fluid flying from the man's gut and threw him back.

The other window busted open, but Raymond couldn't bring the weapon around in time. An infected woman with greasy black hair lunged inside and tried to wrestle the gun from Raymond, who only managed to get off a few misfires. Raymond yelled in despair and kicked at her until he could open the door behind him and crawl out on his back. As he fell he felt stones and glass sticking into his back. Raymond quickly rolled over and staggered to his feet. He lifted his rifle and watch his three enemies approach, the woman, a man with a machete, and a familiar face.

"...Barry!" said Raymond.

There was his chubby friend, his clothes stained with fluids and dirt, his skin discolored and writhing, his mouth and eyes mutated, but the shape of his face unmistakable.

Barry suddenly made a smile of sharp, slimy teeth and said, "Hey Ray..."

Raymond held his hand in a nonthreatening gesture and said, "Barry, yo! Hold on, I can help bro! It's me!"

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“I know,” said Barry as he got closer with drool running down his chin. The other two infected spread out to try and corner Raymond. “I know Ray. I know you’re the one who did this?”

“What?” said Raymond. “N-no! No its not!”

“Yes, it is,” said Barry. “See, I have mother’s memories. We all do. You let her free. Oh, thanks by the way!”

Raymond lifted his rifle and said, “Look,” he turned to the other man and woman before pointing the weapon back at Barry, “Look, dude...I’m sorry, okay! I’m sorry! But just stop and Mika and I can help you.”

“Who, you mean that sexy Asian chick?” said Barry, halting before Raymond. “Nah. She’s gonna be used for the greater good?”

“What?” said Raymond.

Barry spread his arms in a grandiose fashion and said, “We’ll all be used for the greater good. Mother with sacrifice a handful of us and call upon the god of birth, Phallogora. He’ll impregnate all the women and breed a stronger batch of our kind. A pure race! And your new girlfriend? Well...” Barry laughed “...she’ll be one of the first set to give birth once she’s infected.”

Raymond noted the tone in Barry’s voice, as if he was high on something, and realized his friend was no longer there, for Raymond could feel the honesty and passion in his words. For the first time, Raymond’s hands stopped shaking, and determined to prevent Mika from falling to his mistake, steadied the sights on his weapon right between Barry’s eyes.

“Oh?” said Barry. “You’re gonna shoot your best buddy now? You don’t wanna join the fun side?”

Raymond said coldly, “You’re not my friend anymore,” and pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened but the dull sound of the hammer hitting an empty chamber. Raymond stared down at his weapon and said, “Ooooooooooh shit.”

The man to Raymond’s right lunged with the machete. Raymond leaped away and deflected the next blow with his rifle. Raymond quickly backpedaled, dropped the rifle and reached behind him for the pistol. He switched targets and opened fire at the woman running toward him. It took four shots to drop her and by then she had already scratched him on his chest.

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As Raymond winced and staggered away the infected man brought the machine down, carving a large wound on Raymond's chest. As Raymond uttered a tight squeal he fell on his back. But before the infected man could bring the machete down in Raymond's head, the human emptied the rest of the clip, striking his attacker in the stomach and crotch. The infected croaked and crumpled to the ground.

As Raymond rolled onto his hand and knees Barry kicked him in the ribs. Raymond squealed and flipped onto his back. He tried to get up once more, but Barry kicked him in the head. The stunning blow dropped Raymond flat on his face. His skull throbbed like his brain was about to explode, his chest burnt as if it was smothered in acid, but Raymond couldn't stay down. If he did so, Mika would die, not to mention himself!

Raymond groaned and slowly lifted himself onto his hands and knees. He raised his torso and looked up from his kneeling position at Barry, now clutching the machete the other infected had dropped.

Barry stopped before Raymond, light glinting off the blood on the weapon. "So, Ray," Barry said, "Can I eat your heart when I kill you? I like the taste of that more than the rest of the body?"

Raymond slowly smiled and said, "All...this...for some chick?"

Barry looked incredulously at Raymond, who quickly replied, "You think too much with your dick man."

Raymond suddenly leaped forward and headbutted Barry in the crotch. His infected friend's eyes flew wide open and he gaped. Barry staggered back, crossing his arms over his burning loins and stooped. At the same time Raymond staggered to his feet and reached for the crowbar off his waist.

Barry snarled. Slime spewed from between his teeth. His eyes widened, and he got up shrieking. The inhuman thing came for Raymond with the machete in a chopping blow. Raymond parried it with his crowbar. Raymond screamed with the weapon his both hands and brought it down into Barry's left eye.

Barry froze, dropped the machete and fell on his butt. Raymond stepped back and steadied his breathe. He was about to turn away when he saw Barry slowly reaching for the crowbar stuck in his skull.

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Raymond took one of the mustard bottles off his waist and walked over to Barry. He looked down at what was once his friend, and said, "I'll see you some day on the other side, bro."

Raymond stabbed Barry in his other eye and squeezed. He yanked it out and watch Barry's body slowly shake as the solution went to work. Barry's blood was spewed out in a thick, smelly foam that ran off his face into the ground, where it quickly melted.

Soon afterwards, Barry went still, and Raymond watched for a good while his dead friend before he sighed and walked away.

The thought had occurred to Raymond that he just killed his friend, but somehow Raymond couldn't feel the urge to cry. He was definitely downed about it, but something else was tugging at his mind.

He looked towards the woods, were the saw the figures of the infected disappearing out of sight. Mika was nowhere to be seen, and Raymond suddenly realized what the other feeling was.

Duty.

He had to rescue Mika. He couldn't save Barry, but he had to make it up somehow. There was no possible way he could walk away from this. If he did, either the people Mika worked with would find him and silence him, or Actoa would complete her mission and push humanity to the brink of extinction. There was only one way to change the outcome.

Death crossed Raymond's mind, but he shrugged and said, "Fuck it."

Raymond went over to Mika's van and took his bicycle out of the back. He opened the trunk and rummaged through her bag of ammunition. He searched for something he had seen earlier. He found one of the items and held to his face. It was a grenade.

Raymond smiled.

## Chapter Six

**M**ika didn't waste her energy struggling. She simply allowed her captors to bound her hands behind her and take her with them. They dragged her through the woods for about fifteen minutes along a small path, until Mika arrived at a small village of sorts.

But as Mika walked through the settlement, she realized this was where Actoa got her reinforcements. Some of the houses were up in flames with the windows busted out and the doors broken down. A few of the vehicles were turned over as well, but it was the sight of the dead lying out in the grass that tugged at Mika's heart. Even the children, those who resisted Actoa's forces were reduced to dead waste where ever they made their stand. Most had the flesh off their bones eaten. That, along with the fact that there were over forty of the infected present besides the ones she and Raymond had slaughtered, made Mika realize Actoa did succeed in taking over most of the villagers.

*And that's even without pure breeds,* Mika thought, and that alone made her shudder.

However, Mika had a plan, one a bit crazy, but might still prove useful nonetheless. As the small group around her carried her to a gathering near the edge of the vast, dark lake, Mika bit down on a tooth in the left of her mouth, and then a right one. The computerized part of her brain said, "Bomb activated, timer ready. Requesting permission to start countdown."

"Start," said Mika.

"What did you say?" garbled an infested man.

"Nothing to your ugly ass," Mika replied.

Another infested slapped Mika and said, "Quiet..."

Mika tightened the lid on her anger. She had twenty minutes on the clock. Hopefully the ritual would progress far enough for there to be enough aliens to go along with the blast. When the time came, Mika, along with the entire village would be incinerated.

It was an extreme sacrifice, but Mika found it necessary to save humankind. And avenge her brother.

*I just hope you're far away from here, Raymond,* Mika thought.

At the shore, four bonfires were lit in equal spacing. Mika could make out between the people at the front movements in the center. When her captors brought her closer the crowd parted, Mika could now see what was going on.

There were ten naked, infected men lined up, and moving before them was Actoa. The woman's right arm had now fully regenerated, however it resembled something less human. She scribbled a strange rune on the forehead of the men from a bowl of blood in her hand. Mika also noticed that there were ten circles all connected to a central one around the men.

As Actoa marked the last man, she turned around, saw Mika, and smiled. "Oh, you made it," she said.

Mika remained silent, glaring at Actoa.

Actoa approached her and said, "I was hoping Raymond could tag along. But I guess we will have to deal with him later."

"You won't get away with this," said Mika.

"Oh, yes I will," said Actoa. "You see, sweetheart, I've survived attacks from the Ark agents twice before. Though I must admit, one agent came really close to killing me."

"Han..." Mika said dryly.

"I beg your pardon?" said Actoa, cocking her head to the side.

Mika said, "That agent that almost got you, his name was Han."

Actoa's smile vanished and she straightened her neck. "So you knew him?" she said.

"He was my brother, you cunt!" Mika said, her eyes glistening.

Actoa's smile slowly reappeared with a devilishly quality. "Oh," she said, "so its revenge?"

Mika clenched her fists as if she had Actoa's neck in them. She didn't respond, not wanting to give anything else away. However, she decided to tell a lie to buy herself, and the bomb, some time. "I already called for help," she said, "they'll be here soon."

Actoa said, "And by then, I would have already succeeded."

Actoa waved her hand and Mika's captors brought her away. Actoa pointed to the men, who slowly walked into the ten circles. As Actoa took her position in the center-most circle, Mika realized just how hypnotized the infected were. Though the men were about to be sacrificed they showed absolutely no signs of fear, only expectation.

"*Twelve minutes remaining,*" said the clock in Mika's head.

Actoa took off her clothes, exposing her curvy body and her well-developed pubic hairs. The smell coming from her crotch hit Mika's nose and made her muscles between her legs contract. Mika pinched herself and remained focus.

Then there was silence, and Actoa closed her eyes in a meditative state. A static feeling began to emanate from Actoa, and she opened her eyes to expose a bright glow from them. Mika suddenly felt her heart racing.

*Calm down*, she thought.

Actoa began chanting strange, arcane words that grew strong in air with each passing second. As it did a whitish-blue energy spread from Actoa like smoke and hit the men around her. The runes beneath all their feet lit up as did the symbol on their foreheads. When light appeared in the circle beneath Actoa, the men's foreheads shone brighter until their bodies melted into a writhing puddle.

Mika shuddered at the sight and moved involuntarily, but one of the infected shook her and held her steady.

Still engrossed in her chanting, Actoa turned to the lake and pointed at it. The puddles around her slithered like wet snakes off the shore and into the water. Once gathered some distance away into the lake, the puddle merged together. Light enveloped the large mass of liquefied flesh, and out of nowhere a huge lightning bolt struck it. A loud roar bellowed from the frothing lake, and out of the mess a massive creature emerged.

Mika gaped at the being that dragged itself closer to the shore. She imaged a giant red slug when she saw it, but it was much too leathery. Its head was encased in something similar to the foreskin of a penis, with six white eyes poking out. Beneath them was a mouth with pike-like teeth sticking out.

It dragged half its body onto the shore with its six legs, towering six meters over Actoa. Its underside had a plethora of pink throbbing buds.

Actoa smiled and approached the creature with widespread arms. Her eyes seemed dazed as if she was already experiencing an orgasm. Mika felt her panties getting wet just by the mere presence of the being.

Mika suddenly caught movement around her and realized the infected women were getting undressed. They walked off towards the being with fluids already wetting their thighs.

Actoa said, "Great God Phallogora! The god of fertility! Grant us children and let us satisfy you!"

Phallogora made a guttural sound that turned into a whistle. It shuddered, and the dozens of buds extended off his belly, attached to muscular, veiny tentacles. The women eager laid on their backs, or on their hands and knees with their asses turned to Phallogora.

The buds opened to expose smaller penises that could fit inside the women, and wasting no more time, Phallogora shot his multiple phalluses into the women. They all screamed and winced, jerked and shivered as Phallogora thrust and twisted inside them.

Actoa, lying on her back, gripped the grass and bit her teeth as the penis inside her pushed against her womb, feeling as if a tender cut was being touched and tickled. Each time Phallogora twisted in Actoa her muscles contracted. She made loud wails as Phallogora growled and pushed harder, now entering inside her uterus.

Mika looked around her and saw the infected males masturbating furiously. *Now is my chance!* Mika thought with her sagging panties.

She busted out of the ropes that bound her, elbowed an infected in the face and punched another one on his exposed testicles. As the infected near her fell she ran towards Actoa.

*"Five minutes remaining!"* the voice in her head said.

But as Actoa got closer, one of Phallogora's penises swatted her feet and flipped her onto her back. It wrapped itself around her while another one slithered between her legs.

"No!" Mika said. Not only was that thing about to enter inside her, but the bomb was also located in her abdomen. If that penis came inside her, it could potentially neutralize the bomb.

As Mika struggled, Actoa looked over at her with her barbs ready to pierce her flesh.

*Not like this!* Mika thought as the smaller penis tickled her vulva. And that was when she heard it.

"Mika!"

There was a loud crashing sound, and a van came charging through the bushes and through the central street in the small town. Behind the wheel Raymond had his foot stomped on the gas and two grenades on the dashboard.

The sudden outburst caught everyone by surprise, even Phallogora.

Actoa stared wide-eyed at the speeding vehicle and turned to Phallogora. "Quick!" she said as she began to gyrate on his penis. "Hurry up and cum you idiot!"

But even Phallogora was mystified by the massive hunk of metal coming at him.

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“Raymond...” Mika said in disbelief. Suddenly, she remembered the timer, and said, “Countdown, on-standby.”

“*Countdown paused,*” said the computer. “*Three minutes and ten seconds remaining!*”

“Get the fuck out the way!” said Raymond as he ran over two infected coming at the van with weapons. The last one he hit so hard the women splattered into two pieces over the vehicle.

The van hit a bump and bounced onto the shore. Some of the women tried to break free but the penises were swollen inside them. And as they tried to pull the phalluses out of them, Raymond screamed, ran over and woman’s head and crashed the van into Phallogora.

The impact made a residual thud that knocked Phallogora back. As the beast wailed in anger he lost focus of his sexual activity. Phallogora’s erections decreased and Actoa and the other women managed to pull the penises out of them.

Raymond quickly pulled the pin off one of the grenades and hopped out of the vehicle. He ducked beneath a thrashing dick, took his newly reloaded rifle and shot the member that subdued Mika.

As Mika hurriedly wriggled out of the shriveling organ, Raymond dove upon her and said, “Get down!”

And the grenade went off. The chain reaction hit the other grenade and created a near simultaneous second explosion. The blast was so great it took the van’s fuel reserve and added another, bigger blast that threw flaming dust and shrapnel everywhere. The blast tore apart Phallogora’s gut and struck his face. Raymond covered Mika as the hot air rushed over him. Phallogora screeched in anguish and careened over.

Actoa saw the creature’s flaming penises wriggling and falling apart. “Nooooo!” she screamed.

Seconds after the blast Raymond help Mika to her feet.

“Are you okay?” he said, holding her by the shoulders.

Mika nodded. “I’m fine!”

Raymond quickly unslung the rifle and gave it to Mika. “Here!” he said.

Raymond took a mini-uzi he found in the van, placed the barrel in a mustard bottle filled with solution, and stood back to back with Mika.

“You ready?” said Mika as she saw the infected coming at them.

“Hell yeah!” Raymond said.

The duo opened fire. Raymond's idea worked better than he had expected; when the bullets released in the container, they carried with them traces of the solution in their targets. With this method he easily gunned down four infected. Their wounds frothed as the life quickly fled their bodies.

Mika managed to gun down two infected with gaping, frothing holes in their torsos. The third one had his leg torn off, but continued to crawl at her. Mika caved in his head under her feet.

Actoa had already raced over to Phallogora whimpering gutturally on the ground. Actoa had tears in her eyes; a combination of sympathy for the creature and her plans literally going up in flames.

She placed a hand on his head near the gaping, bloody wound. Phallogora's movements slowed, until he stopped moving. Tears ran down Actoa's cheeks. She stepped away from the smoking corpse as it began to dissolve.

*My people! Actoa thought. I can't bring them back!*

Actoa heard the gunfire and turned to the two humans slaying her subordinates. They had now moved their assault to near the houses on solid ground.

Actoa snarled and sprinted in their direction.

As Raymond emptied the clip in a man's gut, he tossed the gun away and drew for his machete that Barry almost beheaded him with. Raymond ran it through the chest of an infected, kicked him down and began mercilessly hacking away into his head. Raymond stood up and took a deep breath. "Yeah!" he said. "Like that bitch!"

Actoa kicked Raymond so hard she broke his ribs and sent him sliding across the ground.

Mika caught sight of him. "Ray!" she said. She turned to Actoa and fired, but the alien woman was already in action. She ducked beneath the bullet and punched Mika in the gut, throwing her back. Actoa leaped on top of her but Mika kicked her away with equal force.

Mika rolled over and got to her feet. She hurried to Raymond's side and saw him slowly pushing himself up. Coughing up droplets of blood.

"Can you stand?" Mika said.

Raymond looked at her, then caught something out of the corner of his eye over Mika's shoulder. "W-what the hell's that?"

Mika turned around and saw Actoa's body shaking. Something seemed to wriggle and bulge beneath her skin. Actoa stood and faced the humans. Whatever human quality she once had was completely gone. Her eyes darkened, and her mouth widened. Actoa's skin ripped and something unearthly emerged.

Fear shot through Mika, but she stood her ground. She checked and saw that she only had two bullets left, and took up the machete Raymond had dropped.

Before Mika, was a true snekelosa.

It was twice a man's height, but it went into a crouch on all fours. Four tentacles slowly twisted off its back, tipped with massive barbs. Four antennae jutted off its head around with drooling mouth. The eyes on the narrow face glowered at Mika. Her vaginal tube twitched and dripped fluids at its tail swept behind it.

Actoa opened her mouth and coughed. Sticky fluid flew in Mika and Raymond's direction. Mika quickly spun, snatched Raymond under her arm and got out of the way. The slime began to melt the ground beneath it.

Raymond observed the substance, and said, "That's bitch's spitting acid at us!"

Raymond looked up from his crouched position at Mika. "Shit! Mika your arm!"

Mika lifted her arm and observed her sizzling flesh. The acid had caught her left arm. But to Mika it felt only like a very hot day in the sun. However, when the flesh fell apart, Raymond was treated to another strange sight.

"What the hell...?" he said as he saw a glistening, metallic surface instead of red flesh. Mika lowered her arm. Raymond stood up and glared questioningly at her. A guilty look appeared in Mika's eyes.

But Actoa roared, getting the attention of the two of them.

Mika turned to Actoa and said, "Raymond, I'll explain to you later. Just stay back."

With Raymond present, Mika couldn't use the bomb without killing him. Many innocent people had died in this whole fiasco, but Mika wasn't about to let Raymond meet his end after having just redeemed himself.

Mika hurried in Actoa's direction. She lifted her rifle and fired the last two shots. Actoa dodged one of the blows but the other one hit her in the back. She wailed but and staggered a little, but the blow didn't slow her down.

Actoa crawled in a quick pace towards Mika, throwing the tentacles on her back before her. Mika sidestepped one, chopped another one in half, and rolled out of the way of the third. Actoa snarled and leaped upon Mika. The human stepped back but Actoa knocked her aside with an arm. Mika hit the side of a house and Actoa hurried over to finish her off.

Mika winced at the blow to her back. She tried to get up but fell. Though she had cybernetic parts that enhanced her physical output, her body still performed based on her organs capacity to last. Although a blow like that would've easily snapped a man's spine, Mika could take the brunt it. However, one more like that, and Mika doubt she would be able to get up again.

Actoa pinned Mika beneath her hand by the chest. Mika cried under the weight, but Actoa only opened her mouth and exposed her barbs.

And that was when Raymond leapt in Actoa's back. Uttering a battle cry he stabbed Actoa with a ketchup filled with solution and squeezed. Actoa reeled off Mika. It spun around and threw off Raymond. He hit the ground hard and stayed there. Actoa went for him but Mika was already in action. She ran towards Actoa's tail and grabbed it. Mika pulled with her enhanced strength and held the alien in place. Actoa swung her tail and threw Mika onto her back, but her grip didn't loosen an inch. Mika cut Actoa's tail off in one clean motion and tossed it away. Actoa shrieked and hopped around until she was a good distance away. Foam dropped off her back in huge clumps. Mika got up and brought her weapon in line with Actoa. The alien ran at the woman like a lion going in for the kill. Mika steadied her feet and calculated the distance. One inch off mark, and Actoa would have her. But Mika was determined. She wouldn't let this Alien slip by a third time.

"For Han..." Mika said.

Just as Actoa shot forth the barbs in her mouth, Mika threw the machete. The blade hit the back of Actoa's throat with a loud thud, stopping her barbs from going any further.

Mika spun aside and let Actoa dive into the ground. Actoa slid a good distance before coming to a stop on her belly. Mika exhaled deeply and walked over to Actoa's body. Mika saw her struggling to move her limbs, but the weapon had firmly lodge into her neck, cutting off signals from the brain to the body.

Mika stepped around in front of Actoa and knelt before the alien's miserable face. Mika ignored Actoa's bloody teeth and death stare, and said, "Don't worry. You'll be going to where that god's gone to." Mika lifted her metallic left hand and said her fingers together. "You can

fuck all you want there.” And Mika stabbed the alien in the head, burying her hand up to the elbow.

Actoa went quiet, and very, very still.

Raymond opened his eyes and was met with the mahogany wood of a ceiling. Clearly it was not his abode, and he looked around and found himself in an almost empty room; except for a small table and dresser. The color of the walls and the fragrance in the air had a familiarity to it, but Raymond couldn't remember what it was. He slowly sat up, feeling pains in his torso.

He looked down on himself and found that his wounds were bandaged up. “What the hell?” he said. Then his memory began to flood back to him. The amazing and outrageous events that took place just last night. It tugged at his alertness and Raymond suddenly felt uncomfortable.

“Mika?” he said.

Raymond winced as he moved his feet off the bed and onto the floor upon the brown carpet. He shielded his eyes from the light through the window and opened the door. Outside the room he realized why the place looked so familiar. He was inside Mika's house. He walked through the hallway beyond the door leading to her armory and into the living room, where he saw her.

Raymond felt elation ripple through him. *She's alive!* Raymond thought.

Mika was dressed in another leather jacket over her black blouse and pants. Sitting in her couch, she was surrounded by three suitcases.

As if sensing his presence, Mika turned to him and smirked. “Looks like that alien bitch didn't beat your ass bad enough,” she said.

Raymond smiled and hobbled over to her. She made some space on the sofa and Raymond dropped himself next to her. Mika put down the bowl of oats she was eating and turned to him. “Are you okay?” she said.

Raymond nodded. He said, “You?”

Mika sighed and nodded as well. “Just about it. I took care of Actoa. For good.”

Raymond's mind crossed upon the horror that was Actoa, and shuddered. The woman had conned him and taken so many lives. Including his friend's. Raymond felt guilt coming upon

him, but when Mika touched him he felt it all go away. “Lighten up,” she said. “You just helped save the world.”

“...I guess,” said Raymond. He thought about it some more and smirked. “Yeah, I did!”

However, Raymond looked at the suitcase questioningly. He knew he shouldn’t have to guess, but he just had to ask. “So, what’s with all of this?” he said.

Mika glanced at the suitcases briefly before saying, “My work here’s done. I’m leaving.”

“Just like that?” said Raymond.

“Yep,” said Mika.

Raymond hesitantly opened his mouth, then closed it. Mika took notice and said, “You want to ask me something?”

Raymond said, “You mentioned that...you had a brother...” Mika’s smile slackened a little. She shifted in her seat. “You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to,” said Raymond.

Mika looked at her left hand. The rest of it was concealed by the sleeve of her jacket. “He was an agent like myself,” she said. “He was the second person to try and hunt down that snekelosa. She killed him.” Mika sat back. “So I got info on how to track her down and finished the job for him. His name was Han...”

“I’m sorry,” said Raymond. He sighed lightly and looked at the bowl of porridge. “All this time, Mika, I’ve been glooming over my problems, when you had to deal with shit like this. It’s crazy.”

Mika smiled and said, “Nothing’s crazier than dying and coming back to life.”

Raymond eyeballed her with the intensity of two lasers. “What?”

Mika turned to him, rolled down her sleeve and exposed her cybernetic arm. “You’ve been wondering about this? Well, I don’t know how I got it either.” She rolled up her sleeve and said in a cautious voice. “A few Ark agents and I were on a mission in Haiti three years ago. It was my third mission in fact. We were hunting down a creature called a chimera. Something out of Greek mythology, only it was man-made. It was a big one too. Around four meters tall. It killed off my team. All three of us.”

Raymond had a pained look on his face. “Shit...” he said. “Mika...”

“I was pretty sure I was dead,” said Mika, touching her chest. “Its horn went through me. Really good. I blacked out, expecting to go see paradise.” Mika giggled and paused, then said, “But I woke up, not long after.” Mika took a piece of paper out of her pocket and gave it to

Raymond. “I found this next to me; in an old shack near a river.” Raymond read the discolored paper;

“If you’re reading this, then congratulations. You’re one of my successful experiments. You got a little busted up, but I managed to fix you somewhat. I replaced part of your skull, both your legs and arms; mostly the left, with cybernetic components. I know, it’s cool huh? Anyways, I couldn’t modify your organs in time; they were knocking down my door and I had to skedaddle. You have roughly four to five times the strength of an average Joe, but use that kind a kick carefully though. I have some work left to do elsewhere, so if you want answers to the questions I’m sure you have, meet me in Canada. There’s a place there called Pleasant Camp with a mountain like a pair of boobs. I’ll be waiting for you there.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. Magic.”

Raymond put down the paper with an eerie feeling. He slowly turned to Mika and said, “You’re hunting this guy?”

“I need answers,” said Mika. “I need to know who this man is and why he saved me.” *And why he put a bomb inside me,* Mika thought.

“Based on this note he’s your stereotypical mad scientist to me,” said Raymond.

“Regardless,” said Mika, “I have to find him.” Mika reached into her pocket and said, “I have something for you.” She took out a bronze ring with strange carvings on it and the crest of a feather in the center.

She gave it to Raymond, who took it and said, “What’s this?”

“It belonged to my brother,” she said.

“Oh, okay,” said Raymond as he examined it. “I want you to have it,” Mika said.

Startled, Raymond looked at Mika and said, “Huh? Mika...wait...I can’t take this.”

Mika held his hand and folded it with the ring inside. “Please,” she said. “I already avenged my brother. I don’t want to carry that burden anymore. That kind of ring is given to agents of Ark when they have successfully completed their first mission. Think of this as your passing mark.”

“No shit?” said Raymond. “You mean, I’m one of you guys now?”

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Mika nodded and said, “Don’t worry, I’ve already made a phone call and eased things over with them. The agency doesn’t recruit people like this, but, I begged, and they made an exception.”

“So, like, I’ll be going on missions now?” Raymond said.

“Not really,” said Mika. “Only if they’re really short on staff. Mostly in that event they will give you a partner.”

A car horn honked outside, and Mika quickly looked in the direction of the door.

“Who’s that?” said Raymond.

“My ride,” said Mika. She got up and took up two of the suitcases. Raymond took the other bag and carried it over to the door. Mika put down one bag and opened the door. Sunlight flooded inside and they were met with warm leaves riding along cool winds.

Just outside Mika’s gate, was a black, unmarked SUV. And standing at the gate, was a man dressed in a black cloak along with a black fedora that concealed most of his face.

As Mika and Raymond made their way to the gate, Raymond whispered to her, “Who’s that guy?”

Mika replied in a cautious voice, “That’s Crow. Don’t try to talk to him, though. He Doesn’t like it.”

When they got to the gate, Raymond noted the man wore a sweater and jogging pants beneath his cloak. All black as well. Raymond eyed his attire quizzically, until he got a glimpse of the man’s face and shuddered.

Crow’s irises were crystal white, almost as if he were dead. Their contrast against his dark skin made them seem to glow like bulbs. Crow’s bland expression didn’t change as Mika opened the back of the vehicle and put in her bags. Raymond handed her the one he had and nodded at Crow. The other man only blinked and bent his neck a little.

*If this guy isn’t a serial killer, I don’t know what he is?* Raymond thought.

Mika turned to Crow and said, “Thanks for picking me up.”

Crow nodded and walked back around to the driver side of the car. Raymond felt a vein pop in his head at how Mika beamed at the voiceless man. Mika turned to Raymond while reaching into her coat. “You might need this too,” she said.

She handed him a biotic energy scanner and the keys to her house. Raymond took them. He sniffed the scanner, found traces of alien still on it, and grimaced.

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Mika said, “You can charge it just like a cellphone. It has a manual on the home screen to teach you.”

Raymond lowered the device and looked longing at Mika. Both of them remained silent for a while until Raymond said, “Will I ever see you again? I don’t have your number.”

Mika said, “Whenever I need to find you, I’ll know where to look. I’ll be gone for a while, Ray, but I’ll be back.” She gestured to Raymond’s house, and said, “A few agents even repaired the window when I first made the call and told them about you.”

“Wow,” said Raymond, “you guys are really nice.”

Mika’s smile wavered a little, and she said, “To our own, Raymond. Never forget that?” Mika kissed Raymond on his cheek and walked away.

Raymond felt goosebumps on his skin and shivered. Touching his face, he saw Mika hop into the seat next to Crow. As he heard the engine start, Raymond said, “Mika?”

Mika stuck her head out and said, “Yeah?”

Raymond showed her the ring and said, “What does the feather and the stuff on the ring mean?”

Mika smirked and said, “Birds can fly all over the world freely without restrictions, just like us. My brother’s free-name was Rooster.”

The vehicle took off. It made a U-turn and headed out of the community. And with it went Mika and everything that was her.

Raymond stood with the scanner and keys in one hand and the ring in the other. *Aliens, magic, mysterious beings and cults*, he thought as the SUV turned down the street and vanished. *Well, this can’t be more difficult than college, can it?*

But as Raymond stood on the sidewalk, he realized something extremely important he had overlooked. He brought the ring to his face and frowned. “Wait a minute,” he said, “roosters can’t fly!”

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The End.

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