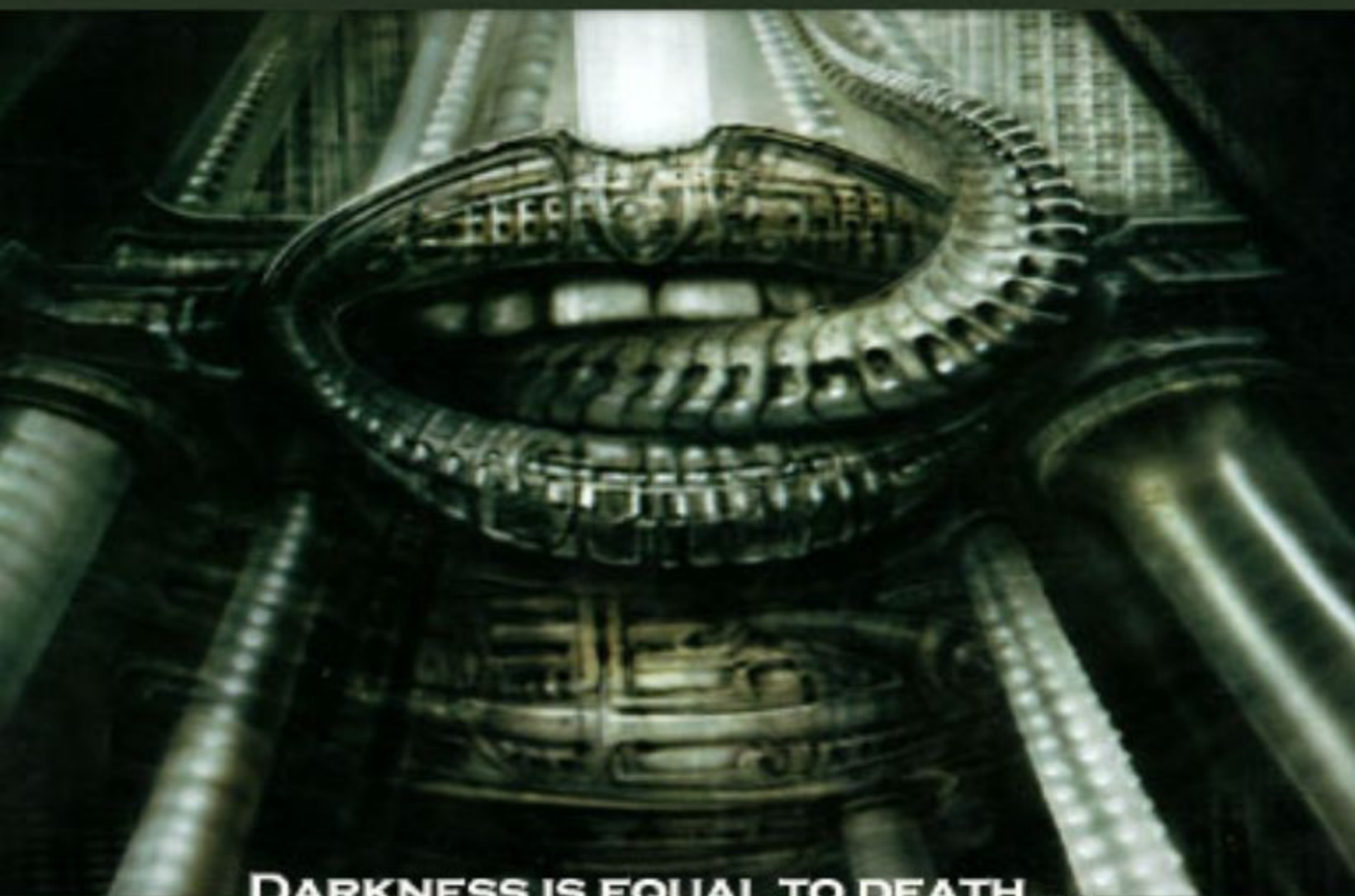


VILE



DARKNESS IS EQUAL TO DEATH

NICK KNIGHT

independentbook

VILE

BY

NICK KNIGHT

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For Gayathri, the nastiest creature on earth (Joking!)

“Evil flowed from those eyes like blood from a fresh wound.”

- Charles de Lint, Yarrow

PROLOUGE

It had satisfied its vile tastes. Tremendously enjoying the meal. What was once a flaying, struggling body, when in first pounced on it, was nothing more than a few shattered bones and drops of blood here and there. Its intake would increase in the following days; the one inside would soon take her place. These meals were the last ones before her death and she intended to enjoy them to maximum. This one especially was a very memorable one. The one inside her was kicking wildly. Soon.....he would walk the dark streets of the looming city. Her progeny would make the lords of the dark proud. Make her proud. It would frighten the stupid bipedal, devour them, destroy their race which forgets that deep beneath their feet there lies a world reeking, slimy.....full of her likes. Slowly, one by one they would devour the weaker ones on the surface, finally emerging supreme.

She ran into the dark bushes and within minutes squad cars were all over the place. Soon there would be more wielding torches and guns. She watched carefully. She needed to eat

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more. More! . Her sisters too were trying hard. To create killers, upgrading their proficiency to kill.

She slowly moved away from her hiding position. Slipped through an open space in the fence. The darkness comforted her. Encouraging her to go on.

She reached a dark street. The inner suburbs were a favorable hunting ground.

A tall man with long hair.....a drunkard, singing and walking unsteadily. Perfect! She lunged at his throat and ripped it off.

CHAPTER ONE

“This is no serial killer, even the forensic scientists think that it is some kind of beast.” Martin knew that he was a bit too excited and that Mary would soon run out of patience.

She was a very good listener and was a source of inspiration, but this talk had gotten out of hand. He was thoroughly frustrated and the incidents at the sheriff’s office did not help. He was a freelance journalist. Someone who specialised in doing investigative reports on serial murders and bizarre incidents and he was very good in what he did. ‘The investigator’ had always thought of him as an asset, not because of their admiration for him, but the rise in circulation he could effect in a matter of days.

He was a very nice person. Fast-talking, romantic, inquisitive...all the qualities Mary had looked for in a man. Mary would utilize every given opportunity to remind him that they were not getting younger and should get married.

On his last birthday, she had reminded him again. “Both of us are 26 and both of us are in love.”

Martin had brushed away her jet-black hair from her forehead and said 'hmm...' Both of them started laughing and then they made love. Martin was not very tall, but then he compensated for that with his cute looks. This is the 50th time you are telling me that Martin.

"You have to admit, you have certain limitations as a Journalist."

"But we have the right to information," Martin began.

"But not confidential information." she looked into his eyes.

"Cut the crap Mary, they can't hide the whole thing from the public, and people are going to skin them alive if the serial killer turns out to be a mad rabid beast on the loose. He said without lowering his gaze.

"I still cannot understand why they don't entirely stick to the forensic report," he continued "they think its a psychopath walking around with a claw like instrument."

"Can't you see the reason Martin? Nobody sane would jump onto the assessment that there is a beast roaming freely, killing people in a modern city like ours. Besides nobody has seen the

thing.” She was quite sure that for this once all her debating skills would go down the drain.

“Tell you what,” she said getting up from the couch, “You have spoiled an evening...I have been trying hard to get your mind of the whole thing and you have been blabbering for the past 3 hours about a freak in’ bastard, which you think is a beast and the police guy who kicked your ass today, thinks is a psychopath. How inconsiderate. You don’t love me do you?” She was crying.

“Come on dear stop crying, okay I will shut up, it’s just that today at the sheriff’s office... I have never ever been insulted like this . And for the first time in my life I am being made to look like some nut..... Forgive me, okay.” They embraced. “Don’t ever say that I don’t love you.”

His mobile rang fiercely.

“Yes Nathan, what? Two more... Okay I am coming.” He walked hurriedly into the bedroom to get his jacket and bag.

“Two more dead Mary!” He said as he emerged out of the room. He kissed her briefly and moved to the door.

“I am sorry for what I said.....I didn’t mean it.” She said abruptly.

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Martin had half opened the door. He turned “I know.”

“Take care.,” she said smiling.

It was the last thing he heard as he closed the door.

CHAPTER TWO

The scene could be best described as a 'blood bath'. Martin was really surprised to find that he could bear to look at the gory visage. The reason was simple. It was the 15th time he was doing so.

It was as simple as that. 15 crime scenes later he didn't expect to puke all over the place like he did the first time. The 15th dead body was no different. 'Well!' he thought sarcastically. 'There is no body.....just bits a pieces which makes you say the word automatically - 'dead body.'

He had always wondered what was capable of doing 'this'. What creation of god was so merciless and had an absolute disregard for life? Even the worst psychopath would not be able to do this.

'Maybe it was the handiwork of the devil.' Martin was sitting on a wayside bench; the remnants of the green coating on the steel frame attracted him the most. He etched a big 'MONSTER' on it.

Just as he had finished his masterpiece, the man he had been waiting for emerged from the left where all the squad cars were pooled together.

“Martin, I think you should go home now. We are done here. We have traced the items to one Mr. Hanson, a guitarist at a local club. Poor guy...did not stand a chance.”

Martin stood up, shook his overcoat as if it were covered in leaves. Then he looked up...at the spreading branches of a nearby tree. “Too many, too many bodies, I don’t think you can put a finger on it, can you?” He said as he continued to stare up. “You don’t have an answer! Dammit!” He sat down again with a sigh.

“In fact we have an answer Martin. You were right about the ‘animal theory’. Experts from the FBI have confirmed that it is indeed some kind of an animal.”

“See, I told you!” Martin raised his voice. “ Its so damn powerful Nelson, you do not need to bring the FBI experts for finding that. The claws!Wow! One of your men thought the tooth marks were actually caused as a result of a bear trap being clamped shut on the victim and then the body would be shredded using a shredder. Well what the hell was that! A rerun of the Texas chainsaw massacre.”

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“Martin shut up!” Nelson interrupted. The other officers were obviously attracted to Martin’s ranting. “You need to go home and get some sleep!” Nelson said firmly.

“I will pal.” he walked slowly to his sedan, turned to wave back a good bye and got into his car. “I will see you tomorrow.”

CHAPTER THREE

Nelson briefed him on the new twists in the case. He described the whole scenario slowly and in great detail. But it didn't take Martin 10 minutes to realize that he would not be of much help.

'Guess even Nelson has his own limitations.' Martin thought.

Nelson was telling him with great delight the antics of the experts from Washington. And the way he described the whole thing reminded him of a child describing his first visit to the zoo. It was true that their own department was a menagerie of sorts.

Most of the time was used up to remind Martin of what had passed. Nobody needed to remind him of things. His memory was legendary among his counterparts. As he left the office at quarter past 12 he felt like he had sat through a horrible third-rate flick in a filthy downtown theatre.

He walked a bit unsteadily and just as he turned the corner to reach his car, "Martin..." a voice called out. Martin turned back to face a short, spectacled young man with a potbelly. He wore a

blue jeans and a black t-shirt, which screamed in white bold letters, 'PARAXPROJECT.COM'.

In the middle of each 'O' was everybody's favorite picture of an innocent, blue bodied, black-eyed alien.

"Hi!" he said, extending his hands. "I am Justin and this is, he said pointing to the writing on his shirt my site. I own it. We even have a monthly magazine I edit it. As the name suggests we concern ourselves with unraveling the mysteries of the world. Delving deep into the dark realms of the paranormal....." and thus he continued his animated lecture.

Martin stared at him for a while looked at his watch and put it straight to him. "What the hell do you want?"

"Oh sorry," Justin was clearly embarrassed. "You are the guy who writes articles on the mysterious killings in our city.... aren't you? Well, I have got some information for you."

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CHAPTER FOUR

Martin's coffee had grown cold. He had been carefully listening to Justin for more than half an hour.

"Our site carried an article and exclusive footage caught on an amateur video. People always think we were cranks and there was even an article in your newspaper, condemning our site." Justin had managed to talk fast and drink his coffee.

"Well, from what I know your site lacks a reputation for veracity. Martin said.

"It has always been like that. Every story we present, every speck of evidence we churn out is ridiculed by the police, the press and not to mention the public. Get me a tuna sandwich." He mentioned all of that in one breath.

"I am telling you the guy filmed this thing and who wrote about it is no freak. He is a nature something? Y.....yes a nature photographer. He is a nice gentleman who earns a lot of money. To tell you the truth he has used a fictitious name to write the

article. He in fact tried to approach a major newspaper with the story.....but then.....you know.” He moved back in his chair and suddenly leaned forward.

“Let me tell you,” he said banging on the chair, “His reputation is at stake but still he wants people to know the truth, its not a fabricated video. It clearly shows the thing, what ever it is...oh thanks!” The sandwich had arrived.

“Mr. Justin I had a hunch that it was an animal, people didn’t believe me and now I have a hunch that you are telling me the truth ...well not exactly, but I think I would like to see the person. What was his name?” Martin said.

“Keene, Roland Keene.” Justin said stuffing the remaining places of the sandwich into this month.

“And where do we go and meet him?” Martin enquired.

“Nashville Street.” It was barely audible. The munching noise was more predominant.

“What?” Martin asked.

“Nashville Street. Well, he didn’t originally live there. He was staying in a flat near Carlos tower. He said his moving to the new

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place has got to do with the creatures.” Martin looked up in surprise. “That’s what he told me.”

The waiter had placed the bill on the table.

“Lets go,” Justin said getting up,” You pay!”

CHAPTER FIVE

Mary kissed the framed photograph. They had taken it while holidaying in Miami. She briefly reflected on those sweet moments.

She smiled. Mary had put on more weight in a year and she loved it. Earlier she had felt like a bony thing walking around shocking people. She was not good looking when compared to Martin, but he was not narrow minded enough, to be bothered on those lines.

Actually his proposal came as a shock to her. They were classmates in college and that had later developed into a close friendship during their post graduation years. When Mary's father died 4 years back, she was absolutely heart broken. She had even gotten into drinking. Martin had arrived at the scene like an angel. Their relationship was based on a simple theory, he needed her and she needed him.

She kept the photograph back. He was an orphan. She was the only thing he had. She had realized a long time back that her situation was no different.

They were planning a trip to India at the end of the year. It was her idea and Martin seemed to be really excited. Sometimes she hated her work more than anything. Being a software engineer was no walk in the park. She looked at her cheap 'Seiko', which she wore when she was at home.

It was time to go, she had to supervise a project and her boss would be waiting.

'Nasty Ramsey' was never the one to buy even genuine excuses. She got up from the couch and walked to her closet. She spared a moment to open the window shades and peer in to the empty streets.

She loved the trees. That was the first thing that caught her attention when she had decided to come and check out this apartment in Nashville Street. She immediately fell in love with the place. The trees that lined both sides of the street had influenced her decision in a big way.

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There was a park with a huge pond full of fishes nearby, which was tough to spot anywhere in this big, bad city. She loved Nashville Street, its peace and other worldly charm.

CHAPTER SIX

Martin didn't actually expect a tall, handsome, well-built man to open the door. He had expected an egghead and he soon realized that he was terribly wrong. Roland was 30, with jet-black hair, which seemed to mimic the color of his black attire. His tight shirt revealed enough to convince Martin that he was in good shape.

Justin started blabbering the moment he shook hands with Roland. Roland gave Martin a warm smile and exchanged pleasantries with him. Justin again started delivering a lecture on the relevance of paranormal research and how his site was pioneering the whole program.

"Well....," Roland interrupted him. "This is the video...of the creature, the one posted in Justin's site."

Martin's eyes were fixed anxiously on the 17-inch monitor. The picture was not grainy as he expected.

"What time was it? He enquired.

“Close to 5:30 pm.” Roland said.

The camera was focused on a thick bush adjoining a warehouse. There were absolutely no sounds and the place seemed to be deserted. All of a sudden a dark figure emerged from the woods. Its features were not discernible, but it resembled a huge lizard. It moved stealthily towards the fenced rear door of the warehouse.

Suddenly as if it realized it was being observed, it ran into the woods. Things were normal again.

“What happened, did it spot you?” Martin asked.

“I was there.....well hidden from its view and it suddenly bolted into the wooded area. I was really afraid it had spotted me and was planning to move to a vantage position and attack me from the rear. But it did not.”

“So this is the video.” He shifted uncomfortably in his chair. “Can be a fraudulent tape. I have seen more convincing videos of dinosaurs in Manhattan, which turned out to be first class hoaxes.” Martin continued.

“See I told you, he will also talk like the rest of the fools.” Justin threw his hands up in exasperation.

“Mr. Martin you may kindly note that the warehouse in the video is the exactly where the 5th murder was committed. The ‘Bigley’s place’.” Roland intervened.

“And may I know what you were doing there with your camera. Spy work.” Martin did not sound friendly.

“I am a nature photographer and I am doing a collection of photographs for a calendar manufacturer up north. The theme: ‘A Bugs nightlife’. Interesting isn’t it. After focusing my camera and taking a few snaps of our six legged and eight legged friends, I decided to capture some rare footage of its nighttime activities on my handy cam. All of a sudden there is this noise, the bushes were shaking violently and this thing comes up. You have to see it to believe it and I am not lying. A few authorities I approached in the beginning behaved exactly like you.”

“You haven’t convinced me. How the hell? What kind of a creature is that, an oversized komodo dragon? Well, they are known to attack man. But here in this city...come on. I don’t believe this. He got up. It has to be an animal, that is for certain, but that doesn’t necessarily mean you can fool every sane person on earth for some media attention. You guys have to work

harder. That video is not convincing and I am telling you have to come up with more... until then chow!" He moved towards the door muttering under his breath "Imbeciles!"

"We have got more." Roland's booming voice stopped him.

"What did you think? All this footage is crap. Wait till you see more. I hope after seeing this you will still have some fight left in you to prove that this is fraudulent. Watch this!" The rest of the tape rolled.

It started of from where they had stopped earlier. Martin stood and watched in shock as beautiful, scantily clad women emerged from the bushes. He could hear muffled conversations between two people.

Suddenly they came into focus. The woman. And a young man clad in blue jeans and a black jacket. They were suddenly hugging each other and talking animatedly. They walked hand in hand towards the fenced warehouse. And suddenly the woman pushed the young guy onto the fence.

She started to kiss him vigorously all over the body and finally spend a long time on his lips. One instant the punk was writing with pleasure, in a flash the whole scene changed. The

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man started to scream as slowly the woman like appearance of the thing changed. It was now a thing.

A reptile. Something scaly and huge that resembled the Komodo dragon. But this was much bigger. It stood on its hind legs, its tail twitching in ecstasy. There were strange projections on its body .Its transition from a half-nude woman to a murderous creature was swift, but not as swift as the brutal assault. In the matter of minutes nothing was left of the young man. The picture started to shake.

The creature turned around crushing the remnants under its huge weight. It sucked blood from the pools on the tarred road using its tongue. It lifted its head and made a strange noise as if it were burping. After standing on its hind legs for a minute or two, it seemed to sense something in the air.

It put its segmented tongue out of its mouth and moved its head from the left to right. The tongue resembled a sword or a butcher's knife. Now Martin realized what it had used to mince its victims. Then it suddenly landed on its belly with a thump and sped into the darkness.

The tape rolled to a stop.

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“Thanks to Mr. Sun there was just enough light to see all that happen.” Roland said with a smirk.

“Did you see the size of that when it stood on its hind legs, must be 7-8 feet easily and the claws, wow!

“Killing machine with a multi-purpose tongue.” Roland said as Martin slowly sat back on the couch with his month wide open.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“You are telling me, you didn’t show the second part of the tape to anyone?” Martin asked, sipping the orange juice.

“Precisely, I didn’t see any point in doing so. But I knew that if I got hold of something solid this would be my key to climbing up the popularity charts. I would be a celebrity in a matter of days. The media would take care of it. My career will flourish, my name, my prestige. So I went after the thing myself and did some research.”

“Why the hell would you want to do that? This tape is convincing enough. By Jove! That is more devilish than an oversized Komodo dragon. What ...the....”Martin tried to interrupt Roland who immediately cut him.

“Which makes me the only living authority on this creature. He raised both his hands in exaltation. The great Roland Keene.”

“What do you know about this thing?” Martin asked.

“First you have to promise me, you will help me in my endeavors and use your contacts to make sure that my name hits the headlines at least for the next four months. Then of course I will take care of the rest. The book rights, scientific papers, a movie by Spielberg. Not to forget ‘Roland the adventurer’ merchandises.”

“That can be arranged.” Martin assured him.

“Okay, these things come from beneath our feet, from the underworld, deeper then we can imagine. Otherwise we would have encountered it year’s back. There are references about such a creature in several folklores originating from Asia, Africa and even America at the time of the settlement.

‘Vichen’ that is how the Molabi tribe called the thing. Their elders talk of huge dragon like beasts emerging from the under world which can take the shape of any living being, lure man to it and then satisfy its hunger. From what little I know about it, it lacked the ability to bear excessive sunlight. A few of them over the years have evolved the ability to withstand some amount of light.”

“That explains the killing in this tape .The sun had not set.” Justin said.

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“But how can it change its shape like that? It became a woman earlier in a matter of minutes.” Martin said in disbelief.

“I think it is able to take on the shape of its victims, whatever it has devoured.” Roland answered.

“Okay, so what next?” Martin was impatient. He had gotten used to getting shocks every other minute after this particular conversation with Roland.

“Well as you may not expect, there are many of them operating in many parts of the city and they are behind the recent killings.” Roland said.

“What? There are many of them and you make it sound like it’s doing a cleansing operation.” Martin was hysteric.

Roland put on a serious face and leaned towards him “I think it is doing exactly that and lord save us. They are extremely intelligent. Probably none of us will be alive in a year.”

“Why do you say that?’ Martin asked.

“They are growing in large numbers with each passing day. They will outwit us; they will outnumber us and finally kill us all. Haven’t you heard of villages in South America and Europe

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where thousands of villagers have vanished without a trace? Now they are a bit messy with their kills, once they become large in numbers they will make a large section of interconnected tunnels underneath and will shift their killing grounds to the underworld. Slowly drag us from the surface, take us to the deep and finish the job. Neat! No one will know. No one will bother to look underground.”

“We have to destroy them,” he continued, “But before that I need my passport to success, after I get what I need we will inform the police of the spot.”

“What spot?” Martin asked.

“The crater in the ground where they emerge from. I have kept watch day and night for the past 3 weeks.” He explained

“And you know that place?” he asked surprised.

“Yes.”

“Where is it?”

He invited them to the nearby window and pointed to the dilapidated building, which nestled in a deserted plot. The whole area had turned into a virtual forest.

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Martin was shell-shocked. The house and the plot were few paces away from the park and the pond where he and Mary had spend many evenings. The park in Nashville Street.

CHAPTER EIGHT

“Precisely! I have been scouting the city for evidence that they are many in number. But the point is that all of them emerge from the house.” Roland said. They were standing outside the wretched plot that was full of trees, creepers and all kinds of bugs.

“It seems to be a really old house?” Justin was scratching his head violently.

“Yes, almost 55 years old. A dancer, who went by the name – McGrath, owned it. An Australian. When he moved back to Australia with his troupe he sold it to a politician - a celibate and miser. The house went without its much-needed repairs and then there was this court case that has not been settled to this date between the relatives of the deceased politician.”

“Disputes! Can never be settled.” Justin quipped.

“That’s why they are called disputes, I guess.” Martin said, tremendously irritated by Justin’s unceasing scratching.

“It’s said the house is haunted. The unhappy politician hanged himself in there. So people don’t come near it. For our friends from the deep there couldn’t have been a better place to slip unnoticed onto the surface.” Roland said with a smile.

“Did you see a ghost while you were in there? Justin sounded like an old man. “A haunted house in our city and I didn’t know, Too bad!” he started scratching his head again.

Roland smiled and continued. “We will go in there tonight and secure what I yearn for. The key to my success.”

“You have the tapes, what more do you need. When the police are informed, they can see these things for themselves.” Martin did not see logic in what Roland was trying to tell him.

“I haven’t told you one thing, I am a very good hunter and I value prize catches. It’s my dream to capture one of the creatures. Dead, not alive. Woo.... Ho. You can’t keep that thing if it’s alive. I want to cut-off its head, stuff it and keep it in my room. A real specimen is the ultimate proof. And most of my interviews for CNN will have wall sporting the stuffed head as a background as a background.” Martin could easily spot the spark in his eyes.

“Its risky. I don’t think it is a good idea. Those beings are really powerful. You can’t do this.” Martin said in a matter of fact way.

“*You* come with me and help me in there or you get lost! If you go and inform the police I will deny all knowledge of all that have said. I need help, okay. That’s why I asked Justin to get one more guy for our group. When I learned that you were journalist I was overjoyed. Finally there would be some credible person who can document and write on the exploits of Roland the great. The police get to know of this my chance to kill one of those bloody creatures will be lost. You help me with this or get lost. It is as simple as that. Tonight we will go into the house and do tidy job. A couple of torches and a good shotgun will do the job and early tomorrow I will personally go to the police headquarters and tell them every thing.” Roland walked some distance and turned towards Martin.

“Do you agree?”

“Yes....” he mumbled. But he had other plans in his mind.

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Roland was telling Justin,” We should be getting back to our apartment soon. We have to check the equipment.” Justin nodded.

Martin’s mind was in a mess. He could be easily receiving the scoop of the year award from the Mayor in front of a celebrated community of topnotch journalists or it could very well be his last assignment. Some how he didn’t feel confident about the whole thing.

He shook his head for a while and finally decided he would go through with it. In his mind he prayed. “God be with me!”

He was hoping against hopes.

CHAPTER NINE

All of them called him 'Mr. Shitter'. They thought he was mad. It was true than the he had been to an asylum three times in a row and returned with no visible improvement.

His actual name was Billy and he wore the same stinking shirt and pant during the last 20 years of his wretched existence. It could no longer claim to be a piece of clotting. Torn and tattered even Billy was amazed at how durable the material was.

'It had stood the test of time.' He thought proudly.

He had got it from the destitute home he was admitted to when he was in Texas.

Well, that was along time back. After being discharged from the mental asylum he had made this city his home. Strictly speaking his home was the streets. He begged for food but never for clothing, he washed himself whenever it was possible but his obsession was defecating in the streets. That has got him into a lot of trouble. The last time he did that on the road the kids in the

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neighborhood bashed him up. A kind old gentleman had saved his skin.

He was admitted to the hospital and the gentleman met his expenses. But after he was discharged he was driven over to a destitute home and as soon as he saw the board he leaped out of the man's Cherokee and fled into the night. He had gone through enough bad experiences during his first day of stay at a destitute home.

It had left a bitter taste in his mouth. It was more so because he never brushed his teeth.

Most importantly in a destitute home he would have to do things regularly, read, play and most of all he would never get to shit on the streets.

After his last experience he had toured the city to find a place where he could pursue his favorite hobby, where people could see him doing it but not get sufficiently mad at him so as to kill him.

He liked this particular locality. He liked the park. He had scratched his butt and read the huge yellow board with black lettering on it. 'Nashville Street.'

“Cool!” he had said. His excitement was obvious, the moment he rested his eyes on the most favorable spot in the park. There was even a pond near it, where he could wash himself.

The sun had set and the small lamps inside the not so big park could not penetrate the darkness sufficiently. He yawned and stretched his arms. He was tired. He had to get some sleep before he could get up early in the morning and do his stuff with people jogging all around him.

He was no longer afraid of the policemen who were disgusted at the sight of him. He would happily go to jail again, but he had to satisfy himself.

‘People say we have liberty’ he thought. “What liberty? I can’t shit where I want to?”.

Saying this he climbed the fence and slipped unnoticed into a dark, secluded spot in the park. He crept underneath one of the benches and arranged the dry leaves on the ground into a mound. His pillow was ready.

He dreamt that he was standing in the middle of one of the busy roadways in the city. He would have been thankful had it been the rush hour. But there was no traffic jam and all kinds of

vehicles were rushing past him. A few of them even flicked the end of his torn coat.

They were moving faster and faster. He screamed in fear. He stood rooted at the spot. One wrong move and he would be smashed to bits. All of a sudden a huge trailer changed lanes, crashing into the two vehicles on its sides. It honked its blaring horn, flashed its lights and headed straight for him. He screamed and screamed as the huge monster truck headed for him.

Just at the right moment it braked noisily.

He jolted out of his dream and he realized that the noise of a car braking was real. It was near him.

On the road that ran parallel to the park.

A black sedan had parked near the fence. A woman was holding the driver's door open and talking to the man who occupied the driver's seat. He was wearing some kind of a black suit. All of a sudden the lady removed her top for the man to see. He saw her nude back.

The driver rubbing his hand got out of his seat and opened the back door. Then pulled the half naked woman along with him

into the back seat. As soon as the door closed, the car started to rock.

It was strange sight for him. The car with its parking lights on, rocking like hell.

‘Nice secluded spot’ he thought. He propped his head on his right hand and watched the scene gleefully. In a flash the movement stopped and then the car started to rock with immense force in an inhuman manner.

It stopped as suddenly as it had begun. He watched in shock as the back door blasted from its original position and hit the fence with a loud ‘thud!’ Through the groovy fence wire he saw a reptile emerge from the car.

It was huge and it flicked its tongue covered with blood. It shook its head and splattered the footpath with blood and grime. He got from underneath the bench and ran into the night screaming.

He was convinced that it was a new security system erected to prevent him from defecating on the streets again.

CHAPTER TEN

It had successfully lured the unsuspecting man into its death trap. It had almost killed the wretched creature, when all of a sudden a sharp projectile rushed into her body. The chamber that housed the 'one' had been damaged.

She would die soon from loss of body fluids. She was just hours from delivering her baby.

'No!' she would not let her baby die. She needed a 'host' and that too immediately.

A human was approaching. 'A female', it thought 'She would do'.

It crept underneath the car. The car was lifted off the ground because of its size and power.

There it waited.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mary was always very wary of this particular stretch of road at night. The road that lays adjoining to the park. She was always worried about the fact that the park was located some distance away from the residential area.

She smiled at the next thought that crept into her mind. When she and Martin had spent private moments in the park, she had thanked god for gifting this spot. Finally she was far away from the prying eyes of her neighbors. It was a thought she relished.

Her heart was virtually thundering. The lamps from the park provided some relief but she was not satisfied. She had passed the gate of the park when suddenly her gaze fell on a car parked too close to the fence. There was something odd about it.

‘There is something on the floor, oh god!’ She thought.

She approached the car and vomited at the sight of the side of the car with its missing side door and gory contents.

Blood was everywhere. While she was busy vomiting she had failed to notice that there was a slight thud as the car rested back on its four wheels.

Something was hissing behind her back. She turned her head to face a tall dark creature. She could not gauge its features. In an instant it took hold of her shoulders with its clawed arms. The creature thrust its segmented tongue into her mouth. It slithered down her throat, probed her inner organs and finally came to rest in her large intestine. The transfer had begun.

When it was over it left for the bushes in the house where it would die peacefully and rot without any stench. Flies would devour every single piece of its decayed flesh piece and finally there would be nothing left to prove that it existed. That was how the whole ritual took place. Always.

When Mary woke up after lying on the road unconscious for over an hour she couldn't remember a thing. She had this terrible stomachache and she had the feeling her head had become really light.

She had to reach the house. The rotten house near the park and deliver this 'thing'. She clutched her stomach and ran towards the house.

VILLÆ

The evil thing twitched inside her belly. Impatiently!

CHAPTER TWEELEVE

The house moaned, groaned and occasionally rocked.

Martin had never in his life experienced so much fright. Roland sat calmly wiping his shotgun. Infect he had brought along a big baggage full of essential things, but did not bother to explain 'What they were?' They were inside the dilapidated house, huddled together eagerly in one room which offered the closest view of the crater.

It gaped at them from the floor of the once exquisitely furnished drawing room. The present situation was such that even to think, once it was a beautiful home was a sin. Roland was very familiar with the house. At about half past seven they had scaled the fence and walked straight into the house. Roland had obviously been to the place many times before and he had conveniently setup an entry as well as an exit point. All the while he talked about how famous he would become after tonight's rendezvous.

Justin was just too much to handle. He was very edgy and though he had boldly stated that he was not frightened, he had taken additional care to wear at least 40 different varieties of charm all over his body. He also lectured about a few fancy gadgets he had brought along for their safety. Martin failed to grab its relevance, as a gun was nowhere to be seen. He somehow felt that Justin should have brought along a weapon of some kind.

Martin was not confident about Roland's self-proclaimed abilities to slay one of the creatures. So he had done the next best possible thing. He tried to call Nelson discreetly on his mobile while Justin and Roland were busy packing for their little outing. But he could not reach him. Finally, after several futile attempts, he left a message for him on his answering machine. The moment Nelson got it he would be here with backup.

He had made sure that his message and his voice sounded grave enough. So dramatic were his words that when it dealt with some vital points it sounded almost surreal.

Martin checked his watch. 'Nelson? Come on pal.'

He had complied with Roland only because he threatened not give him any information. The journalist in him had betrayed his sanity.

“Why does it not come out earlier, much earlier?” Martin asked softly.

“It does, but usually on this particular day of the week, 10 minutes from now. That’s when I have spotted them stealthily emerging from the underworld and slipping into the darkness.”

Turning right. “Now shut up, we don’t need any disturbance.” Saying this he hit Justin on his head.

Justin was trying on a pair of funny looking night vision goggles that had flashing lights all around the lens. Abandoning his irritating antics Justin stretched his knees and stared at the drawing room.

The door leading to the room with the crater was wide open. Moonlight filtered into the drawing room. But their room was absolutely dark because of its blacked out windows.

Roland was confident that they would not be spotted. He also wanted to take a clean shot at it. Martin could hear Roland mutter a silent prayer as he had joined them in the corner, after leaving the door ajar.

The flat wooden flooring seemed like desert in a moonlit night. Right in the middle, suddenly the desert caved in. Drawing

VILE

all the light of the stars into the abyss. Splinters of wood that protruded from the sides reminded him of horrifying landscapes he used to encounter in his nightmares.

Martin was frightened. In minutes he would feast his eyes upon the most fearsome creature on earth that had devoured more human beings over the centuries than all the wars combined together. He wanted to take a leak.

Suddenly there was a light noise from beneath the floor. Something from the deep was slowly inching towards them.

A bump. Silence. Then it started again. This time it was clearer. There were echoes, racing through the tunnels and rushing out of the crater, warning them of vile beings treading on damp earth with clawed limbs.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

There was a splintering noise and something crashed into the room from the front door. All of them were expecting something to leap out of the crater. But the sudden and unexpected noise shocked them.

Justin was speechless. Roland positioned his gun and Martin leapt to his feet. The thing that had crashed onto the floor, almost fell into the dark hole. It slowly stood up. It was a person.

‘A robber’ was the first thought rose in Martin’s mind, but when he observed the figure closely in the moonlight, familiarity started to raise its ugly head. The dress, the hair.....

“Mary!” He screamed and switched on the powerful halogen light Roland had brought along. Roland hurled abuses at him and tried to switch of the powerful set of lights. Martin held his arm.

“Mary.” he said slowly walking towards her.

She looked as if she had just come out of a washing machine bruised and pale. Her skin was stretched in a grotesque manner. She was obviously in a lot of pain. It seemed that her eyeballs would pop out at any moment. She was clutching her stomach and only a whimpering sound emerged from her throat. Martin supported her on his shoulders.

“Roland call an ambulance.... No! I will take her in my car!” He turned towards Mary, “Love what happened, come on.” He tried to lift her. Then he spotted a strange agitated movement in her belly. Suddenly it became fast. In a split second it had suddenly inflated itself, cruelly.

“My God!” Justin, who was standing near him, exclaimed.

It happened in a matter of seconds. There was a popping sound and Mary’s stomach burst open. She kept staring at Martin’s face till the last moment. Blood, grime and a strange oily substance rained even on Roland who was in the inner room. Her bloody entrails now covered the lights and it cast hundred of shadows adding to the terror. Martin screamed in horror as he crawled back into the inner room with the aid of Justin who dragged him in.

Roland cleaned the glass and the lights were free of all kinds of obstructions. Suddenly an ear splitting scream, that

VILE

even silenced Martin's mad ranting forced Roland to focus the light on the source. It was a shapeless thing, gray, scaly and red at places. A green oily secretion oozed from all corners of the shapeless mass. It was the thing that had emerged from Mary's belly.

Roland did not hesitate to blow it to smithereens. The shot sounded unnaturally loud. The might of terror had overcome them so fast that, they were shocked into a state of inactivity. Martin was sobbing silently while Justin tried to comfort him. After eliminating the wretched thing Roland dropped his gun and bent on the floor. He threw up again and again.

A familiar hiss brought back the deeper silence. It was a sound Roland knew really well. Martin stopped crying. It hissed again. Roland turned the light away from the nauseating remains of the thing that had killed Mary, to the crater.

A pair of green eyes was watching them stealthily. Hissing, its dirty mouth dripping slime, it emerged slowly from the hole. It was like watching a slow motion. Martin was no longer breathing. He clutched Justin's hands and started to slam a slice of iron rod into one of the blacked out windows in the room. Roland had enough time to shoot the thing.

VILLÆ

‘By god it certainly resembled an over grown Komodo dragon.’ Roland thought. But it was more terrifying and evil than any known creation of god.

Roland emptied another bullet into the belly of the dead creature as a sign of victory. But he made the vital mistake of not being alert. The next one leapt out of the crater in a flash and pounced on Roland who was taken by surprise. He was over in matter of minutes.

Two more had entered the room as Justin and Martin burst open the window. Justin was just about to leap out when something sharp and very powerful got hold of his legs. One moment his legs were there then it was gone. Martin leapt over the other one and tried to run out through the front door. But he was caught by a lashing tail and finally fell into the carter.

He lay their motionless face to face with another one of the monsters. He looked up and he realised his road to freedom was blocked by the other three who had finished of Justin and Roland. Escape was beyond his reach. He looked into the eyes of the one nearest to him, its horrible breath battering his face constantly.

He kept still and thought about Mary. Then he cried, just as the beings leapt on him crushing his body. Amidst the

VILLÆ

unbearable pain he prayed. 'God help nelson fine this place please!' His head was gone. Then he couldn't think anymore.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Nelson was greeted by an awful silence as he braked his car before the old house. He looked at his watch; it was 30 minutes past nine.

“Jim wait here.” he said to his partner.

He walked towards the rusted gate and on reaching there took his flashlight and checked out the whole plot.

“Where are you pal?” he said softly.

At that very moment a figure emerged from the front door. He now noticed that the door seemed to have been hit by a truck. The figure was nearing him, walking hastily. The sharp beam of light from his flashlight revealed that it was Martin.

“Hey what’s happening Martin?” Nelson asked with a smile.

Martin scaled the fence in one swift leap to his disbelief.

“Where did you learn that thing from?” Nelson was shocked and a brief glance at his partner sitting in the squad car convinced him that he was not hallucinating.

“Where are your friends?” He questioned him. He did not look different. There was nothing wrong with him. He was the same old Martin.

“Oh!” Martin replied, “There is nothing in there. Those guys were lying. Sorry for the false alarm.”

“What? I think I better take a look insi.....” he couldn’t complete the sentence. He felt a burning sensation in his torso. A brief glance revealed that his chest had been ripped open. When he raised his head he did not find Martin.

Instead a huge beast, something out of a horror film stood there assessing the damage. Its sharp teeth found his heart pretty easily and Nelson walked around startled for some distance before he fell into a nearby drainage.

Jim was lucky for about 2 minutes. He saw what happened to his partner. He had gotten out of the car to shoot the monster. Realizing that it wouldn’t work he leapt into the car to radio for help.

VILLÆ

But the door on the other side was open. He said a silent prayer and extended his hand to close the door.

In a swift movement, one that would have shamed a deadly snake, the thing snapped off his hand.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The operator, who attended the call, later went on to say in the local newspaper that she still could not forget the horrible screams, hisses and noises she had heard on that wretched night. The condition of the backup officers who had reached the spot was no better. A few of them needed psychiatric help.

Several prints were obtained from the scene of the crime, mostly of the officers who had clutched and grabbed at everything to save them from the terrible fate that had virtually made a soup out of them.

The house was searched and 4 unidentified bodies were obtained. The crater was sealed off. A brief session of probing had revealed that it was just a hole. There were no tunnels or spaces underneath it for anything to hide.

The investigators were thoroughly frustrated because there were no major clues. Tempers flared and rumor mills worked overtime. The residents of this once peaceful residential area knew that it would no longer be a quite neighborhood.

VILLÆ

The nightmares that haunted a Whole city stopped abruptly.

And then it came back. Never to end.

EPILOGUE

A strange screeching noise filled the air. Vibrations and subtle changes in the air were lapped up eagerly. The great lord had spoken. They had to cover up their original route.

The wretched humans had stormed the place. They would not stop at it. And soon all of them would be discovered, their civilization that flourished beneath the sleeping, waking, walking world.

The humans would discover them and try to destroy them. But it did not matter anymore

The war would begin.

Soon!

Meanwhile all of them were heading in one single file towards their home. The great lord had commanded all of them to assemble before the altar.

VILE

The war was near.

The end of human kind was fast approaching.

It moved with measured steps. Rhythmically. Marching steadily, blood rushing through its veins. Savoring the memories of its past kills.

It moved its head from side to side, flicking its tongue. Occasionally closing its heavy, scaly eyelids.

As if it relished being vile.