

THE DEVIL AND THE AWESOME FOUR

BOOK 1

RISE OF THE FOUR



DAMON GRAVES



TOMBSTONE PUBLISHING

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Book design by Tombstone Publishing.

2nd Edition

First printing 2019

ISBN: : 979-8-89587-168-3



Only suitable for people aged 15 or over

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DEDICATIONS

This book is dedicated to the following:
Mom, Dad, Alan, Lisa, Noel, Jennifer, Anton, Ben,
Kate, Paudie, Hayley, and Mike.

To my wife Caroline and my Step Kids
For all my aunts, uncles, cousins and friends, too
numerous to mention individually, but you know who
you are.

Eliza Knight, whose ideas and assistance with this book
are greatly appreciated.

INTRODUCTION



When Ben Connors, Roger Ryan, Jackie Anderson, and Sarah Thomas met, they got more than they bargained for. From the word go, hell was hot on their trail, casting them into a world where the supernatural and paranormal reign supreme. Fate had brought them together for a reason, to fight the forces of evil and the dominions of hell. They were four young people with uncomplicated lives, until evil reared its ugly head forcing them to take action and go to battle, with a whole load of trouble to follow.

The Devil himself becomes involved and tries his best to destroy our heroes, sending maniacs, demons and a whole lot more to destroy them, before his ultimate goal can be accomplished. When the four met, they inadvertently set in motion the countdown to Armageddon and now is Satan's chance to return and wreak havoc upon humanity, the only thing standing in his way are the Awesome four and he will stop at nothing to eradicate them. From his chainsaw wielding terror named Harry Gordon, who gives up his soul to become an immortal killing machine that leaves bodies strewn in his wake and as he encounters the four heroes, blood is going to fly. Satan even tricks the four into travelling to the future under the pretence that they are protecting the new Messiah. When Stephanie the vampire queen comes to town, all hell breaks loose and poor Ben becomes a tortured man, and when something strange happens to his beloved Jackie things get a little confusing. As we catch up with Ben and Roger, we find them standing at Dublin airport ready to embark on a new life of sun, sea, and happiness. If only that were true. Let's join them now and follow their journey from ordinary saps to American Heroes.

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THE BEGINNING



Ben Connors and Roger Ryan are close friends and have been for over ten years. Ben is a 26-year-old, factory worker at a steel fabricating firm. Roger is 27 and works in an electronics enterprise specialized in assembling computers for a small firm. They are both exhausted and depressed by the thought of the countless years laid out before them, so they decided, to leave their present lives far behind them. They've had this planned for two years, but the lack of funds held them off, until now. This was their golden opportunity to break free from the chains that have held them back for so long and Los Angeles California was their chosen destination. They arrived at the airport on the big day and found the lobby, packed to capacity with people rushing to their right terminals or arguing with staff about over booked flights or plane tickets that were not issued on time. It was pandemonium. Not letting the chaos deter them, they handed the clerk their passports, then she handed them the tickets to their new lives.

“Your tickets gentlemen,”

She said with a smile, her bleached white teeth sparkling in the overhead fluorescent light.

“Thank you.” replied Ben with a flirty smile, wider than the clerks.

“Will you come on?” Roger said, pulling him by the arm leading him away.

He took one last look out the lobby window at the place, which he hoped to never return.

“Goodbye and good riddance to this depressing place. All of our lives, we have been pretty much trapped here with a bleak outlook ahead and no future, now it's time to leave and never look back.



After two hours waiting, the last call for flight 756 Los Angeles came through the intercom, the invitation the guys had been waiting to

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hear. "This is going to be great. Sun, sea, booze, and women, what more could a guy want?" Roger said with a little laugh as they slung their backpacks over their shoulders and proceeded to terminal 2.



As they walked up the gangway, a hostess asked them for their tickets.

Then they walked down the aisle placing their backpacks in the overhead luggage compartments before taking their seats and fastening their seat belts.

The engines roared as the plane taxied into position.

With final checks completed, the pilots received the go ahead from the control tower. The Boeing rocketed down the runway slowly lifting off. The guys felt their ears pop, becoming a little queasy.

Six hours later the tires of the landing gear screeched along the tarmac, as the plane landed in California.



"L.A. here we are!" they both said as they disembarked.

They walked into the terminal and proceeded through customs where the officers examined their cases, and passports, and once they were satisfied with Roger and Ben, stamped and approved their visas, they then walked outside, hailed a taxi and asked to be taken to the nearest Motel.

They drove for what seemed like forever, with the driver ranting on about everything from politics and religion to just downright old bullshit. Then, the taxi stopped outside what looked like a rundown sleazy joint, they hopped out and handed him twenty dollars each. The cabbie drove off, while the driver yelled out his window "Welcome to Los Angeles", honked his horn and disappeared into the distance. They walked into the motel, down the damp ridden cockroach infested hallway, and knocked on door number one. The landlord opened it. He was in his late forties heavy set, greasy balding head, wearing a string vest that looked as if he wore it for the past ten years without washing it, a cigarette hung from the corner of his mouth, a can of Budweiser in his left hand, his trousers were unbuttoned his big beer belly hanging

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over the waist line and he looked like he needed at least four showers just to remove the surface grime. The smell of stale smoke and sweat almost made their eyes water.

“Yeah, what do ya want?” He barked with his eyes firmly fixed on the guys.

“Ah, Sorry to have bothered you” Ben said as they backed away from the man and hurried down through the damp ridden corridor with the landlord hurling insults at them.



They strolled on for about ten minutes before they came across another motel. Ben winked at Roger and smiled as they walked down the corridor to the landlord's apartment and knocked. Not sure what to expect, they held their breath as someone unlocked a security chain from the other side. A man appeared in the doorway. He was in his mid-fifties, remarkably well dressed and pleasant.

“Can I help you guys?” He asked in a Gentle, friendly tone.

“Yes, you can,” Roger said, putting down his bags to catch his breath, “we need a room for a few nights nothing too big and hopefully not too expensive.”

“I think I can help you there just give me a second.” The man went back inside. A few moments later, he came out with a huge bunch of keys.

“Come with me.” He led the way down the corridor. The guys couldn't believe it, they were expecting a real kip, but this was great. The walls were painted a lime green colour with paintings of the ocean, a forest, a lighthouse, to name a few, and the floors were pinewood and well kept. They walked down the corridor, until they came to a stop outside door 32, the landlord then opened the door. The room was nice enough, but they didn't care about stuff like that as long as they had a place to crash for a few nights. “How much do you charge a night?” Roger asked half expecting it to be pricey.

“It will be fifty a night per person with two nights deposit up front.” The man spun the bunch of keys round his index finger.

“We'll take it.” Ben had an exhausted look in his eyes. The man handed them their keys.

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“Enjoy your stay.” He said closing the door behind him.

“Let’s try to get some sleep, then get ready to hit the town,” Ben said, and threw himself on the couch, Roger lay on one of the beds.



After about four hours of sleep, they awoke:

“I’m just going to grab a quick shower Ben,” Roger walked to the bathroom locking the door behind him. Ben looked in his travel mirror and noticed he had about a day’s growth of stubble.

“Man, this won’t do at all. I’ll have a shave when Rodge gets out,” Ten minutes later the door opened and Roger came out, towel wrapped around his waist.

“I’m going to have a shave and a quick shower. Won’t be long,” he said entering the bathroom. Thirty minutes later they were dressed up and ready to party. Smelling of Old Spice aftershave and Lynx Body Spray.



They went out for a few drinks, which lasted two hours, before they came upon a nightclub called, “Aces High”. The place was packed, and people were being turned away, as they reached the doors the doormen stopped them explaining that the place was almost full, Ben was quick to reply.

“Almost full, doesn’t mean completely full now does it. Come on man, we’ve travelled a long way, so how’s about cutting us some slack,” he smiled at the Bouncer who pondered for a moment before his supervisor winked and nodded.

He removed the security rope stepping aside letting them enter.

“Thanks man we appreciate it,” Ben said with a nod and a grin. Roger patted him on the shoulder

“Let’s grab a beer and go mingle,” he pointed to the bar.

Up at the bar, things were a little crowded and they accidentally bumped into two women, spilling some of their drinks but it was the girls who were first to apologize.

“Apologize for what? It was us that bumped into you,” Roger said with a smile. The girls laughed and introduced themselves.

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“I’m Jackie and this mad one here is Sarah,” One of them said. She was twenty-two-years-old, five foot nine, with long, straight black hair, lightly tanned skin and dark blue eyes. In other words, drop dead gorgeous.

“I’m Ben,” he said a little shyly, “and this is Roger.” They all shook hands and chatted until they got to the bar. The girls called for beers as did the guys who paid for the lot. After two more drinks, they realized that they were getting to like each other more and more, so much so that Ben kissed Jackie. Just as, their lips parted, the lovers’ songs played.

“Want to dance?” Jackie stood up from the table holding out her hand

He looked at Roger, “She’s asking me to dance? That would normally be my line. Beaten at my own game,” he said with a smile, taking her hand, and leading her to the dance floor.

They were kissing like crazy when someone tapped Ben on the shoulder. He looked around; there were Roger and Sarah beside them with Roger grinning like a Cheshire cat. The lover’s songs finished, and they returned to their seats.

“I’m tired,” Sarah, said stretching, and yawning, her breasts sticking out through her tight top.

“Want to go home?” Jackie added, laying on the hint.

“You bet I do,” Ben said reading her body language. She laughed as she and Sarah went to the cloakroom to collect their coats.

“God those two made our night, didn’t they?” Sarah said with a fantasizing look in her eyes.

“They sure have. God, I’m so glad we came out,” Jackie replied, biting her bottom lip.

They got their coats and went back only to find the two guys sprawled across their seats almost asleep. “Wake up,” Sarah yelled over the loud music.

The guys jolted awake and got to their feet, and Ben asked

“Are we going back to your place or ours?”



They walked out into the streets arm in arm right passed the guy’s

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motel. They walked about half a mile until Jackie said. "Well, this is our stop I'll call you later, Sarah okay," She led Ben up to her front door.

Roger and Sarah walked for another five minutes before arriving at her house.



Ben and Jackie were getting hot and heavy on her couch. He unzipped her red dress and removed her bra. Her large breasts spilled down her chest; their size amazed him. She took off his shirt and unbuttoned his jeans, she stood and slinked her way out of her dress and climbed back on top of him, spreading her legs so her crotch rested on his lap. She kissed his chest working her way up to his lips. He caressed her breasts while she kissed his neck. Passion and lust got the better of them, and they had hot passionate sex.

Jackie was lost in the heat of passion as she yelled with pleasure and panted.

"That was fucking Awesome," she said through her rapid breathing.

After another round of love making, Ben got dressed and was heading out the door when Jackie pulled him back slipping him a piece of paper on which was her number. She kissed him again, went back inside and gently closed the door. Ben was on cloud nine walking out the gate when Roger came towards him.

"Well?" Roger asked, smiling.

"Well, what?" came the reply and huge grin.

"How did you get on?" Roger grinned.

"It was fantastic. I've never had anything that even comes close to that in my life," he said with a laugh of victory.

"I'm meeting Jackie tomorrow are you going to meet Sarah?" Ben asked as they walked.

"Yes, I'm meeting her at twelve at the mall," Roger placed his cold hands in his pockets

"Isn't that great that's the time I'm to meet Jackie at the mall too" Ben lit up a smoke.

They got back to their motel and celebrated their good fortune with a few beers.

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“I was just thinking Roger, instead of meeting them at the mall, why don’t we meet them at Jackie’s,” He finished his beer, fumbled around in his jeans pocket for the scrap of paper Jackie gave to him before he left with her number on it. He picked up the phone and dialled. He waited for the ring but it went straight to her answering machine instead. He left a brief voice mail and leaned forward in his seat trying to place the receiver back in the cradle, but fell forward off the chair and lay on the floor. And there he slept until the next morning.



It was just gone ten, when Ben woke up to a blaring siren as a fire truck screamed past the motel. He held his head with both hands as a terrible headache crept across his brow.

“*Oh Christ! Never again will I drink that much,*” He whispered to himself as Roger rose from his drunken slumber.

It was now 10:45, time to take a shower then join the girls later.



They left the motel; the sun was beating down on them. They made a quick stop to buy cold sodas and continued on their way, sweat dripping from their brows. “God, I’m melting,” Roger said, taking a sip of his now, warm cola.

“I know, it’s blistering,” Ben replied, wiping the sweat from his forehead.



They arrived at Jackie’s right on time, and the girls were waiting for them

“Well, hello again” Jackie said coming to the front door when she saw the guys walking up the driveway

“So, where do we go now?” Ben asked giving her a peck on the cheek.

“We were thinking about the old Lummis castle, it’s a beautiful day so we may as well walk. Will you take this Ben?” Jackie asked with a smile, handing him a picnic basket.

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All four of them walked for about two miles, before the castle came into view, it was enormous and in superb condition for a 900-year-old landmark. They looked around until they came to its courtyard. They saw an open door that led into what used to be a secret escape tunnel. Ben left the basket behind a pillar, and they went to explore.

They followed the spiralling staircase to the bottom into a cavern. On the walls, lit torches cast their dim light into the shadows. Ben kissed Jackie without warning. She giggled and kissed him back. Their lips parted.

“Did you hear something?” She asked, startled, glancing around her, eyes wide with shock. “I heard nothing?” He said, looking around listening attentively, and this time he did hear something, very faint but it sounded like some kind of chanting.

Another chorus of voices echoed from deep within the cavern.

“Let’s follow it and see what happens?” Jackie said as they proceeded toward an open door at the back of the cavern.

They dashed inside and hid behind a stone pillar. At least 50 people with black cloaks and hoods stood in a pentagram pattern.

“Who are they?” Sarah whispered as she clung to Roger looking at them.

“They’re Satanists. It looks like someone’s about to be sacrificed.” Ben pointed as a young man was brought forward from the shadows screaming and fighting as he was dragged before the high priest.

They stripped him and painted an inverted cross upon his chest in pig’s blood that dripped down his body in narrow rivulets. He was forced to lie down in the middle of a painted pentagram on the floor, four disciples held his arms and legs as he struggled and yelled for help. The high priest knelt behind his head, reading a passage from an ancient book then raised a dagger aloft praying in Latin, he lowered the blade, grabbed the terrified young man by the hair raising his head from the floor, his eyes opened wide in terror as he felt the cold blade across his throat. The man gagged as his blood poured from the gaping slit across his throat onto the floor, the pentagram began to glow a sinister luminous green, the disciples stepped back forming a circle. A

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gateway had been opened; the dead man's body sank into the black hole that had now appeared in the middle of the floor, followed by a terrible blood curdling roar that echoed from the giant hole, a colossal hand appeared, then another. A monstrous beast was emerging and the high priest was panicking, turning pages in a rush trying to stop what he had started, but it was too late. The Cyclopean demon now stood menacingly before them staring at the terrified cult.

The worshippers were chanting something in a language long dead to this world. The demon stood at least ten feet tall, with a single piercing yellow eye in the centre of its forehead, razor-sharp hooked finger nails, and a mouthful of jagged teeth. It roared and with one slash of its claws sent a man's head rolling across the ground the body still standing, nerves firing making it dance and tremble, blood gushing everywhere. Jackie clasped her hand across her mouth to stop herself from screaming as the demon went berserk. The other worshippers panicked and ran. Screams of terror and suffering echoed through the caverns as the slaughter continued. Dismembered limbs, blood, and shredded robes were all that remained of forty nine people. The high priest was trying to open the latch on the steel gate, pulling and pushing but to no avail. He grabbed the bars shaking the gate and kicking it, when he heard heavy breathing behind him. He turned pale as he slowly turned to face the thing he had let loose. The beast reached out a massive hand seizing its summoner by the throat. The man coughed and gagged as the fingers tightened around his neck. He was lifted high into the air then felt the demon's other hand seize his legs. With a mighty roar the beast ripped the man in two and a shower of blood splashed across the floor covering its feet. The head of the severed torsos mouth was opening and closing as if trying to mutely curse this bastard monster, when it fell still, eyes glassy and vacant, the spinal column trembled and pulsated as the life ebbed away. The demon roared again flinging the horrid remains each side of the room.

Suddenly, it turned its attention to where the four were hiding. Moving like lightning, it was upon them. The pointed teeth that lined its monstrous jaws and evil eye sent shivers down their spines. It swung its claws at Roger who ducked and ran to Ben.

"How the hell do we stop this thing?" He screamed over the

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howling shriek of the wind emanating from the vortex.

“I don’t know Rodge, if it came from that gateway then maybe it must go back through it, I don’t know, but we have to try and stop it somehow before it gets out.” Ben yelled, as Jackie grabbed him by the arm

“How the hell do we stop it, Ben? You just saw what it done to those clowns; what chance do the four of us have against it?” She yelled, as the beast went on the attack again.

They ran deeper into the cavern, down stony corridors with the creature’s grunts and growls echoing behind them. They stopped to catch their breath, placing their hands on their knees panting and gasping. Jackie happened to cast her eyes over Ben’s shoulder and spied a solid oak door.

“Ben, look behind you,” he jumped thinking the demon was about to grab him, as he turned, he saw the door. Placing his shoulder against it he pushed with all his might but it didn’t budge. The others came to help and as they pushed, the door slowly gave way, painfully slow. A guttural roar sent shivers down their spines as the demon’s shadow appeared upon the wall illuminated by the burning glow of a torch.

“One more big push, come on,” Ben yelled and the door suddenly gave way and they ended up in a heap on the ground. They quickly regained their feet and pushed the door shut, it creaked and squeaked until it finally latched. They found themselves in total darkness. Ben reached into one of his pockets and took out his Zippo. He flipped it open and thumbed the flint wheel, a bright yellow flame lit up the darkness and above his head another torch jutted out from the wall. He reached up taking it from its holder, placing the lighter beneath it and for a moment it seemed like the flame wouldn’t catch, until it gave a little whoosh as it ignited with a puff of black smoke. He placed the Zippo back in his pocket holding the torch out in front of him. A thunderous bang came from the door and it shuddered in its frame. They spun around to see a huge split had formed in the solid oak door, as another horrid roar bellowed through the caverns.

Ben held the torch aloft looking around the room they were now cornered in, and in the flickering light he could just about see another door.

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“Come on follow me,” he led the way holding Jackie’s hand. They reached the door and he placed his shoulder against it and pushed, this time it opened with little effort and they all piled in slamming the door shut behind them, and at that very moment there was a horrendous bang and sound of splintering wood as the demon shattered the door into the room they had just been in only moments before with a mighty kick, it was so tall it had to crouch to get through the doorway. It stood, growling and grunting, its luminous eye piercing through the darkness as it scanned the room.



“Check this out guys, looks like we have a way to fight back,” Ben said with a grin. The others stood beside him and couldn’t believe their eyes. The room they had just entered was huge and it contained an enormous collection of Medieval memorabilia. All manner of weaponry, suits of armour, shields, flags and other artefacts.

“This must be where they store the exhibits when the tourist season finishes, this stuff must be worth a fortune if not damn priceless,” Roger adjusted his glasses, gobsmacked by the incredible collection, when Ben snapped him back to reality.

“I know you love your history Rodge, but this isn’t exactly the time for a lesson. Grab whatever weapons you can and get ready, that bastard’s gonna come crashing through the door any second,”

They moved quickly, Sarah took a spear, Roger a Mace, Ben and Jackie both grabbed a sword. Ben saw a suit of armour that had its hand clenched as if it were holding a sword or something that was no longer in its grasp.

“Here’s what we’re gonna do, I’m going to place the torch in its hand, so when that demon comes through the door it’ll go straight for this decoy. We’ll be hiding in the shadows waiting for it to get clear of the door, when it does, that’s when we make a break for it back to that damn portal it came out of, and that’s where we make our stand alright,” they nodded in agreement as Ben placed the torch in the Knights hand, and they quickly moved towards the door staying hidden as much as possible in the shadows, when Ben was satisfied, they were close enough they came to a stop and waited. From the other

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room they heard it growl, then it roared and the door shattered beside them, it came in and went straight for the torch light raising its claws high above its head it slashed down sending the suit of armour crashing to the ground in pieces.



The four were running back through the stony corridor, when the howling wind of the vortex pierced through the silence and they emerged back in the room of horror, just in time to witness the bodies of the cult sliding across the floor, being sucked into the glowing whirlpool of doom. A blood curdling roar made them shiver as the demon came around the corner, they turned to face the horror that now stood glaring down on them, its mighty chest heaving and falling as rage coursed through its body. The four stood there, fear making their hearts pound like the sound of distant drums. They locked eyes with the creature, each waiting for the other to make the first move. The beast screamed raising its fists into the air as its ribcage pulsed, the imprints of something horrid protruded from the skin. With a mighty roar two more arms ripped through the flesh, just beneath the armpits, the four were stunned, mouths agape in awe at what they were witnessing. When the pain subsided, it turned its attention back to them. The vortex was growing stronger with every minute that passed and they could feel themselves being pulled toward it, like invisible hands had seized them by the shoulders their grip growing tighter by the second.

“We’re trapped. We can’t fight it here that vortex will drag us all in if we’re not careful.” Ben yelled looking around and noticed another corridor.

“We’ve got to get away from here, come on,” he held out his hand and Jackie took hold. He pushed forward, pulling Jackie along with him, every step was like walking through quick sand with lead weights strapped around their ankles, but onward they struggled until they were thrown forward as the vortex lost its grip. They could hear the creature sinking the clawed fingers of its four arms into the walls dragging itself along. Ben spotted four plinths upon which Suits of armour holding large shields and spears stood guard.

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“We don’t have much time, get up on those plinths and hide as best you can behind those suits of armour,” he helped the others climb onto their ledges before he climbed up on his own and side shuffled, squeezing himself behind the knight, the blade of his sword scraped against the wall with a “skreeek” sound. The demon came hurtling forward as it broke free from the pull of the vortex. It stood silent, looking and listening. A little stone fell from the wall beside Ben and as it hit the ground it bounced, striking the armour with a little “Ting” the demon turned its head toward the sound and took a step forward. Ben was trembling both from fear and the rush of adrenaline as he gripped the sword with both hands waiting for the beast to discover him. It lifted a hand, stretched out its index finger poking at the armour that swayed back and forth. It turned to leave when it turned back and ripped the suit of armour from its plinth sending it crashing to the floor with a rattling bang. It grabbed Ben around the waist pulling him from his hiding place. He had his sword and raising it above his head drove the tip into the creature’s hand. It roared in pain and released him, he dropped to the floor staggering backwards he ended up on his ass. He quickly got to his feet, sword still in hand. When the others jumped from their hiding places to stand beside him.

“I have an idea,” he handed his sword to Jackie and quickly bent and picked up the spear that had fallen from the Knight’s grasp. The demon came charging toward them when Ben drew back his hand and with a single step launched the spear through the air and the thing roared in agony as the spear jutted from its hideous eye. It staggered left and right bouncing off walls, before one of its arms reached up ripping the spear from its eye that left a gaping hole and a greenish liquid that trickled from the wound.

“Get behind it quickly, Jackie pass me my sword,” Ben barked as they ran past the blinded Cyclops taking up positions behind it.

“Sarah, use your spear and stab it in the ribs, I’ll worry about its arms. Roger, Jackie you two, attack its legs,” he stopped talking when it blindly slashed at the air. One arm came slashing toward him, raising the sword he brought it across his body in a dazzling arc and the blade amputated the arm at the elbow. The Cyclops roared as agony ripped through its body as more greenish blue blood spurted from the wound.

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While it was distracted Sarah jabbed at its ribs with her spear and it took a step backward its last right arm slashing out. She stepped back as the claws flashed by her and stepped forward ramming the spear into it again. Another arm came slashing through the air, and as before Ben took it off with a huge swing of his blade. Roger went rushing in with mace held across his body and with a big swing, the spiked club hit the beast in the knee and it buckled from the pain. Jackie didn't see another hand shooting forward from the shadows, but Ben did. He flipped the sword upward so he was holding it by the blade, drawing his arm back he threw it tumbling end over end through the air and it hit the demon in the eye again, it fell backward onto its back and lay roaring and growling kicking and slashing. Ben lost his temper and ran as fast as he could and jumped. He flew through the air with a bellowing battle cry arms out stretched. He landed on top of the demon and brought both his hands down on the sword driving it through the eye with an eruption of that greenish tinted blood. It tried to grab at him but he pushed the blade further in screaming

“Die you vicious bastard, Die,” he was breathing heavy as the creature's blood dripped from his face. The beast thrashed around as new arms began to sprout from its ribcage its dying roars slowly dying down to mere growls as the life drained out of it. Its arms curled up like those of a dead spider, Ben stood up rage coursing through him, he dismounted the beast and stood at its head. The sword twitched as the eye moved, he raised his right leg and screamed as he brought it down on the sword and he felt it go through the skull into the ground. Just then the howling wind of the vortex screamed ever closer, as the demon's body began to tremble.

“Get up on that plinth now,” Ben yelled helping Jackie and Sarah onto the ledge, Roger joined them.

“Rodge, get the girls between us and hold on to the crevices in the wall,” They pushed the girls between them and Roger placed his right hand into the crevice left arm around Ben's shoulder and Ben placed his right arm around Roger's shoulder and his left arm into a crevice. They had the girls anchored safely between them when they finally felt the power of the vortex pulling at them trying to dislodge them.

“Hold on tight this is going to be close,” Ben yelled lowering his

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head grunting under the pressure of holding on for dear life and his feet being dragged out from under him. As they struggled not to be pulled in, the body of the Cyclops went skating up the corridor and into the vortex where it spun round and round all the ways back to whatever hell it came from.

When the demon finally vanished into the black depths, the vortex began to seal itself shut. Ben and the others could feel the invisible force slowly relinquishing its hold on them until finally it stopped completely. They let out a gasp catching their breath and one by one they jumped down from the plinth.

They looked around and all seemed to be back to normality, as they slowly made their way back to the room where it all started.

Ben shook his head in both rage and disgust.

“Damn fools, what the hell were they thinking, or were they thinking at all.” He shook his head.

Jackie and Sarah were all bright eyed, excited and relieved at the same time. Jackie threw her arms around Ben and gave him a huge kiss.

“You really know how to think on your feet Ben Connors, anyone else would have panicked and died trying to stop that thing,” she said holding him tight.

“Some second date this turned out to be,” Roger shook his head and adjusted his glasses.

Ben laughed.

“Some second date is right, we came here for a picnic and instead had to fight for our lives.” Sarah hugged Roger.

“I don’t know about you three but this demon slaying has given me an appetite, what do you say we go back up grab the picnic basket and do what we came here to do. I’m absolutely starving now,” Ben rubbed his belly.

They all just laughed and left the nightmare behind them, as they emerged into the day-light they had to shield their eyes from the glaring sun. Once their eyes had adjusted, they found the picnic basket just where they had left it an hour ago and set up a nearby picnic table, laughing a kidding around as young people do. But, from the shadows a dark figure loomed.

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Satan watched them with keen interest and a terrible grin appeared on his pale lifeless face.

“So, it finally begins. The guardians of the last gateway have united, the time for my triumphant return is here at last after all these centuries,” he erupted into maniacal laughter as he walked away slowly disappearing in a cloud of grey smoke.

The four have inadvertently set in motion the countdown to Armageddon and in doing so have placed themselves in great danger, for Satan will stop at nothing to destroy them.

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ALIEN CARNAGE



It was a stormy night, a gale force wind bellowed through the alleyways blowing trash around as far as the eye could see. Thunder roared making the ground shake, lightning streaked through the night sky, turning darkness into light. Torrential rain cascaded from the heavens and made driving conditions treacherous. Vehicles slowed to a crawl; the windscreen wipers unable to cope with the rain that was making visibility poor.



Somewhere above the Earth, a spacecraft was approaching at high speed. It was out of control. Sparks and flames flew from the heat shield as it entered the atmosphere. It was plummeting towards the ground at tremendous speed when a bolt of lightning struck it. The circular ship went into a spin, like a coin being flipped into the air. It crashed through a forest ripping up trees and carving a deep channel into the ground. It skated along like a stone skimming over water before it stopped with a horrendous bang.

The ship lay there, half buried in the channel it had carved for itself in the earth. It looked like a sleeping silver tortoise. It was smouldering from the damaged engine and fried circuitry. A small hole had been carved in its hull from the lightning strike. Nothing appeared to be moving until a door opened and a set of steps snaked from the craft.

A cloud of white smoke filled the ship's interior, and all that was visible was a faint glow of a low blue luminescent light. A silhouette appeared through the vapour. The mist was too heavy to make out what it was, but it was enormous.

Out of the haze it came, standing at least eight feet tall. The sheer bulk of the beast made the steps shudder and squeak, the heavy rain splashing off its snake like skin. Its strong, muscular, legs pounded the steel steps, its eyes were luminous, glowing like a cat's eyes, three

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rows of razor-sharp teeth glinted in the faint light illuminating from the ship. The beast reached the bottom step, stretching its arms to the sky as lightning flashed showing only three fingers on each of its hands. The foreign beast roared a terrible shriek that was stifled by the howling wind. It lifted its massive head, sniffed at the air, and then growled, running off at super human speed.



At a bus stop in town, a bus came to a slow halt. The doors open with a gentle hiss, and two teenage girls disembarked.

“We’ve got to be mad coming out in this Sabrina,” One of them said, pulling the collar of her coat up to her cheeks to stop the wind and rain.

“I know we’re mad Becky, but who cares? We’re here now,” The other girl said, placing her hands in her jacket pockets shrugging up her shoulders as the rain drenched them.

Both girls walked off into the night, the storm raging. They walked through the park hoping the trees might give them some protection.

The alien was there too, watching them, so close they could have reached out and touched it.

“Damn its Sabrina this place gives me the creeps. Can we get out of here, please?” One girl said nervously.

“God, will you relax Becky. It’s a lousy night, too severe for any weirdo’s being out,” the other said trying to light up a smoke.

The creature growled, watching them, waiting for the right moment to strike. Saliva dripped from its hideous mouth as it became hungry. Without warning, it roared, coming into view. The girls screamed and ran. The alien watched for a second, then attacked. With super speed, it was on them. One girl looked behind and screamed, as the beast reached out a hand and grabbed her, lifting her off the ground looking at her frightened face growling at her. It hurled her through the air “Becky” the girl screamed as she flew twenty feet landing with a sickening thump.

The other girl kept running unaware that the creature had overtaken her and was now in front of her. She glanced behind her when something made her stop. She turned her head slowly looking forward;

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her mouth open and a terrible agony ran through her body paralysing her. She shivered, trying to scream, but the pain was so intense it came out a mere whisper. She looked down, saw the creature's razor-sharp claws had penetrated her stomach, and straight through her back. Blood trickled from her mouth. The alien roared again, pulling its clawed hand back, tearing the intestines out with it. The girl's body collapsed into a bundle at its feet. It sniffed at her, poking at her inquisitively. Its hand dripping with blood, its forked tongue licked at it, the taste of blood driving it into a frenzy. It roared bending over, and with one bite, it ripped the flesh from her face right to the bone. It dragged the body across the park, laid it beside the other girl, and continued eating, there was sickening ripping sound as it tore one of her arms off sinking its teeth into the warm flesh stripping it from the bone.

By the time it finished, there was only a horrible, bloody mess left. It walked off into the shadows. The other girl was only knocked out and woke up dazed and confused. As she came around, her eyes rolled lazily as she focused on her surroundings. When her vision cleared, what was before her sent her body into tremors, she opened her mouth to scream, but no sound came out she looked at the butchered mess beside her. The alien appeared, towering over her, it swung its clawed hand, and blood gushed from her severed throat. It ate again, and by the time, it finished, fragments of severed flesh, partial limbs, blood, and flesh ragged bones were all that remained. It then disappeared into the night, its hunger satisfied, at least for the meantime.



The next morning:

Roger and Sarah arrived at Jackie's place for breakfast. They were drinking coffee when the television reporter described the gruesome scene at the park.

"Hey, look at this!" Sarah turned up the volume.

The reporter was clearly shaken by what she had seen. "This is Cindy Shields reporting live from MacArthur Park, where, earlier today a jogger named John Sherman made a shocking and gruesome discovery. At 6:30, this morning while out for his regular morning run,

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he came across the butchered remains of what seemed to be two bodies. They are so mutilated that police forensics will have to rely on dental records in order to identify the two young women. The victims appear to have been in the park seeking refuge from last night's severe storm, when they were brutally murdered. Police have declined to comment on this matter, only saying they are following a definite line of inquiry. Will this lunatic strike again? Only time will tell. This is Cindy Shields for A-B-C-7 news," she glanced behind her as two body bags were wheeled off to the waiting coroner's vehicle.

Ben turned off the TV and sat.

"God almighty, who or what could do something like that?"

Jackie looked at Sarah.

"I don't know how they can even sleep after doing that to someone."

Sarah said in disgust. Ben and Roger said nothing.



Back in the city:

Two city workers were doing a routine check on the sewer system. They split up to check different sections. One of them was whistling and humming to himself when something moved behind him. He spun around, but there was nothing there. He looked startled when something moved again.

"Damn, this is creepy," he said to himself.

Without warning, a large rat ran screaming past him. He gave a frightened yelp, gasped for breath then laughed. The laughter didn't last for long. His flashlight shone on the ground and he saw strange footprints in the sediment and slime, the likes of which he'd never seen.

"What the hell. Those aren't rat prints," he bent over to get a closer look, and slowly began to follow the footprints.

Twenty meters in he came to a sudden halt when he heard something move behind him. He looked around in a panic, his heart pounding as he shone his torch in front of him. Something was standing there growling, its teeth shining in the light. The man yelped and ran away, panicking and panting, with sweat soaking his face, the

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torch flew from his grasp tumbling end over end as the creature crashed into him knocking him to the ground with a heavy thump that knocked the wind clean out of him.

At the opposite end of the sewer, the other man was finishing his safety checks when he thought he heard a faint scream. He took the two-way radio from his utility belt pushed the button and spoke.

“Are you okay Dave, thought I heard you yell something?” Taking his finger off the button, he listened. There was nothing but static.

He walked through the tunnel towards the other man’s position and had gone sixty feet in when something glistened in the beam of his torch. He bent down and with his gloved hand ran his fingers through it bringing it closer to his face and then realized it was blood.

“Dave, are you alright? Where are you?” He screamed, his voice echoing through the sewer.

He continued walking along when he stopped dead in his tracks. There was a man’s body or what remained of it impaled on a steel pipe. He tried to run, but slipped on something. It was the other man’s insides. He screamed as he tried to get back on his feet. When he tried to run, the creature came rushing out of the shadows swinging its claws. The man tried to scream, but only a gurgling sound came as blood poured from his mouth.

His hands clutched around his severed throat, he looked up in horror. The beast roared swinging its claws again the last thing he saw, were the hideous teeth and eyes then everything went black.



There was panic all over town as reports of a U.F.O. crash in a nearby forest flooded the airways and television stations. Ben, Jackie, Roger, and Sarah were in town when they heard the news.

“You’ve got to be joking,” Ben exclaimed as they watched the drama unfold on a television in an electronics store window.

Helicopter shots of the U.F.O. filled the screen, he could not believe it.

“Why are we standing here? Let’s go check it out for ourselves,” he said as they ran back to his car piled in and sped off to the site.

When they arrived, the police had roadblocks in place and traffic

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was being diverted.

“We have to get in there,” Jackie said, looking around.

“Is there another way to get in without being noticed?” Roger looked up to the sky, which was full of TV helicopters.

“Drive on for another mile and take the next left,” Sarah said, breaking the silence.

The engine of the dark blue Mustang roared; the tires screeched as Ben stamped on the accelerator. They turned off the Free way and down a long dirt road. There didn't appear to be any sign of police activity in the area. The car came to a screeching halt when Ben hit the brakes and they got out.

“Where do we go from here? We need to get close enough to take a look at the spaceship,” Ben said clicking on his flashlight.

They climbed over a wooden gate and walked into the dense forest staying close together, their lights moving left-to-right scanning everything. They hadn't gone too far when they heard a police two-way radio. They turned off their torches quickly taking cover behind a clump of trees. Two police officers came into view. They were carrying pump-action shotguns loaded and ready.

“I can't believe a God dam alien could be responsible for those murders in the park. We found the ship, and I still don't believe it,” a tall, lean, faced cop said as his partner shone his torch into the trees.

“Yeah, I hear you buddy. I never believed in extra-terrestrials before tonight, but I do now. We better tell the Chief to leave guards at all the phone booths in the city,” he said smiling.

“Why would we want to do that?” The other cop asked with a puzzled look on his face.

“In case, this bastard tries to phone home.” Their laughter and footsteps faded into the distance.

Jackie switched on her light and emerged from behind the clump of trees.

“They're gone,” she beckoned to the others.

Three more light beams appeared beside her.

“We're getting close. Let's keep going,” Roger said, and they moved on toward the crash site.

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Ten minutes later, they appeared on top of a ridge, and looked in awe at the scene unfolding below. There, in full view was a circular ship half buried in the earth, with a trail of destruction behind it where it crashed the previous night. The dome like structure of the roof resembled a shining silver turtle shell protruding from the deep channel.

“God almighty, there it is,” Sarah exclaimed with amazement in her voice.

Below them, there were lots of activities. People in yellow Hazmat suits walked around the ship, others in white suits examining the interior. Around the craft, armed police officers stood guard. The National Guard was there also. Soldiers were given orders to “Shoot to kill on sight,” by their commanding officer.

Just then, something moved in the woods behind them, and Ben turned to see what it was. There was nothing, only blackness. He was just turning away when something ran at lightning speed toward the ship; he couldn’t figure out what it was, he only saw a shadow.

“Christ, it’s here,” he said, pointing his finger to the ship.

Within seconds, screams of terror came from below. He and the others ran as fast as they could back into the woods, and made their way to the site staying hidden in the trees and bushes. Gunfire echoed, their muzzle flashes looking like fireworks on the fourth of July. The screaming and firing continued for over ten minutes then there was silence. The four walked from the woods into the site.

“God, they’re dead, they’ve been torn apart,” Roger said with shock and fear in his voice.

Everywhere they looked, Mutilated bodies, littered the area. The floodlights around the ship made the situation even more terrifying, casting shadows around their feet.

“Everyone, be cautious because that thing could still be here,” Ben said, bending over, picking up a dead soldier’s machine gun.

Suddenly, something ran past them so fast they only saw a shadow.

“It’s here,” he, screamed firing a few shots into the darkness. He stood there with the gun pushed hard to his shoulder, his heart

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pounding out of his chest. It came running from the shadows roaring.

“Holy shit,” Jackie yelled as she came to Ben’s side.

He pushed her out of the way as the alien rushed at them. He fell to the ground, rolling out of its path as it raced past.

“It’s heading back to the town, we have to get back to the car,” Ben barked as he dropped the gun and they ran back through the forest, their hearts pounding into the night knowing that the beast could be anywhere.

If it was heading toward the city, it was going to be a blood bath, and the Military had failed to stop it, so it was up to our heroes to take this thing down now.

They were running as fast as they could, heading back to the car when Sarah yelled, falling flat on her face.

“Up you get”, Ben said helping her to her feet.

They jumped over the gate and climbed into the Mustang.

The car roared down the dirt road, the rear end fishtailed as Ben turned the wheel to get on to the Free way. In the distance lightning flashed and thunder rumbled.

“Did you see the size of that thing?” Roger gasped for breath.

“Oh, we saw it all right,” Jackie cupped her hands over her mouth.

Sarah hugged Roger. She was scared. They were all scared.

“Whatever that thing is, it’s got to be destroyed before it destroys us,” Ben said shifting gear.

Lightning flashed again, and rain poured down hard.



The lights of the city came into view, and within fifteen minutes, they were there. Ben slowed the Mustang, and they looked for any sign of the Alien. It ran out in front of them, and they screamed. Ben gave a sharp turn of the wheel trying to hit the creature. He jammed on the brakes as it disappeared down a side alley.

“Is everyone all right?” He unfastened his seat belt and got out of the car.

The others stood beside him. Suddenly, a scream came from the alley. They raced over and saw the body of a man with his throat torn out. The beast bolted from the shadows, crashing through a wire fence

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into Ronald's auto wrecking yard.

"After it," Jackie yelled and they gave chase.

Scrapped and crushed cars lined the yard as far as the eye could see. It was like a maze. Lightning struck a power line, making it explode in a shower of sparks. The rain pelted down with unrelenting force. Ben looked up and saw a giant crane used to lower the cars into the crusher.

"I have an idea," he said, wiping the water from his eyes.

"Lightning always strikes the tallest object first, right?" he added.

"Yeah," Sarah said looking confused.

"Here's what we're going to do. If we can lure it beneath the crane, and hook it with the grabber, hoist it up as high as the boom will take it, then we can let the lightning do the rest. I'll be the bait and get that thing to follow me," he said.

"It'll kill you," Jackie screamed, grabbing his arm.

"It'll kill us all and many more if we don't do this now. Get moving, we don't have much time," he ordered, kissing her, and took off into the maze of scrap.

They began to climb.

Ben sauntered into the maze, looking around him. The alien was watching him from high above on a mountain of scrap metal, saliva dripping from its terrifying teeth, Ben's reflection in its eyes. It slashed its claws through the air; they ripped into the metal as Ben screamed.

"Hey. Here I am."

His voice echoed through the mountains of scrap. The others had reached the top of the crane and had a bird's-eye view of everything from where they were. Ben was like a dot in the distance. The beast attacked climbing down the pile of crushed cars right towards him.

"Oh fuck," he yelled and ran.

The creature was right behind him. he was weaving left and right, dodging its attack. It swung its claws, and he heard a ripping noise as they sliced through his denim jacket.

Jackie opened the door of the cab and stepped out onto the platform, cupping her hands over her mouth she yelled "Turn right,".

Ben ran as fast as he could, but he tripped and fell over, tumbling to the ground. He looked up with terror in his eyes as the alien stood looking at him.

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“Ben,” Jackie yelled, seeing him fall.

“What are you waiting for, you son of a bitch?” He barked staring the alien in the face.

The creature lunged at him, its hand clamped around his throat, lifting him off the ground. He tried to struggle free, but it was too strong, he lashed out kicking it repeatedly in the face until it released him. He gasped for breath as the thing roared, running, and crashing into him, sending him flying across the ground. He rolled under a pyramid of crushed cars and waited. The alien dropped to its knees its monstrous hands reaching under trying to grab him.

“Damn, this thing never gives up,” he said, moving away from its claws.

He swallowed hard as their eyes locked on each other. He rolled out from beneath the cars on the opposite side, getting to his feet. A heavy crash made him look up, and there fifteen feet above him was the monster. It lifted a car from the pile, and screamed, sending the car crashing into the ground, where Ben had been only moments ago. He jumped out of the way before it hit and was now running toward the crane.



Lightning streaked from the sky; the rain was battering Ben. As he was running, he could hear the beast leaping across the mountains of metal.

“That’s it, you ugly mother fucker, keep coming,” he said with a grin, running faster with thunder crashing overhead sending vibrations through the ground.

The beast roared, closing in on him when through the pounding rain and thunder he heard an engine rumble to life. He stopped dead and turned to face the creature.

“You want me well here I am,” as the beast strode toward him the metal claws dropped from above and closed around the Aliens waist. It went crazy trying to prise the claws from its body as it was slowly lifted into the air. No amount of struggling was going to save it now. Ben placed his hand over his eyes to shield them from the driving rain but all he could see was a mere silhouette struggling high above the

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city. Its screams became louder and as it clawed and thrashed about, a blinding flash struck the arm of the crane and thousands of volts of electricity coursed through its body.

It roared, swinging its arms in agony as another bolt of lightning struck it. Again, it roared. One of its arms fell to the ground amputated by the extreme voltage. The skin smouldered and blistered. Agonizing roars could be heard for miles. The group in the crane looked on as another lightning bolt struck the creature making it burst into flames. Blue blood spurted from its mouth and with one last bolt, Roger who was at the controls opened the claws and the creature plummeted 120 feet landing with a sickening bang. Roger, Jackie, and Sarah climbed down the ladder. When they got to the ground, they could see it still smouldering. Its bright blue blood sprayed everywhere.

“It’s over,” Ben put his arm around Jackie.

Suddenly, a huge orange tinted light hovered overhead and a red beam streamed from it.

“You’ve got to be kidding,” Roger, said eyes fixed on the circular ship hovering above.

The red light surrounded the dead alien's body, lifting it into the ship. The craft hovered there for a few seconds before it slowly lifted off, then from out of nowhere a rocket streaked though the sky exploding with a dazzling flash and thunderous bang, as it hit the ship. Black smoke and sparks flew from the craft as it began to fall nose first, the smoke trail arcing over the horizon as it dropped from the sky. Then a helicopter, one they had never seen before flew quickly over head chasing the smoke trail that hung like a black vaporous rainbow.

The four looked at each other in awe.

“Leave it to the Cavalry to show up when the fight's already over,” Ben grinned still looking after the chopper.

“How come we didn't see or hear the helicopter until it fired the rocket?” Sarah asked in amazement.

“You know the Military Sarah, always working on new ideas to create better weapons. Who knows? Maybe they created a stealth helicopter, it's not that far fetched. To be honest I don't care, our work here is done, and if the Military want that ship for themselves then let

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them have it, I say we head for home because I could murder a cup of coffee right about now,” Ben placed his arm around Jackie's shoulders and they strolled out of the wrecking yard back to the car and sped off into the night. If they thought for one second that this nightmare was over they were in for a nasty shock.



Several months later:

On a top-secret Military base somewhere in the Nevada desert, the ship lay locked in a massive hangar. Inside the craft in a hidden compartment strings of a vile gooey viscous substance that criss crossed like a spider's web began to pulsate and stretch. The membrane that encased the thing began to rip as a three fingered clawed hand tore through followed by the other. The hands grabbed the membrane ripping it open and the alien creature stepped out dripping with a clear mucus substance that pooled at its feet, high up in the ceiling a little red light blinked, it was a surveillance camera and monitoring the proceedings from the safety of a control room a man in formal Military dress sat in the shadows a red glow emanated from where he was seated as he took a long drag from his Cuban cigar watching the creature on screen.

“You may proceed with the capture and containment Private,” he ordered a young man who wore a microphone headset.

“Yes, sir General sir,” he pushed a button on the side of his headset

“Platoon move in, capture and containment is a go repeat capture and containment is a go,”

As it took in its surroundings, a door hissed open and soldiers dressed in yellow Hazmat suits rushed in with tranquillizer guns, shock sticks, and flash grenades. The creature tried to fight them off but to no avail, it was still too weak after just being born so it was relatively easy to subdue, one man took a flash grenade and removed the pin, he rolled it across the floor where it exploded with a loud bang and massive orange flash, the creature squealed shaking its head placing its hands up to its dazed eyes as it staggered backward. Six soldiers dropped to one knee and took aim, and with a “pop, pop, pop” sound the tranquillizer darts flew through the air. They hit their target

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and within seconds the alien staggered and wobbled on its weakening legs. Six more darts flew through the air and hit their mark, twelve darts stuck fast to the creature pumping their anaesthetic into its system. It took one rickety step forward and collapsed in heap on the cold steel floor. Other soldiers moved in binding its hands and feet with steel manacles. Over the radio in the control room the Private turned to his commanding officer.

“Capture and containment successful General,” he saluted the man who stood, crushing out his cigar, placing his hat on his head adjusting it.

“Excellent work men, take our guest to the laboratory. Today is a great day for the Military and for America. Operation Desert Moon is a go. Do we have our test subjects ready for our little experiment?” he asked placing his hands behind his back.

“Yes, sir they are prepped and ready for the doctors,” The Private said with a little apprehension in his voice.

“Cheer up son, you should be proud to be part of this new miracle era for the army. If this goes according to plan, then we will have the most powerful, unstoppable soldiers in the world.” He saluted the Private and left the room.

As he marched down a long dimly lit corridor, he bumped into a man called Major Tom Sykes and stopped to talk with him.

“My god Tom, this is it. This is what we’ve been waiting for all these years, and today will go down in history as one of the finest moments since we put men on the moon. Why don’t you come with me Tom and bear witness to this new era of Military might, if we can successfully implant alien DNA into a human, they will have speed, agility and strength, the likes of which the world has never seen. Come with me Tom, you will be perfectly safe. There’s nine inches of bullet proof glass to separate us from the test subjects should anything go wrong,” he waited for the reply.

“You finally get your operation Desert Moon General, good for you, but I for one do not approve nor support your experiment Sir.” He turned and stormed off down the hall.

The General was furious.

“I don’t care if you approve or not Major, I’ve waited for this

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opportunity all my life and now that we're so close to finally realizing my dream nothing is going to stop me. Desert Moon will be a success just you wait and see," he said to himself as he marched down the hall toward the test area.