



Clair Noto's

# THE TOURIST

Novelised by Lee McGeorge



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**SPEAR TIP**

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The Tourist began life as a screenplay by Clair Noto. In the early 1980's, it was considered the hottest film script in Hollywood. Despite numerous A-list directors and creative talents, nobody managed to find a way to make the story workable as a movie. After more than 30 years in development, efforts continue to produce a film from this screenplay.

It is widely revered as  
the greatest sci-fi film “never” made.





# THE ARRIVAL



## The Tourist

England, 1979

The penis was sliding in and out of the vagina.

It was also a dark and stormy night, but sexual organs, sexual contact and the grunts and groans of human farm labourers in a stone farmhouse in the middle of nowhere England were of far more interest to Kabadel-Dos.

A spark of lightning lit the air around her showing billions of falling raindrops. The accompanying thunderclap was terrifying and made her scream at a frequency few other animals could hear. She could see woodland. She could see fields of grass under the stars.

She'd been on planet Earth for only a few hours and had been in a state of panic ever since she arrived. Earth was exile. Earth was a cruel prison. She'd opened an eye on her back to watch the prison spacecraft leave, a black disk with a serrated edge that had carried her from the mothership in low-orbit. It dropped her onto wet grass in the middle of the night and glided away silently. They abandoned her here out of spite and cruelty.

Kabadel-Dos was alone.

To any passer by she would have been hideous in her present form. She looked like a black slug with a white belly, six feet long and

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slimy. Technically she was a hermaphrodite, able to morph her body and open up to six vaginas along her back, or protrude a phallus to deposit a sperm sack; but despite her dual sexuality she always viewed herself as female. In this form she could move as fast as a human if she had to, even as fast as a horse over short distances, but speed wouldn't save her if she was discovered. She needed to hide. Importantly, she needed a human and Kabadel-Dos had slithered her way to a cottage on a small farm and was now pressing up against the wall to peek through a gap in the curtains. She was a human sized slug, looking through the window of a cottage in the pouring rain.

Humans were in there. Kabadel-Dos morphed two eyes onto the front of her form to scrutinise. Eyes a thousand times more powerful than any creature on Earth. She looked at the human bodies engaged in bonding. The female kneeling forward, the male penetrating from behind. She liked the female. She liked the way her breasts swung and bounced and she liked the sounds she made during mating. The male was sinewy and strong, but the female had softness with the strength. Kabadel-Dos watched them make love until they collapsed in sweat and exhaustion and fell asleep under bedclothes.

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Now she would make her move.

The advantage Kabadel-Dos had over Earth creatures was her ability to change her form, but even with the most basic alterations she was beginning to feel a terrible strain. Changing had a cost that she couldn't quite understand, but right now she had to take the chance and pay the price.

Flattening herself, she slipped under the door to the cottage. To navigate such a small space she had to flatten to no more than an oil-spill. It was dangerous but essential to work her way through the building to the sleeping couple. There was much danger here. She mustn't wake them. The safest place she could think of was directly under their bed and as silently as smoke she moved into position and curled into the space.

She'd never been so frightened in all of her life. She was alone on an alien planet, sneaking up on the indigenous top predator. They would panic if they saw her. Kill her.

As slowly and gently as she could, Kabadel-Dos extruded her nervous system. To human eyes it would look as though she was growing spider silk that floated ahead of her. It reached up onto the bedclothes and felt around. It found the wrist of the male and delicately began burrowing into his skin as he

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slept. It went under the bedclothes and felt the female's ankle. The female was instantly a better fit, the nerves, the physiology, the feeling and sensation. She could still feel the pulsating warmth in her sexual organs. Being female was exquisite and Kadel-Dos spread her spider silk tentacles further up her leg to taste her sweat and energy.

The female rolled in bed making Kadel-Dos draw back. She had what she needed. It was time to go.

With the same oil-like movements she slipped back under the doors and outside into the unforgiving weather to find a safe place to change. She could morph in a few hours if needed but there was something wrong here. Earth, for some reason, didn't allow fast morphing. Kadel-Dos had heard that Earth was slow death, but once on the ground she could feel it. The taste of the grass, the bacteria in the soil, the fungal spores carried in the atmosphere were all wrong. There wasn't the nutrition in the environment that she needed and a fast morph would drain all of her strength.

She patrolled the farm under cover of darkness, her slug-like body splashing and sliding through muddy puddles until she found the barn. It was dark, it smelled strange. High

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in the rafters she could see a nesting space that looked secure and began a slithering climb to the top. She passed rats and spiders, unknowing whether these species could harm her. She tasted them and found them nutritionally lacking. Earth was death, there was no nutrition here at all.

At the top of the barn she checked the surroundings with care and nestled herself into a dusty and seemingly undisturbed ledge. Nobody had been up here for some time and, importantly, the location couldn't be seen from any casual view.

Expending energy, she locked her slug-like body to the wall and detached her outer skin. It was now an egg, a leathery pouch with her protoplasmic self loosely inside. She would change now. She would do it very slowly and carefully over many Earth months until emerging as a near identical copy of the female in the farm. She was crying. Everything was gone. Locked in an egg sack and unable to morph at speed. She would become an Earth woman with soft breasts and a nervous system channelled to a single vagina. It would be hell. But one thing was for sure; until she died she would stop at nothing to find a way off this wretched starving planet.

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----- X -----

London, 1982

“Ladies and Gentlemen. It is with great pleasure that we get the opportunity to honour one of our students. In particular, it is with great pride that our university gets to honour a young lady who has at one stroke revolutionised the manufacturing process in so many fields. So as we present tonight’s Bachman Award for Engineering Excellence, I would ask that you please put your hands together in the warmest applause... for Miss Grace Ripley.”

The room exploded with noise.

Under her breath, Kabadel-Dos whispered to herself, “Anything to get off this planet,” then walked up the stairs to the stage giving a humble wave and half bow to the cheering academics. Chancellor Lovecraft was beaming as he held out one hand to shake and an egg shaped award made of crystal.

She shook his hand and took the stupid glass egg. She looked at the audience. Tuxedos and evening dresses. A black tie affair for mostly impoverished students. Not that she would be impoverished for much longer. The patents on her new material would make her a millionaire. More importantly, it would signal her presence



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to engineers on this planet.

“Now, Grace... can you tell us where your idea for foamed aluminium came from?”

Oh Christ, he was expecting a speech or at the very least a public chat.

“I got the idea from looking at a beehive,” she replied a little too close to the microphone. “I realised that the hexagonal honeycomb structure offered incredible strength and recognised that, if we could harness such a structure at nano levels in metal, we could produce materials that were very light yet incredibly strong.”

“I must confess,” the Chancellor gushed. “That when I first saw a block of aluminium that was stronger than steel but floated on water, I knew I was seeing something out of this world.”

Grace smiled and swished her long dark hair back over her shoulder. Out of this world... if he only knew.

She was thankful to get off the stage and quickly made her way to the bar. “Vodka,” she shouted. “Over ice... and make it a big one.”

A man moved close and seemed to sniff the air around her. She turned to him and in an instant was overcome with the most sudden and unexpected sexual desire. He was handsome in a nondescript way. A strong jaw

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and blue eyes under a full head of golden hair; but the desire came from somewhere else. He was... nutritious.

“Tell me, Miss Ripley... where did you really come up with the idea of foamed aluminium?”

She looked at him feeling an unexpected surge of tension between her legs. Something about him. The smell, the taste. He moved closer as though he was going to whisper in her ear but before he got the chance spider-silk filaments had flowed off her lips involuntarily and burrowed into the skin on his face. Her nervous system touched his. “I need you right now,” she managed as a whisper as the filaments drew back into her mouth. “We need to make love.”

They crashed hard into the disabled toilets. The door slammed behind them and locked. They kissed like humans, hands awkwardly over one another's bodies. His hands pulling the dress off her shoulders to free her breasts. He put a nipple in his mouth and Grace almost fell to the floor with loss of control.

She pushed him back against the wall and pressed her breasts against him as the filaments came off her lips and attached across the side of his face. It pinned him. Too much electrical energy from her. It pulsed across

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her nervous system and onto his, overloading him. Moisture spread from his crotch soaking his trousers. If he were human it would look as though he was wetting his pants. Grace worked at his belt, at his trousers. She pulled down his clothes to reveal not a human male penis, but a gaping purple hole lined with inward pointing teeth. Her hand dropped and stroked the teeth, they were soft, rubbery in texture. Fluid oozed from the opening.

“No... wait...” he tried to say.

Grace pushed two fingers inside of him and found her digits growing filaments to tingle his sexual nerves. Fluid oozed like cream from his orifice and Grace felt her hands morphing, opening receptors and tiny mouths like the suckers of an octopus to sup and drink his bodily fluids.

“No stop... please stop... you’ll kill me...”

Grace couldn’t stop. For the first time in three years her body felt whole and nourished. This man had something that no other creature on Earth had. She couldn’t describe it, but whatever it was gave her life.

“I’m dying...” he said. “You’re kill... kill... killing me.”

Grace looked at him. His skin was tightening to his face as though he was literally

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being sucked out from within. She couldn't kill him. Mustn't. Against the greatest sexual excitement she had ever felt she withdrew her fingers and saw they had morphed back to the more black slug-like state of her natural self.

She couldn't let him die.

Grace knelt down between his legs. She pressed her mouth firmly over the purple orifice and tongued the rubbery teeth of his sexual organ, allowing her nervous system to extend into his body and tingle his deepest pleasure spot until every last drop of his bodily fluids had stopped flowing.

Grace felt more alive than ever.

The man collapsed on the floor looking only minutes from death.

She was nourished but she had almost murdered him. It was the first time on this stinking planet that she'd met another non-human and she'd almost killed him.

----- X -----

"My name is Richard... my real name is Artegan Baluco."

They were back at Grace's small apartment. Richard had recovered to some extent in the taxi, but he looked sick and weak. He was flopped into an armchair and his clothes looked

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wet and slept in.

“How long will it take you to recover?” Grace asked.

Richard smiled. “I may not recover... but right now, I feel at peace and satisfied. If I die now it won’t be so bad.”

“You can’t die now,” Grace said with some force. “I need to get off this planet. I’ve been here for three years and you’re the first non-Earth being I’ve met. I was led to believe there were thousands of us on Earth.”

“There are,” Richard said weakly. “But not here in England. I thought I was the only hexbase in England. I came to get away from those New York idiots and begin research into synthesising K.F.A’s.”

“K.F.A’s?”

Richard regained some of his strength and stared at Grace. “Did you say you had been here three years?”

Grace nodded.

Richard rocked his head back and sighed. “Jesus... I’m amazed you survived.”

“I feel like I’m slowly dying. I daren’t morph, at least not with any speed. What is it, what’s wrong with this planet, why does being here feel like we’re slowly dying?”

Richard pushed himself up to sit straighter in the chair. It looked like it took a lot of effort.

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“Okay, I’ll explain. There’s a lot for you to learn” he said. “The reason it’s hard to survive is bio-chemical. Every living thing, no matter where it is in the galaxy, is made up from amino acids. Here on Earth all living things are made from twenty amino acids. No matter what it is, whether it’s a lion, a jellyfish or a blade of grass, the proteins that make up Earth organisms are assembled from the same twenty types of amino acids. Do you follow so far?”

“I think so.”

“Our problem, is that whilst life on Earth is made from twenty amino acids, all other life in the universe is built from seventy six amino acids. Our bodies are expecting to absorb these chemicals from the environment, but here on Earth they’re scarce. They exist in small amounts but there’s no great reservoir of the seventy six aminos we need.”

“And the missing amino acids are what you call K.F.A’s?”

Richard nodded. “Earth life has DNA with four bases. A, C, G and T. Our DNA has two extra chemicals, K and F. We call Earth life Quadbase and everything else is Hexbase.”

Grace looked away pondering the new information. “So Earth life is more primitive?”

“No, the opposite. Life found a way to

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survive here on less resources than the rest of the universe. We're too damned complex for this planet. We need K.F. aminos to survive... and you just about stole the entire supply my body has."

"I'm sorry. I had no idea. I didn't know what was happening. It felt like I'd come across a drinking hole in the desert and I just couldn't stop."

Richard waved it off. "Sex feels pretty good when you're sucking up K.F.A's. I'll survive this, but it will take me some time to replenish. The reason I'm here is to try and synthesise K.F.A's. The university here has everything I need. There's a long way to go, but if I succeed we'll be drinking K.F.A. milkshakes for breakfast."

"I don't want a milkshake," Grace stated boldly. "I want off this planet and I need a spacecraft engineer."

"Nobody is getting off this planet and there are no engineers. Most of the hexbase life on Earth are imbeciles. There are a few clever ones, like you and I, but most of them are mungbean stupid."

"I can't accept that. I'm getting off. I have to get off. I need it. I'm going to find an engineer even if it kills me; but I don't even know where to begin looking."

"Go to New York. America. That's where

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you should be anyway. There are thousands of hexbase life forms in New York... but Grace, like I said, most hexbase on Earth are stupid. Nobody is leaving Earth. We're put here because it's a prison. Earth is inescapable."

----- X -----

New York, 1984

The wino was berating a business man in the street. He stunk of urine. "Save the porpoise," he crowed in the thickest Brooklyn accent whilst rattling a tin can for donations and waving a toy shark. "Save the porpoise, or I'll end up in a pine box."

New York in November was cold and blustery. Steam rose from cracks in the road. Dilapidation was everywhere but the city was recovering. They'd made it through near bankruptcy, a persistent crime-wave, an unsafe subway system and the blackout of '77. The eighties were going to erase the joyful sadness of Cashman & West's American City Suite. Things were going to improve in the future, but right now it was still a place of filth and litter, wealth and poverty, sickos and perverts... humans and aliens.

Grace exited the porno booth in the sex



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store. The light was dimming outside. The first hookers were appearing. She spent a few moments staring at the covers of hardcore magazines before leaving the store and walked by the wino, still hounding those passing by.

“Save the porpoise you moron... oh yeah, well forget you, you airhole.”

The wino jumped in front of Grace who was smartly dressed from a day in her office. Her fur coat showed she was a woman of wealth, her neatly tied hair made her look like a lawyer, her plump lips made her look like a fashion model. She hailed a cab but the wino got in her way.

“Evening Ma’am, save the porpoise or I’ll end up in a...”

“Grace lifted her dark glasses to show the wino her eyes. Large slimy black holes as large as the lenses to her sunglasses, morphed to watch the porn movies at their highest resolution.”

“Jesus... you friggin’ weird lady. This whole city is full of friggin’ weirdos.”

He got out of her way, dropping his toy shark in the gutter.

Grace got into the cab. “Uptown,” she said to the driver.

----- X -----

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The offices of Seaman & Seaman Engineering were impressive and imposing. Charles the doorman opened the cab door as soon as he saw Grace and walked ahead to open the building door too. He would have called an elevator for her given the chance and allowed her to wipe his feet on him if she would only ask.

Grace had licensed her foamed aluminium to Seaman and partnered with them to run her own materials science business. They financed the R&D and got first look at any new products; Grace got to reinvent alien technology and enjoy the wealth. Of course the real reason she did it was if there was a hexbase life form in the city capable of building a spaceship, she was the one person who could produce the materials to make it.

She'd lived here for a year but so far had only discovered a handful of hexbase life, mostly vagrants and all of them were idiotic losers that had lost their mind so completely they barely remembered what they were.

"You're still here, Marty?" Grace called as she saw her secretary burning the midnight oil. Marty was the archetypal career girl of the 1980's, the big city office clerk from a small town who modelled her whole look on the advert for Revlon's, Charlie perfume. She was

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lovely, loyal and hard working.

“I’ve been finalising the documents for the Viceroy deal,” she said. “Mr. Crosby is in the Seaman office, he’s been back and forward a few times to try and see you.” She handed a missed call list to Grace. “Half of Manhattan is trying to reach you.”

Grace took the list and opened the double doors to her office. It was sparse but luxurious, decorated in dark woods and creams. To one side was a sideboard with four pieces of material mounted as ornaments. Foamed aluminium was the first, followed by a heat resistant polymer called Starshield, a lithium-ion sheet that would be used in battery design and finally compound amber. The amber was the key component to any spaceship. It had to be grown organically but have the carbon atoms aligned in a lattice as cleanly as diamond. Compound amber was still at the prototype stage, small clusters of atoms could be aligned but there was still some way to go before it could build a craft to travel the galaxy.

Grace looked at the call list. “Who is this Frogman?” she asked Marty.

“I don’t know... he’s weird. Wouldn’t give me any information and insisted on talking directly to you. He called four times.”

Frogman...

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What the hell was Frogman?

The door to the office opened bringing with it Spider O'Toole. Grace waved to her, "Hi sweetie," then catching herself, "sorry, are we meeting tonight?"

Spider blew a bubble of pink gum and let it pop. "It's Marty I'm here for. Then to Marty, "Are you ready?"

"Two minutes," Marty replied as she gathered her coat.

Spider swaggered her way into Grace's office chewing the gum loudly. She wore tight bleached jeans, bright red high heels and a shiny green blouse with huge padded shoulders. Her hair was bleached blonde and cropped to an inch in length and finally to set off the ensemble she was accessorised with a pair of plastic sunglasses shaped like a lightning bolt. She was hopelessly romantic, cyber and free spirited. "You wanna come out with us tonight?" she asked as she lifted the sunglasses to reveal a blinded and scarred right eye.

"Can't... social engagement. Party of dull potential clients."

"Ah, blow it off. Me and Marty, we gonna get funky down at Danceteria. West 21st Street if you wanna duck out of your obligations." She raised her hands and gyrated as she began singing, "Like a virgin, touched for the very

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first time. Like a vir-er-err-gin.”

“Oh, my God. I love that song,” Marty called.

“Who’s a virgin?” came a man’s voice. “Does somebody need rescuing from their virginity?” James Crosby entered. He wore a three piece suit over a tennis player’s physique and had a swoosh of hair that was equal measure corporate executive and male model.

“Oh my... I need rescuing,” Spider said sticking her bottom out towards Crosby.

“Uh-huh, but are you sure you’re a virgin?”

“I’m not entirely sure,” Spider said biting one of her fingernails in an innocent girl pose. “But anytime you want to make sure that I’m not.”

“Okay, you two,” Grace said thumbing the door. “Out.”

Marty and Spider left the office. “Like I said,” Spider called to Grace as she left. “West 21st Street ‘til dawn if you change your mind.”

The door closed.

Grace was alone with Crosby. He leaned in to kiss her on the cheek. She shied away but he still managed to lightly touch his lips to her skin. Without meaning to, Grace arched her back and panted a small but sexualized breath

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that belied her movement away.

"Please don't," she said in a breathy whisper.

Crosby's eyes moved from her face to her neck, to her breasts which heaved twice under heavy inhalations.

"You do know that one day we'll end up sleeping together," he said with absolute confidence.

"I hope not," she replied. "I might end up killing you."

"Ooooooh. Promises, promises Grace Ripley."

Crosby leaned in again to kiss her but this time she pushed her chair backwards and stood up. "I'm sorry James. We can be friends, only friends." Her tone was firm, cold. "Do you understand me?"

To any other man the tone of voice and demeanour would have slammed the door shut on further advances. James Crosby curled his mouth into a soft smile that could charm the birds from the trees. Grace wanted to have the last word. Crosby regained the upper hand with a smouldering look and a wink. "Shall we go?" he asked.

"Yes," Grace responded like a schoolgirl with a crush.

'Damn him,' she thought. 'Why did he

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have to be so commandingly smooth?’

As they left she noticed him wipe his lips to remove an almost imperceptible trace of powder. Grace touched her cheek where he'd kissed it. Crosby would assume the powder on his lips was a smudge of her makeup. She wondered what he would think if he knew the truth, that she was actually a six foot long black slug from another planet, with six vaginas and a penis and that the dust on his lips was part of her sexual discharge.

----- X -----

Champagne cocktails and canapés. At least thirty guests in a luxurious apartment overlooking Central Park. Grace watched the angostura soaked sugar cube float up and down the glass and sipped her drink. Alcohol was a universal truth. No matter what planet you came from, fermented vegetation killed bacteria and got you drunk.

“I’m surprised you’re not already taken, Mr. Crosby.” Contessa DeLarge was trying it on with him. Crosby smiled back with an embarrassed ‘aw-shucks’ kind of expression. Contessa’s deceased father had made millions in shipping and once she inherited the business she hit the buffet. She was a big woman of

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fabulous wealth and had an insatiable desire for handsome young lovers. She could afford them. Crosby had come here on a charm offensive to sell her metal for shipping containers. Grace could see that the business was his... all he had to do was make Contessa DeLarge a happy lady.

"I'm surprised he's still single too," Grace said nudging Crosby towards her. "But there you go... still available, still on the market." Crosby threw a smile at her that subtly showed the grimace. Grace did enjoy teasing him.

From across the room, dressed in less than endearing clothing, was a slim looking man with ragged skin. He looked gaunt, stressed, almost like he'd been in a concentration camp for some time and had yet to adjust to the outside world. His hair was greasy and his eyes were two dark holes. He didn't fit in at this party and he'd been making eyes at Grace all night. This time, when they made eye contact, he crossed the room.

"Miss Ripley, could I have a moment of your time. My name is Carl Frogner."

"Frogner? Oh, are you the Frogman?"

She stepped aside and saw Contessa link Crosby's arm to walk him away. Crosby stared back over his shoulder at Grace with a look that said, 'don't leave me alone with her'.



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Crosby then made eyes at Frogner. Eyes of male ownership. Eyes that said, 'get away from my girl'.

"Miss Ripley..." Frogner looked around. He was nervous, jittery. He struggled to speak with her. His voice trembled and he seemed scared to even be in her presence. "Miss Ripley, I'm like you... I'm not from here. Is there somewhere we can talk privately?"

"What do you mean, you're like me?"

"Smell me, Miss Ripley."

"Smell you?"

It took her a moment to register what he was really asking.

He leaned in close and hissed, "I need to have sex with you."

"Excuse me?" Grace stepped back and looked side to side as though searching for support. Crosby saw instantly and dropped Contessa to step back towards Grace.

"You don't understand," Frogner gripped her arm. "I need to be with you. We have to have sex, you and I."

Crosby caught that part of the conversation. "Hey, listen up, Pal. If you're gonna talk a lady into bed, first buy her dinner."

"Shut up, human scum. I'm not talking to you." Frogner spat at Crosby.

Crosby inflated his chest, postured, ready

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to put on a masculine display of supremacy.

"Hello," Contessa said joining the scene. "Who are you? Do I know you? Who invited you?"

"I'm a friend of Miss Ripley," he replied.

Grace looked flustered, on the spot, she struggled for words and shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know you," she said finally.

"Come on, Pal. I think it's time you left, before we end up calling the police." Crosby gripped Frogner's arm and marched him towards the door.

"Please, Miss Ripley... I need to have sex with you. Please. Pleasssse." Frogner begged it like an innocent man pleading his innocence on the way to his execution. Crosby pushed him out into the corridor and toward the elevator.

"Get your hands off me you airhead," Frogner exclaimed once outside the apartment.

"Look, you farming idiot, stay away from my woman!"

Frogner suddenly flashed a face of pure anger, he grabbed Crosby's arm, spun around and threw him across his shoulder to leave him upside down and against the wall. His strength was phenomenal. Crosby struggled to right himself. He saw Frogner ahead of him stooped and pulling his arms wide into a predatory

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fighting stance. Then Frogner terrified him... He hissed with a black forked tongue like that of a snake. It was long enough to lick across his own face.

A black tongue like a snake... incredible strength...

"That's enough!" The voice belonged to Grace who had followed out of the apartment.

Crosby righted himself and stood up, smoothing his jacket. Not sure whether to return blows. Something was supernatural about Frogner. He wasn't right. No man should have been able to throw him... but the tongue... What the heck?

"Mr. Frogner," Grace called with authority. "I will meet you tomorrow at the Black Orchid bar at 8pm. It's just off West 10th Street."

"Grace, you can't..." Crosby implored.

Frogner hissed slightly at Crosby but contained himself.

"Go now, Mr. Frogner," Grace continued. "We can talk tomorrow."

Frogner nodded courteously at Grace then stepped into the elevator carriage and continued showing his angry face to Crosby until the doors closed.

As the carriage descended Crosby turned to Grace with the most confused look

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imaginable. "You're not really going to meet that guy are you?"

----- X -----

"Are you going to tell me your story?" Spider O'Toole asked pouring Frogner a whisky. The Black Orchid bar was dingy but nice. Black walls with neon lighting, filled with fine, art-deco furniture but lacking a sign outside to attract customers. They were going bankrupt and Spider knew she'd be looking for a new job within a few weeks.

"I'm waiting for someone," Frogner said. "A lady told me to meet her here today. I hope she turns up..." Spider put a bowl of peanuts on the bar and leaned closer. Frogner noticed her blind eye and the scar surrounding it. "Oh, my!" He exclaimed. "What happened to your eye?"

"Car crash. It happened when I was a little girl."

"It looks so cool... it's amazing."

"Thanks," she said with a wide smile. "I always thought so too. The way I see it is I lost an eye but gained sex appeal. You think I look good?"

"You look..." he turned away embarrassed. "You look beautiful."

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Spider smiled. The poor guy looked lonely. He looked like the sort of person to have never kissed a girl out of shyness. "So what's your story?" she asked again. "Who is this lady you're meeting. Are you on a date?"

Frogner smiled and fidgeted. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you. Nobody does."

"Give me a try," Spider said. "Tell me a crazy story."

"A crazy story... I'm an alien from another planet. I'm exiled on Earth and unless I have sex with another alien soon, I'll die... how's that? Is that crazy enough?"

Spider laughed as she topped up his drink. "You know, that pickup line might actually work in this city. That's one fudged up crazy story. And what about your lady friend, is she an alien too?"

"Yes, she is," he said confidently.

Frogner moved his hand over a napkin beside the peanuts. It had a logo for the bar printed on it, an orchid. When he lifted his hand to show Spider, the logo seemed to be embossed on his palm.

"And that," Spider said, "is a very cool trick. What are you really? Are you a magician?"

Before he could answer the door opened. Grace Ripley was stood in a cyan highlight

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from a ceiling spot. "Mr. Frogner," she called. Both Frogner and Spider looked up.

"Hi Grace," Spider said with a little surprise. Was this strange little man here to meet Grace?

"Miss Ripley... Thank you for coming. Sincerely. I really appreciate this."

----- X -----

Across the street from the Black Orchid, James Crosby was gripping his coffee and shivering. The coffee was in a styrofoam cup and against the November chill it felt like life-support. He was hovering in the doorway of a closed dry-cleaning store.

What he was doing was creepy. He was stalking, following; but Grace was more than just a friend, she was someone who he admired, respected and most importantly was talented enough to find herself on the James Crosby list of potential future wives. It was a very short list... hers was the only name on it.

Most women eventually succumbed and fell into bed with a handsome successful man like himself, but Grace was a mystery and the regular rules of courtship didn't seem to apply to her. She had a hidden side that was intoxicating. She was talented as a scientist,

## The Tourist

career minded as an executive, determined as a business owner and beautiful as a woman. Yet underneath her exterior there was an odd determined drive along an agenda that James had never found himself able to follow.

Then this freak turned up.

This freaky man who crashed a party begging her for sex.

She agreed to meet him? Agreed! What the heck?

The worst of it was the forked black tongue that had to be at least eight inches long. He was sure he'd seen it, certain it wasn't a trick of the light, or from a knock on the head.

This man was pathetic and grimy and odd and right now he was sitting at a table having drinks with Grace. On the outside he looked like one of life's losers and was physically nothing. Yet despite accosting Grace and demanding sex, she had arranged to meet him.

Something was wrong with this guy. He was a freak, he was violent and he was a threat.

As creepy as it was to be following her, this guy was creepier and James would never forgive himself if he'd ignored the threat and this guy attacked her, or raped her, or hurt her whilst he'd decided to not make it his business.

## The Tourist

----- X -----

“How do you know what I am, Mr. Frogner, and what do you want?”

“I need amino acids. Do you know what K.F.A’s are?” Frogner was fidgeting and worried again, the same as he had been when they met at Contessa DeLarge’s party.

“I know about K.F.A’s, but how did you find me. I’m looking for others like us. I was told that they were in New York but I haven’t met any that can string a coherent sentence together until you.”

“There are hundreds of us, maybe even a thousand. Everyone meets through Sloane at The Corridor... I can’t get in anymore.”

Grace scratched at her eye. Frogner wasn’t making much sense. “What is The Corridor? Who is Sloane?”

Frogner reached out a hand and touched her forearm. “Please, Miss Ripley. I have low K.F.A’s and I’m coming into heat. My body will morph without me being able to control it and without aminos I’ll die, painfully. I’ve been searching Manhattan to find other hexbase life outside of The Corridor.”

“Tell me about The Corridor, tell me how do I meet other hexbase life.” Grace demanded.



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“Have sex with me and I’ll tell.”

Grace was in no mood. She placed her elbow on the table like she was proposing an arm-wrestle and clenched her fist. Frogner watched as beads of sweat formed on the back of her hand as though being wrung from a sponge. The beads of sweat seemed to evaporate leaving a pearly dust on her skin. Then Grace snapped her fist open and blew, her palm was filled with the dust and it blew straight into Frogner’s face.

“NO NOT THAT... NOT THAT!”

Frogner bounced backwards out of his seat knocking the chair over. Spider saw the commotion and grabbed a baseball bat from behind the bar out of sheer instinct. Frogner turned and ran. He ran through to the back of the bar and crashed through a fire exit into the side alley. Grace followed but didn’t run, she didn’t need to.

“Are you alright?” Spider asked as Grace passed.

“I’m fine.”

----- X -----

From where James was watching it looked like Grace had thrown her drink in the guy’s face. He jumped and bolted, she followed.

## The Tourist

The fire exit crashed open to the alleyway and the crazy fork tongued guy came staggering out, clutching at his face. James ran across the street and was about to enter the alley when he saw Grace stride out of the side entrance to the Black Orchid.

Creepy guy fell to his knees, stood, walked a bit further and fell down again.

Grace approached him.

James sneaked into the alley by stealth and hid behind a dumpster to watch just on the edge of where he could comfortably hear what the crazy guy was mumbling.

“What is it?” he heard the creepy guy ask the night sky. “I can only see stars.” The strange man had rolled to his back and was clawing at the air as though slowly swatting flies from his face.

Grace crouched demurely beside him. James could just about hear her. “Tell me about The Corridor, Mr. Frogner, tell me where I can find other hexbase.”

The man on the floor writhed slowly, either in pain or sexual ecstasy, it was impossible to tell. He spoke loudly, almost fighting to get his words out past the feelings that had overtaken his body. “The Corridor is where the hexbase are. It’s close by, here in downtown, but you can’t just walk in. You need a key.”

## The Tourist

“Where do I get a key, Mr. Frogner?”

“Sex show. Live sex. Live sex. Near Times Square.”

“Which sex show,” Grace demanded.

The man on the floor grimaced and swatted the imaginary flies from his face. He answered but it was too quiet for James to hear.

He'd heard enough. He'd seen enough. This strange guy with a black forked tongue who had demanded sex, had been reduced to a baby, rolling on his back in an alley and swiping away imaginary floating objects.

Grace was walking away, heading back into the bar. She pulled the fire exit closed behind her leaving the strange man laying on his back outside.

James Crosby had followed Grace out of fear for her. Now he would follow out of mystery. Something very strange was happening.

----- X -----

Grace exited the taxi at Times Square. The 1980's was bringing wealth back to New York but a lot of that money was spent in the porn stores. Live Girls. XXX. Institute of Oral Love. Illuminated signs and neon strips bathed the streets with coloured light and promises of

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sexual gratification. Peep shows, pornos and glory holes.

Grace went off the sidewalk to a quieter little alley. If she'd paid attention she would have noticed James Crosby getting out of a cab behind her. She was too focussed on her destination to notice that Crosby was following.

She saw the doorway and stepped inside to be bathed in red light. A young woman sat behind a high counter wearing a black bra and a thick winter coat; it seemed the purpose was to show her breasts whilst fighting the chill of sitting in a doorway.

"I'm here for the show. I was told I could get a key if I saw the show."

"To see the show is thirty bucks," the girl said. Grace rummaged through her purse hoping she had that much in cash. This was an expensive theatre ticket. She paid and entered. There was a staircase decorated as a cut price boudoir. Posters for porno movies lined the walls. Male fantasies of women in trashy lingerie, swollen breasts in every picture, spread thighs and stocking tops. At the bottom of the stairs was a room containing a prostitute stretched out on a leopard print sofa.

"Hey honey, you wanna get freaky, girl on girl?" the prostitute called.

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Grace ignored her and moved on to the theatre.

There was a bed, or rather a bench, surrounded by twenty or so chairs that were raised the further out they stretched. Spotlights shone through smoke onto this empty bed as men lounged in the dark, their shapes only given away when they inhaled on cigarettes.

Hidden under cover of darkness, Grace allowed her eyes to morph wider to see better in the dark. With her eyes improved she could see a prostitute in the far corner masturbating a guy as he leaned against the wall. It made her worry about sitting down. The upholstery in this flea-pit needed treating with caution.

Ten minutes later the music started playing and the men took their seats. She was the only woman at the show and those whose eyes had adjusted to the gloom looked on her with lingering stares.

The performers arrived to their stage bringing a hush to the crowd. A man and woman. She wore a black bikini with a bandolier of bullets across her chest. The man had big muscles and wore combat pants, a military helmet, aviator shades and was chewing a cigar. They danced a little. The woman stood on the bench as the military man pulled off her bikini. He sucked her nipples. He poked her with a

## The Tourist

finger. She threw a leg over his shoulder the better he could taste her. She took him in her mouth.

Within a minute Grace was sweating profusely. She couldn't help herself. She'd hitched her skirt above her knees, to open her own legs and fantasise it was happening to her. She pushed open the jacket of her suit to touch her breasts through her blouse.

The couple on stage changed positions. The woman knelt on the bench as military man penetrated from behind. He chewed his cigar and saluted to the crowd as he humped. They changed position again. The woman on her back with the military man over her, missionary style.

Grace thought she was going to explode. Her human body was in overdrive, fuelled to incredible sexual intensity by the scene playing out before her.

She began to cocoon.

The sweat on her body was suddenly turning to dust and solidifying. This shouldn't happen, this was a response to contact, not from...

A man was touching her thigh. He was a greasy filthy man, leaning towards her, staring at her eyes, leering, with a hand up her skirt to stroke her leg.

## The Tourist

“NO!” Grace yelled. She grabbed the man’s wrist and bent it backwards. It would have snapped if the man hadn’t fell from his chair to get lower. Grace bounced to her feet. The performers and audience turned their attention to the commotion. A light clicked on. A huge black man in a muscle top with feathered armbands tied around his biceps stepped in and grabbed Grace by her arm.

“We don’t want no trouble here, lady,” he growled as he dragged her backwards.

“I’m sorry,” Grace screeched. “I’m sorry.”

The black man pulled her out of the theatre, up the stairs and pushed her through a door behind the reception desk to a dressing room. For a moment Grace thought the black man was going to kill her. He closed the door and stood with his back to it. “Are you alright?” he asked sounding sincere.

Grace trembled and said nothing.

“It’s okay. I would never hurt you.” He smiled. His smile was lovely, soft and warm. Behind the closed door he was suddenly the nicest, kindest, sweetest man. “How is your leg?” he asked motioning to her thigh.

Grace scrutinised him for a few seconds then asked, “Are you a robot?”

“Yes... Please, show me your thigh.”

## The Tourist

Grace relaxed and leaned back in the chair. She hitched up her skirt to show fine silk underwear and stockings. She spread her thighs as wide apart as they would go. The black robot knelt down and moved his face to within inches of her. "I started to cocoon," she said with the ease of talking to a trusted doctor. "I was so engrossed in the performance I didn't notice the human rubbing my leg."

The black robot looked up. His eyes were now glowing green lights. He smiled, then looked back down to examine even closer. "I think you are fine," he said. He leaned backwards and with gentle fingertips on Grace's knees, eased her legs back together. The glow of his eyes dissolved back to hard brown human eyes. "My name is Marcel."

"Marcel, I am Grace Ripley. Can you help me? I'm trying to find a place called The Corridor. It's supposed..."

"I live at The Corridor. Sloane lets me live there during the day. At night I work here."

Grace suddenly felt exhilarated, electrified. "Please, Marcel," she said getting closer to him. "I'm trying to get to The Corridor and meet Sloane. I've met one hexbase who said I must come here to get a key, but I don't know what that means."

Marcel stood up and smiled at her kindly.



## The Tourist

He pulled a simple door key from his pocket and handed it over. "You are very beautiful in your human form Grace Ripley. I hope I meet you at The Corridor. Let me tell you how to get there."

----- X -----

James Crosby had been hiding in the far corner of the sex show when the commotion happened. He heard Grace rather than saw her. Then a huge black hulk was pushing her out of the door and up the staircase. People had got in the way. Blocked his view. He almost called her name but it choked in his throat.

By the time he got through the punters and up the stairs, Grace and the black bouncer had vanished. He went out into the alley and saw nothing. He ran to the edge of the street and looked around. People walking, cars honking, a million light bulbs advertising porno movies in a dozen cinemas.

She was gone. Vanished. He walked back and forth in the street looking both ways, worried that something had happened. He was about to return to the sex club when he saw her step through the front door alongside the huge black man. the body language was not what he expected. She looked comfortable with him,

## The Tourist

like they were trusting friends.

James moved to the corner of the alley and watched.

They approached and walked right past him without noticing.

The black man stepped into the road and hailed a taxi; he even opened the cab door for Grace like he was her butler or something. Grace kissed the black guy on the cheek and held his hand for a second. They smiled at one another, then grace got into the cab and the black man closed the door behind her.

“Cheese and crackers,” James said to himself. “Talk about having a double life. This girl is a mystery.”

Grace’s taxi was pulling away. James saw another coming ready to pick up. “Taxi!” He shouted.

----- X -----

Frogner was unsure how long he’d rolled around in the alley, but he was very cold and his coat felt damp. He made it to his feet and staggered back to the Black Orchid bar.

“Oh... Hi.” Spider said.

The place was just as deserted as last time. “Do you have a phone,” Frogner asked.

Spider nodded and pointed, then asked,

## The Tourist

“Are you okay, you don’t look good.” She stepped from behind the bar and came to his side, fussing at him, trying to touch his face. “You look swollen.”

“I’m fine... please,” he tried to brush her away without offending her.

“You know Grace is a friend of mine... did she hit you?”

“No. Please, I’m fine,” Frogner protested.

“Because although she is my friend, she shouldn’t be hitting you... In fact, I can’t believe it anyway... what happened?”

“Nothing... She wanted something from me.”

“Did you give it to her.”

Frogner nodded affirmatively as he waved her off and made his way to the phone. Spider was staring at him with an odd expression on her face.

He picked up the receiver, dropped some quarters and dialled.

“Let me speak to Sloane... It’s Frogner... No listen, I need... Listen... Will you just fudging listen to me! Tell Sloane I know someone who Taiga needs... No I won’t tell you, you tell Sloane and then I’ll talk to him direct.”

There was a pause. Frogner realised Spider had moved away from the bar to look at him.

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She was staring. This wasn't good. He tried to shield his face by running his fingers through his hair to hide behind his elbow. That was when he realised his hair had grown much longer whilst he was on the ground outside. He was changing already. He had problems.

"This better be good Frogner," came the voice on the phone.

"Sloane! Oh, Sloane, good to hear ya voice, buddy... listen, there's a woman I met, a hexbase, she's a materials scientist and she can make all the stuff that Taiga needs for the ship. I found her. Taiga is going to need her... So whadaya say, buddy. Can I bring her to The Corridor?"

There was a pause.

Frogner was sweating. He could feel his face filling with fluid, pumping up, swelling.

"Okay, Frogner. Bring this hexbase, but I swear, you jerk me around and I'll drain you of K.F.A's and have you sent to a human prison to starve. Understand me?"

"No problem, Sloane... In fact I already sent her to get a key, but I need to explain her to you first. She knows nothing, and I mean nothing at all. She's smart. You need her Sloane. and you need me to bring you stuff like this. Trust me, if you want to get to Taiga, you need this. And another, hello? Hello? Sloane?..."

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Frogner hung up the phone. He went into the men's room, took one look in the mirror at his feminine features, long hair and small breasts and realised he wasn't a man any more.

He had to get to The Corridor and fast. His life depended on it.



# THE CORRIDOR





## The Tourist

Grace exited the cab on the corner of a rundown block by Canal Street, not far from Spider's bar. There were a few hookers on the prowl by the outskirts of Chinatown. They looked colourful. Fishnet stockings and micro skirts. Big hair and huge plastic bangle earrings in primary colours to match their lip gloss.

Grace walked past a few market stalls and Italian and Chinese restaurants to find a block that was exactly as Marcel the robot had described. There was an open office called The Manhattan Grief Counselling Service. Grace slipped into the alleyway by the side and saw a single storefront containing La Marca Bros Funerals and the Sun Kee Yee Funeral Parlour.

"You were right, Marcel," Grace whispered to herself as she took the key from her pocket.

"Howdy," a female voice said from behind. "I'm looking for Barnabus."

Grace turned to find a beautiful young woman dressed as a cowgirl. Tight black jeans with brown leather boots, a brown leather waistcoat that threatened to pop the buttons and expose her breasts and a large cowboy hat tilted back. She looked like a model she was so beautiful.

"I'm sorry," Grace replied, "I don't know

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anyone called Barnabus.”

The cowgirl smiled. “Barnabus is a club, silly. I know it’s around here somewhere, I just can’t seem to find it.”

“This is a funeral home.” Grace said pointing at the sign.

The cowgirl pointed to the key in Grace’s hand. “Are you going to a funeral?”

“I’m meeting someone.”

“Meeting huh? Well, good luck with that. You have a good time, ya hear?”

The cowgirl walked away slowly with her thumbs hooked into the top of her jeans. She whistled a slow tune as she walked, leaving a sound that haunted the alleyway. Once the cowgirl was out of sight, Grace placed the key in the lock and turned it without effort.

It unlocked nothing. Instead it vibrated. A vibration imperceptible to a human.

A sonic lock.

Grace felt the frequency vibrate through her human hand and allowed her heartbeat to flutter and speed up to match the resonance of the key. Her human heart began to beat like the wings of a hummingbird and once at speed she opened her mouth and allowed the harmonic resonance to flow out.

The door clicked. Unlocked.

Grace entered.

## The Tourist

“Well howdy, pretty lady.” Inside was the same cowgirl from the alley. “I’m Vargas, the doorman.”

“Doorman or doorwoman?” Grace asked.

“Man... I’m male... I’m the ying. My female yang is outside. I’m all masculinity baby, but I prefer to be in a human female body; so soft, so sensual and wired up for pleasure. Don’t you agree?” Grace nodded. Vargas sniffed the air around her. “You’re a hermaphrodite, yes?” Grace nodded again. “And who is your sponsor?” Vargas asked.

“Sponsor? I don’t have a... oh, a guy called Frogner. He said I should come here to meet Sloane.”

Vargas pursed his lips like he was about to whistle but instead sucked air in over his teeth and shook his head. “Frogner eh? He’s banned from the club. Not a good idea to be dropping his name... But I tell you what,” Vargas moved himself closer to Grace, resting an elbow against the wall and tipping his hat back. “What do you say I sponsor you for tonight. Maybe we could spend a little time together too.”

Grace breathed out, relaxing, warming to cowgirl cowboy. “I’d like that. I’ve only met one other coherent hexbase in New York and that was Frogner.”

## The Tourist

Vargas tutted and shook his head. "Frogner is a fooling idiot... But look, why don't you morph to your true form, go on up and relax a while. I'm working until about 5am, but I'll come up and find you later." Vargas pointed to a staircase.

"Thank you, but I won't morph, it took me months to get into this shape." Grace said.

"Fair enough 'lil lady... You go on as you are and I'll see you soon."

----- X -----

James Crosby was sure he'd seen Grace enter the alley. He'd held back too far and lost her. Once he approached he met a woman coming the other way out of the alley. She was dressed as a cowgirl. She'd tipped her hat at him.

"Did you see a woman come in here?" He asked. "About this tall, wearing a business suit, kind of upmarket, glamorous looking."

The cowgirl shook her head with her lips pressed in a telling smile. Like she was telling a harmless lie just to tease him.

The cowgirl entered the grief counselling clinic. Crosby ran to the end of the alley and back, searching. Grace wasn't there. He backtracked and entered the grief clinic to see a whole family of Chinese boo-hooing. They

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cried into tissues like a chorus of drunken cats over the framed photo of an old man.

“Excuse me, but where did the cowgirl go?”

The Chinese boo-hooed harder.

“The cowgirl... the...”

The matriarch of the Chinese started shouting at him in Cantonese, admonishing him in a foreign language, demanding that he leave and pushing him towards the door as the crying wails of the grief stricken family got louder and louder.

“Never mind.” Crosby said as he left. Grace was gone. She’d vanished.

----- X -----

Music. The bass was pumping into Grace’s body through her feet. She ascended the stairs to the first floor looking at a thin strip of pale light coming from beneath a double set of doors. For some reason her confidence drained and she was scared to discover what was on the other side.

“This is it Grace,” she whispered to herself. “This could be where you find your engineer.”

She pushed open the doors and entered.

The walls were painted black. Marble-like studs of illuminated glass peppered the walls.

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The room was huge, but had been separated into booths and alcoves of haphazard shape. Creatures sat at the booths. Aliens. Hexbase life.

The music pulsed.

An alien walked past her, tall and humanoid but with the snout and tusks of a wild boar. It pressed its webbed hands on her breasts as it passed and looked deep into her eyes.

“My name is Grace Ripley,” her voice drowned against the music. The tusk man passed by and walked away.

Grace followed him into a booth that looked like a toilet. The tusk-man walked to a urinal. Except it wasn't... The urinals were aliens, male aliens pressed to the wall. The standing tusk-men looking like they were urinating were actually engaged in oral sex with the urinal aliens. The urinals were male, the tusk-men were doing the sucking through their groins.

Grace almost exploded with happiness. She felt a tear forming, a human tear from her human eye. A tongue touched her cheek to taste it. Her gaze followed the tongue to see a huge bat-like woman suspended upside down from the ceiling, her taloned toes wrapped around a perch, her wing-like arms flapping to show a fine membrane.

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“My name is Grace Ripley,” she called to the bat-woman over the music. “I’m looking for a spacecraft engineer.”

The bat-woman didn’t respond.

Grace walked deeper seeing all of the wonders of the galaxy. Smooth slimy skins and grooved snake-scales, talons and tusks and fangs and molars. Perfect adaptations that had evolved independently of one another. Furs and hairs, scents and pheromones.

A creature best described as a bloated manta-ray glided across the floor around her and climbed a wall to find a resting place. It opened stereoscopic eyes on its back and stared at her. A creature in a booth looking like a pile of wet laundry opened a slit along its front and lifted a drink in a Martini glass using three fingers made of sticks. A tube like tongue reached out and sucked up the drink.

There was a creature alone in a booth. It looked like a glossy black centipede sitting up. It was smoking a cigarette and nursing a whisky. Grace approached and said, “Can I join you?”

The centipede said nothing.

Grace moved to the next booth to speak with a smooth silvery blob, “My name is...” she stopped herself short. The blob was a wet cocoon. Two humanoids were inside making love whilst suspended in a yolk of protoplasm.

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It would be rude to disturb them.

She continued on her way.

“You wantss sssamsssing?” A voice asked to her side. There was a creature that looked a perfect fusion of human and spider. Perfect pale white skin with a head, two eyes and two female breasts. The human body dissolved into four thin arms and four legs and a break in the body where thorax met abdomen. “You new heresss? You wass sssamsssing to drinksss?”

“Yes... I’d like a drink... what do you recommend?”

“Ah. I givesss you surprisess. Comingss right upsss.” The spider lady glided away into darkness.

Grace spotted a wide humanoid shape at a booth that looked like a monster made from red clay. “May I join you?” Grace asked. The clay-monster made a slight nod. Grace leaned across the table, about to sit down, “I’m looking for an enginee-ahhhhhhhh!”

Something bit her ankle. Two red clay hands reached across the table and wrapped carefully around her wrists as a second snakebite sunk its teeth into her other ankle. She was paralysed, her human muscles locked with the venom. The red hands pulled her chest flat against the table whilst the two snakebite tentacles pushed her legs apart. she felt two other tentacles sliding



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up the back of her legs, they pushed up her skirt and wormed their way into her panties, pulling them down to expose her bare bottom to the room. She was held down, bent over a table in bondage and about to be penetrated by alien tentacles. That was when the spider lady came back with the drink.

“Theress we goes.” Spider lady said placing a Martini glass to the side of Grace. “Classixxx of sssa housesss.”

Two tentacles penetrated her. She cried out in a moan. The red clay-monster looked at the drink then to the spider-lady and said, “Oota ma ma, she cocktail.”

“Noesss problemsss.” Spider lady said whilst ignoring Grace’s predicament. “I putss on yourss tabss.”

The clay-monster turned it’s face back to Grace and locked its eyes with hers as the two phallus inside of her swelled and burst in an eruption of sticky fluid.

It felt... amazing!

“Oh, God... Oh, GOD!” Grace began to sweat and tremble. It was like new life being pumped into her. Instinctively she knew what it was. K.F.A’s. Fresh amino acids. It was like a drug, like shooting pure heroin. The feeling after so long to taste the lifeblood of existence was intoxicating. The snakebite tentacles

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released her ankles and the red clay-monster let go of her wrists. It stroked one of its thick fingers delicately over the back of her hand. "Thank you," Grace said breathlessly.

"Oo, toota mashina kapo kapo," the clay-monster said with a courteous nod of the head.

Grace awkwardly pulled up her underwear feeling the stickiness of the slime dripping from her crotch. It had soaked into her skirt, probably ruining the suit, but the feeling it gave was worth a million new suits. It was incredible. With her clothing straightened she slumped into the chair next to the clay-monster and pushed herself up to it to snuggle and hug. It wrapped an arm around her and motioned her drink. She tried it. Sweet, alcoholic, but not something she could identify. She rested her head against the chest of the clay-monster and listened to his heart.

He was dying. She could hear it. It wasn't imminent, but his days were numbered.

This thing, this strange otherworldly being made of clay and tentacles was soon to die, yet it had given her an overdose of its own precious amino acids. She didn't speak its language and didn't need to. It looked unusual with its cracked clay maw and odd ridged brow, but Grace could sense that from the core of

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its being, this clay-monster was a caring and kindly soul that was saying goodbye to life.

“Are you Grace Ripley?” There was a semi-transparent humanoid at the booth. Grace didn’t care to move, she cuddled and hugged the clay-monster. “I said, are you Grace Ripley? Sloane wants to meet you!”

Grace jumped a little. “Yes. I’m Ripley. Where is Sloane?”

“Come with me,” the transparent-man said.

Grace got up and shuffled out of the booth. She was halfway out when she stopped, backtracked a little and kissed the clay-monster on his cheek. They looked at one another for a few seconds then Grace left. She glanced back once more at clay-monster. He looked miserable when alone in his booth. He looked sad. He was lonely and he was dying.

----- X -----

“Go to the end of the corridor.” The transparent-man said.

The corridor in question was long and bare. No carpets, no paintwork and only buzzing fluorescent strip lights to cast the space in a greenish blue tinge. “Mr. Sloane will meet you by that door at the other end.”

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With that, the transparent-man closed the door behind him and locked it with a clunking mechanism that reverberated ominously along the empty tunnel. Grace walked its length. She noticed a surveillance camera watching her. At the far end was a solid steel door that opened as she approached. There was an odd looking woman wearing a pale flower print dress that had been ruined by a large coffee stain.

“Hello, Miss Ripley,” the woman said sheepishly with eyes downcast.

“Hello...”

Grace stepped into what looked like an embalming room.

“This way,” the coffee-stained woman said. She led Grace to another room and pushed against a steel case of bottles and chemicals. It moved. A hidden door to another space. Inside this room were huge tanks of red liquid and inside of these were various alien creatures of all sizes and shapes. Some as small as dogs, some as big as horses. They were all connected to multiple tubes and wires as they moved and swished in their tanks.

“So they tell me you’re a lady I should know,” came a voice. A man stepped from behind a tank. He looked handsome, and somewhat familiar. “My, my, you do look beautiful as a human being, who did you model

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yourself on?”

Grace shrugged her shoulders. “Some woman in England, nobody really, she was the first person I saw.”

“Ah-ha, well you got very lucky. Myself, I modelled myself on Donny Osmond, made myself look a little older, a little more athletic, a little more rugged. Do you approve?”

Grace shrugged again. “You look good.”

Sloane smiled and walked towards a door, beckoning with his head. “I like being a Donny Osmond look-a-like.” They entered an office. “My first choice was Richard Roundtree. Did you see the movie Shaft? I love it. I made myself look like Shaft... then discovered racism. No Sir-ee, be the white man in this town, that’s the best advice I can give.” He motioned towards a chair by a desk. “Please, have a seat.”

Grace saw Vargas the doorman leaning lazily against the wall. “Hi,” she said as she took a seat. Vargas chewed a matchstick and gave her a seductive wink but said nothing.

“Before we get started,” Sloane said as he took her hand. “Let me taste you.” He lifted Grace’s hand to his face and put one of her fingers in his mouth. He sucked making a slow sensual moan. “Oh, my,” he said on releasing her hand. “You’re Dalipoxian!”

Sloane dropped into his chair on the other

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side of the desk, then snapped his fingers and pointed to the floor beside him. The woman in the coffee-stained dress, who Grace didn't even realise was behind her, dutifully came into the office and knelt down where Sloane had pointed. She stared at the ground in humiliation. Sloane ruffled the woman's hair. "You're such a fucking jerk, aren't you, Frogner."

The woman nodded, defeated and ashamed.

"That's Carl Frogner?" Grace asked loudly. "You're a woman now?"

"I'm complicated," Frogner said with a feminised voice. "Please call me Jane now, not Carl. I've feminised. I'm dual... I'm in heat."

Sloane laughed. "In heat, he's like some intergalactic German Shepherd. He's also the dumbest mother farmer you'll meet... But tell me, Miss Ripley, what is a Dalipoxian doing on this god forsaken rock?"

"What am I doing? I'm looking for a way off. I'm looking for a spacecraft engineer and I want to get off this planet."

"And go where? Back to Dalipox?"

"I'll go to anywhere that can support life."

Sloane leaned back in his chair and took his time before speaking. "You do realise, that it's your kind, the Dalipoxians, who dumped

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everybody here, you are aware of that, yes?”

Grace nodded shallowly. “Things have changed,” she said. “I was captured by Karpalians. They control most of the worlds now... The universe has become one big Karpalic empire.”

“Since when?”

“Since... I don’t know, I’ve been here for about five Earth years and the balance of power had been leaning that way for some time.” Grace paused for a moment of thought. “Mr. Sloane, have you met any other Dalipoxians on Earth?”

“No,” he said. “Earth is the prison of their design. It was your race sending aliens here to suffer.” He leaned across the desk towards her. “Payback, eh? Ain’t it a bootch!”

“I need to get off this planet and so do you. How do we do this?”

“Nobody gets off. It wouldn’t be much of an exile or prison if we could simply leave.”

“Are you telling me,” Grace asked with a tone of condescension, “there are no engineers who could build a spaceship on Earth?”

“Not really... well, a few have tried. In fact most of the UFO’s the humans think they see are us trying to go home. There was a guy a few years back who was quite good. His name was John Taiga, have you heard of him?”

## The Tourist

“No. Where is he?” Grace asked.

Vargas and Sloane exchanged a sly glance. “I wish I knew,” Sloane said. “But Taiga is your best bet, if you can find him. If you want off this planet your best bet is to track down Taiga. Lady Frogner here can get you started, take him... her, with you and look around. But take my word for it, if there was a way off this rock we would have gone home a long time ago.”

----- X -----

Grace and Frogner left through the front door of the grief counselling clinic. Grace was full of determination. “Where do we find John Taiga?” She demanded of Frogner.

In the thin dress, the newly female Jane Frogner was shivering and had her arms wrapped around her shoulders to try and stay warm. “We looked for Taiga before,” she said. “We hunted high and low. We got so far as tracking him back to owning a discount store but the trail ended there.” Frogner looked defeated in spirit. Shivering, abused, humiliated and bullied.

“What happened to you,” Grace asked softly. “Why are you a woman now?”

“Reproductive degeneration,” she replied. “I’ll stay like this until I make love to a man and



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then I'll morph back. It will be painful because I don't have enough K.F.A's to support the transition. I don't expect to survive the next morph."

Frogner looked beaten. Her willpower had deserted a long time ago and her fight and spirit were depleted. She was facing death and pain and there was nothing she could do.

"Just a second," Grace said. She hitched her skirt and pulled down her underwear, still sticky and wet from the discharge of the red clay-monster. She stepped out of the damp lingerie and handed it to Frogner. "Will this help?"

Frogner took one smell then bunched the panties up around her face, licking the gusset and sucking the amino acids off the fabric like a starving man who'd been thrown a piece of rotten fruit. It was miserable to have nothing but sex-stains and ejaculate to eat, but it would keep her alive and for that she was thankful.

"Now tell me," Grace asked Frogner as she sucked and chewed on the underwear. "How do we find this John Taiga?"

----- X -----

Harry Sloane sat forward in his chair, rested his elbows on the table and pressed his hands

## The Tourist

together like he was praying.

"Nobody can find 'Taiga,'" Vargas said. The cowgirl doorman pushed herself away from the wall. "And besides, if he did know how to get off this world he would have done so already."

Sloane exhaled deeply. "I don't know. It costs us nothing to have her try."

"You said his spacecraft was badly damaged?" Vargas said.

"It was. It was a wreck," Sloane replied. "The engines worked but the amber bodywork was trashed. It would get into the upper atmosphere but it sure as heck wouldn't survive a vacuum. Frogner was right about Ripley though; she can almost make amber but she's not quite there yet."

"Could you see much of her thoughts when you sucked her finger?"

Sloane made a gesture to suggest he could and couldn't, he'd seen enough to remain interested. Nonchalantly, he bit his thumbnail and was shocked when it began to peel off. He took hold of it carefully and repositioned his hands to pick it off without Vargas seeing.

"Look, I tell you what we should do," Sloane said. "I don't know if 'Taiga is alive or dead, nor do we know if he's on Earth or off, or even if he could figure out how to get off."

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But what we do know for sure is he had the flora and fauna to make K.F.A's and even if he's left the planet there's still a chance he left the plants behind. Forget the spaceship, we should hope Ripley draws him out so we can get the plant life."

"We sure would like some of those tasty plants," Vargas said.

"Yes we would... Hell, having those plants would probably make this planet tolerable."

Sloane stood. "I got stuff to do. Why don't you get out of here."

Vargas nodded, straightened his waistcoat, pushed up his lady boobs and left the office.

Sloane let him leave completely before he looked at his broken thumbnail. "Ah, spit!" He exclaimed.

He left his office for the alien aquarium. At the back of the room were a series of small doors set in the wall, originally for storing human corpses. He opened a door and pulled the flat bed; it rolled out on castors bringing a badly injured alien out of the void. It was ashen grey, wrinkled like a prune and missing its legs and one of its arms. It breathed through a respiratory mask tied to its face. It made the slightest struggle and blinked painfully against the sudden light.

Sloane took a scalpel and made a small cut

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into the abdomen of the tortured soul that was almost dead. He wrapped his lips around the wound making the creature wince and cry out in pain. It tried to raise its only arm in hurt, it raised three inches and fell back. Its weakness was undeniable, and so to was the pain it felt.

Sloane didn't care for the pain of other creatures. They were his food. They kept him alive and after ten minutes of sucking the life out of the creature he was pleased to see that his fingernail had grown back looking nicer than ever.

----- X -----

Grace entered the convenience store. Frogner hovered by the doorway, somewhat embarrassed to enter although she was at a loss to explain why. She wasn't enjoying her femininity and Grace suspected the man he had been was embarrassed to find himself as a woman.

"Excuse me, I'm looking for John Taiga," Grace said to the cashier. The girl was skeletal thin with wire frame glasses and spiky blonde hair. She looked bored.

"He's in the back. Just go through there and tap on the door."

Grace made her way along an aisle of toothpaste, sanitary towels and roll-on

## The Tourist

deodorants to a doorway marked 'Staff'. She tapped on the door. A short, fat man appeared with a terrible balding comb-over; he smelled of sweat.

"Yeah, what's up?" he asked.

"I'm looking for John Taiga," Grace said. "Is he here? May I speak with him?"

"Speak with him... you are speaking with him, lady."

Grace looked somewhat startled. "You? You're John Taiga?"

"Why does everyone look so surprised. Yes I'm John Taiga, but let me guess, I'm not the John Taiga you're looking for."

Grace pondered the question for a second. The man before her was human, of that there was no doubt. This man was a greasy slob. He was wearing a red shirt and purple trousers with white slip on shoes of fake leather. He was a mess.

"I'm looking for..." Grace stopped to think how to explain she was looking for an alien spacecraft mechanic. "The John Taiga I'm looking for is an engineer."

"You're not the first. A lot of people come looking for him. You're the prettiest, though. I think you've been sent on a wild goose chase, lady. But don't worry, you're not the first."

"Why do you think people come to you?"

## The Tourist

Grace asked. "Could it be mistaken identity?"

The human Taiga deflated and relaxed. "Mistaken identity, perhaps. Stolen Identity I think is more likely. There was a guy calling himself Taiga, using my details."

"Really?" Grace perked up. "I would very much like to find this man. it is quite important. I can pay well for your help, but I must find this man."

Human Taiga rested himself against the door frame. "You can pay well, eh? I tell you what, lady. I got money. I own this place," he gestured like he was showing off a palace. "But what I don't have is a woman in my life. What do you say you and I have a drink together sometime?"

"Well that's very tempting, Mr. Taiga. But how could I know you have anything to help me find the John Taiga I'm looking for?"

"Because," he said with a glint in his eye, "he left me a forwarding address... Yeah, yeah, yeah, I remember now. I know who you're looking for. I know him from some time ago. So where shall we meet up for a drink?"

Grace smiled, humouring, wondering what strategy to use. She put on her best sultry voice. "Do you just want drinks, Mr. Taiga? Or are you hoping for hot, sweaty, sensual love-making too?"

## The Tourist

“Wha... but you’re pretty?” he looked surprised by the come-on.

“I’m pretty. But just outside is my girlfriend and she is pretty and hungry for a man right now... But look, tell me how I can trust you. Otherwise I’m gonna think you’re full of baloney and walk.”

“Okay,” Taiga said, pushing his strands of hair back over his pate to make himself look smart. “I’ll tell you something I’ve never told any of the others who looked for him. This guy Taiga, he took my identity. I helped him do it. He paid me well but that was a few years ago. Back then a lot of people looked for him. You’re the first in perhaps two years. I have a forwarding address but I can’t say for sure he’s still there. I’ll give you that address if you wanna go to bed with me.”

“How about you give me that address and I’ll give you my girlfriend. She’s outside. Come and have a look at her... I tell you something else. She is wild in bed, and I do mean wild. She will do anything you want...” Grace leaned in close and whispered seductively in his ear, “Anything.”

Taiga giggled.

They walked to the front of the shop. Grace beckoned Frogner into the entranceway.

“This, Mr. Taiga, is my friend Jane.”

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“Pleased to meet you, sweetheart.” Taiga said.

“Mr. Taiga here has offered to help us in exchange for wild sex with you,” Grace said. “Please, give the man a twirl, Jane. Let him see what you look like.” Frogner pulled a face like he was biting into a lemon and twirled around in his coffee stained dress. “Now Jane has an office close by, don’t you Jane?” Frogner nodded. “It’s a perfect place for some privacy... for some man on woman action... And Jane here, is feeling desperate for some man on woman action. Aren’t you Jane?”

“I’m desperate for man action.” Frogner said staring down in embarrassment.

“So, do you have a forwarding address, or not?”

John Taiga drooled a little. The checkout girl folded her arms watching the indecent proposal with disdain. “Will she dance naked?” taiga asked. “She looks like she’s got nice little boobies... I’d love to see her dance naked.”

“She’s got gorgeous little boobies and she will dance for you, she’ll crawl around on the floor naked for you, she’ll do whatever you want, won’t you Jane?”

Frogner nodded.

Taiga grinned almost unable to contain himself. “Let me go and get you that address.”



## The Tourist

----- X -----

The taxi dropped Grace off at Riverside on the West Side. She'd left Frogner with the human John Taiga so they could get their freak on. Taiga was a grubby little man with a bad smell. Nobody would chose to make love to him, only the desperate would do so; luckily for him Jane Frogner was on the wrong side of the desperate line.

"Could you wait for me, please," Grace asked the cab driver.

She approached the house. It would have been a glorious building at some time in it's past; one of those white painted, federalist mansions with a wide porch and front door in the centre of the front face. The sort of house a child draws, but built for the rich. It was run-down now, somewhat giving a vibe of creaky floorboards and draughts.

Grace rang the bell. A teenaged girl answered the door.

"Hello," Grace said. "I'm looking for a man named John Taiga, I was given this address."

The girl sniffed at Grace then opened the door wider. "Mom," she called. "There's a lady here for Mr. Taiga."

Grace hovered on the porch looking in to the building. It was just as run down inside as

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it was out.

A woman appeared. She was about forty years old, with strands of grey amongst dishevelled golden locks. It was tied up with an emerald set pin giving her the look of an arty eccentric who had just awoken. "Do you know John Taiga?" she asked Grace.

"I'm trying to find him."

"Yes but do you know him?"

Grace smiled politely. "I'm trying to find him because I think he and I have something of mutual benefit to one another. My name is Grace Ripley, I'm a..."

"Have you heard of the Autumn Dog, Miss Ripley?"

Grace shook her head. "No, I haven't, what is it?"

"It's the Chinese name for a sexual position to be used by men with large stomachs. It's very exciting."

"Does John Taiga have a large stomach?" Grace asked.

"No he does not. I just love to offend women who think they can come here, to my home and ask me about John Taiga."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cause any offence. It's very important for me to find him."

"And he was very important to me... He

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lived with me, some years ago. He gave me the most wonderful experiences of my life. Wonderful, wonderful, unique and exquisite experiences.” As she spoke the woman drifted away and walked back into the home, ending the conversation.

The teenaged girl still hovered by the door. “Can I ask, ma’am,” the girl said. “What do you have that you think is mutually beneficial with Mr. Taiga.”

Grace was about to say, ‘nothing’ and leave but something made her stop. Some unexpected pull, a belief that she was missing something. She looked at the teenaged girl, she scrutinised her face. “I’m a materials scientist,” she said at last. “I make materials that can be used for the most incredible engineering projects known in the galaxy. What I make is out of this world.”

The teenaged girl stared back blankly as though she didn’t understand; but then she said, “Perhaps you should leave me your card.”

----- X -----

Grace took the cab to Jane Frogner’s office. She wanted to make sure she was okay.

She wasn’t.

Frogner’s office was up a tight staircase. The plaque on the door said, Carl Frogner,

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Sales & Marketing. Sounds of sex were coming from inside but they sounded tortured, with pig-like squeals and gasping grunts.

The human Taiga could be heard gasping like he was about to have a heart attack, but then he started screaming and shouting.

“What the hell, lady... what in the hell are you.”

There was commotion in the office. The sound of furniture being knocked over. Glass broke.

Outside in the corridor, Grace leaned against the wall and rested as she listened to the sounds. It was the noise of a drunken burglary, mixed with what could only be described as a drunken pig trying to rape a man. Things were clearly not going well for Frogner.

The door crashed open, Taiga burst forth showing a hairy chest, hairy back and man boobs. He was fastening his trousers and carrying his shoes and shirt. He saw Grace. “You!” He exclaimed. “Forget You, Lady... next time you set me up with one of your friends, make sure it’s not some deformed ladyboy freak.”

Grace said nothing. Taiga pushed past and made his way down the stairs, lamenting all the way.

When he was gone Grace noticed the

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sound of soft sobbing from inside the office. She sighed, pushed herself away from the wall and went in to see Frogner.

“Look at me,” Frogner said. He, or she, was sitting on the floor with tears streaked across his cheeks. He had half a beard on the right side of his face and one very large and swollen left breast, the right side of his chest was flat with some unappealing dark hair around his right nipple. “He didn’t finish the job,” Frogner cried. “How am I supposed to morph now? How am I going to find a man to make love to me when I look like this?”

He stood up and paraded about the office naked. One leg was slender and womanly, the other coated in dark hair. He felt between his legs and shrieked. “NO! My vagina has gone... oh no, oh no, I couldn’t make love if I wanted.” He examined himself and turned to Grace to show his crotch. “Look,” he said showing a pork sausage penis. He was holding it on the palm of his hand. “Look! I’ve started growing a cockadoodle but it isn’t finished. I’m freaking deformed!”

“Okay, calm down,” Grace said, but then burst out laughing at the absurdity of his half man, half woman physiology.

“Why are you laughing? I’m going to die. I can’t survive now.”

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“Don’t worry,” Grace said trying not to giggle. “I won’t let you die.” She patted her hand on the desk. “Come, put your hands on the table and bend over.”

Frogner shuffled over holding his swollen breast in one hand and rubbing tears from his eyes with the other. “I don’t want to die like this,” he said.

Grace held her hand up and pointed a finger. “Look,” she said. Frogner looked at her fingertip and watched as it morphed to open up a tiny human mouth. It made lips and opened and flicked out a tiny pink tongue. “Come on,” Grace said. “Bend over this desk and open your legs. Let me give you some K.F.A’s.”

Frogner cried with a wail. Happy at the generosity, sad to be so needy. He did as Grace requested and bent over the desk so that Grace could pop her finger-mouth into his anus.

----- X -----

A few hours earlier, James Crosby had lost the trail on Grace when she went into the alley with the cowgirl. He’d given up any thought of finding her after that and had taken up residence in the front window of a Chinese noodle bar, but then an hour later Grace took him completely by surprise when she appeared

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from the doorway of the grief counselling clinic. She was with an unknown but oddly-familiar looking woman.

At the time Crosby had felt like he was being a creepy airhole. Following Grace and watching the intimacies of her personal life. But this evening had been so unforgettable he couldn't imagine stopping now. He'd seen her meet a guy, throw a drink in his face, chase him, seemingly attack him, go to a sex show, attack a guy there too, become best friends with a huge black man who treated her like a princess... Grace Ripley had a bizarre double life and his stealthy detective work was titillating.

Titillating and perverted.

It got perverted when Grace slipped off her panties in the street and gave it to the other woman to suck on. At that point, all thoughts of worrying about being creepy went out the window. This was surreal. He couldn't be expected not to watch.

From a distance, James followed them as they walked across Manhattan to a discount store where she introduced the panty-sniffing woman to a bald, fat man in a red shirt and white shoes. It was at that moment that James realised something so profound he almost fell over with light-headedness.

The panty-licking woman in the coffee-

## The Tourist

stained dress was in fact the crazy guy from the party. The guy with the lizard tongue.

What the heck...?

No question it was him. He was in drag, dressed as a woman, but that same strange guy from the party, the same guy Grace had thrown a drink into his face, was now licking Grace's underwear and picking up strange men.

Grace, the other woman and the fat man had all stood on the street corner for a few minutes until Grace hailed a passing cab and disappeared into the night. The location was too distant from the main avenues for James to get a cab fast enough to follow her. So instead he followed the cross-dressing lizard-tongue guy and his new gay boyfriend.

He followed them to a run down tenement building with crumby offices operating out of some apartments. A plaque outside read, Carl Frogner, Sales & Marketing. That was the guy from the party. Mr. Frogner. The door to the lobby was unlocked and James followed them carefully up the stairs. He found Frogner's office and pressed his ear to the door, listening to the muffled conversation and some unusual sucking sounds. He wasn't sure how long he waited there but was suddenly disturbed from his sleazy sleuthing by footsteps in the lobby. He looked over the banister and saw Grace.



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He panicked.

Oh, my God... he was busted. He couldn't explain this.

He slipped silently further up the staircase, hoping to God that Grace went to Frogner's office and didn't continue to the higher floors. She waited outside the office until the bald, fat man left. He exchanged angry words with Grace, complaining about a ladyboy or something. Was that it? Was Grace a pimp of transsexuals?

With far more caution, James made his way back to the office and rested his ear on the door. He heard crying and wails, he heard Grace laughing and giggling, then he heard the other woman gasping and panting as though having sex until growling and howling like a wolf to the moon. Then it all went quiet.

James hid higher on the stairs again.

Grace left the office.

She looked drunk. She could barely stand up and had to slide against the wall as she left. What the hell had they been doing in there? Drugs?

James walked at least twenty yards behind as she made it to Canal Street subway station. It was almost midnight and a drunken, wealthy looking lady travelling the subway alone seemed a really bad idea.

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Grace made it through the turnstile and wandered to the platform. The subway was deserted and James had to hide at the foot of the stairs rather than go onto the platform proper. The train arrived, covered in graffiti, tagged by a hundred hip-hop influenced artists. Grace got into a carriage that held only two other men. James got into the car behind hers and watched her through the window of the adjoining carriage.

Grace swayed under the motion of the train. She was saying something to the two men. They went to her. James saw her beckon them with a hooked finger. The guys didn't look too rough; they were probably just two normal guys heading home after a few beers. Grace fell against one and hugged him, holding herself up against him. The other man laughed, then all three of them fell onto the seats and there was some kind of sexual groping. He saw Grace kissing one of the men, then saw a hand pass up her skirt.

James shuddered. He knew Grace wasn't wearing underwear. She was on a midnight subway train, alone with two strangers, allowing one to finger-bang her whilst she kissed the other.

The train approached Houston Street. Grace eased off the kissing to watch the

## The Tourist

surroundings. She scanned the platform. Nobody was getting on. She resumed the threesome with the men.

There was a pain to watching her sleazy love of cheap sex. If she wanted cheap sex, why couldn't she have it with him? He was a decent guy, he'd made the right moves and had always been respectable and gentlemanly. She'd rejected all of his advances. It seemed Grace Ripley enjoyed slumming it. Anonymous sex with strangers on subways, sex clubs, cross-dressers and panty-sniffers. How was he supposed to compete with that? He didn't have any major perversions. He wasn't freaky, he was boring and middle of the road.

The subway approached Christopher Street and again Grace broke off momentarily from her two lovers to scan the station. There was a couple at the back end of the platform, they would be getting onto the train a few carriages back.

The train pulled away again and...  
What the heck?

There was blood on the floor of the carriage. The man doing the finger-banging was bleeding and his clothes were soaking with blood. It was dripping from the seat to the floor. Grace was still kissing the other man as the finger-banging man slid from the seat and

## The Tourist

began convulsing on the floor in a pool of his own fluids. He rolled to the side and vomited, shaking without any control over his body.

Grace stood upright, suddenly alive with vibrancy and vitality. Her drunkenness gone, her strength regained. The man she had been kissing slipped off the seat too.

Grace looked around her, straightening her clothes.

She saw James staring at her through the window. His mouth was wide open in shock.

She looked equally shocked to see him.

They stared at one another through the glass not knowing what to do.

The train arrived at 14th street. Grace ran from the door. James ran behind her. "Grace," he shouted. "Grace, come back here." She ran for an exit and saw it was locked, she turned to backtrack as James came to her. She couldn't escape. She stopped and stood still, eyes looking around the subway to avoid eye contact.

The train pulled away.

"Grace," James said as softly as he could. "Grace I think we need to talk... what the? Jeepers. Yes, we need to talk, Grace." His eyes were locked on her right hand.

Grace stared down at her hand, morphed into a spike, the fingers fused to look like the head of a spear. Grace flexed her hand, she

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shook it and stretched her fingers showing a fine membrane of webbing between the digits as the skin morphed back to something more human.

“I’m sorry James, you shouldn’t be seeing this,” she said finally.

“I’ve seen more than just that... Come on,” he said offering his hand as a demonstration that he would hold her morphing spear-hand no matter how crazy things looked. “What do you say we get out of here.”



# THE TOURIST





## The Tourist

"I don't know quite where to begin," Grace said.

She'd gone with James Crosby to his apartment North of Central Park. It was plush, with deep white sofas and cushions, an open fireplace and low mood-lighting. Despite the fact that Crosby had just witnessed her mid-morph and seen her rob two human men of amino-acids, she found it hard to accept that he could have seen what he'd seen and still act so calm. He was even opening a bottle of wine to have a midnight drink between friends like nothing had happened.

"If you don't know where to begin, then perhaps I should start," James said. He told her honestly about following her. He told her he was frightened by Frogner and explained about the lizard tongue. Whilst it was clear to Grace that James knew far more than he should, it was still a long way from knowing the real story. What struck Grace was his motivations for following. She believed his sincerity when he said he'd followed her out of concern. She believed him when he said he had wanted to ensure she was protected and kept safe.

Nobody, on any planet, had ever shown her that much concern. James Crosby had glanced into the looking glass and been disturbed by what he'd seen, but despite it all, his number

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one concern was for her wellbeing.

“Are you something supernatural?” James asked. “Are you involved in some kind of devil worshipping sex cult?”

“I’m an alien,” she said.

James Crosby nodded his head. “I see,” he said. Mystery solved. He handed Grace a glass of wine and clinked his glass against hers. “Alien, huh? What was happening to your hand?”

“It was morphing...” Could she really tell him this? She rolled the dice and took a chance. “I was, I don’t know how to describe it. I can change my appearance, but there’s a heavy physical cost to doing it, so please don’t ask me to show you again.”

“Okay,” he said as though it was fine. “What happened to the two men on the subway?”

“I was stealing some of their bodily fluids. I’m not a body-snatcher or vampire or anything. I needed it to stay alive and those men will recover... oh, urgh, this is such a mess.” She put her wine down and rested her head in her hands for a few seconds. James used this as his cue to get closer and rub her shoulders to help her relax. It was a moment of intimacy. It was a male approach at a sign of female weakness. Was he wanting sex? After everything he’d just seen, was he still trying it on?

## The Tourist

"I'm an alien, James, from outer space. I come from a planet called Dalipox. Undesirable aliens are exiled here on Earth... I'm taking a chance telling you this. When I was brought here, before I was dumped, they told me about the Ethy Code, the rules for aliens on Earth, that we're not supposed to tell humans of our existence."

"Oh," James said showing his first hint of concern. "And what could happen to us if anyone finds out?"

Grace shrugged. "Nothing, I guess. They made it sound like it was penalty of death for telling a human. When I got here I realised that the real threat was I'd be locked away in a government laboratory and experimented on."

"Grace... is this... is this the reason you never wanted a relationship with me?"

She looked at him feeling a wealth of emotions. Unworthy of his acceptance and a powerful desire to foolishly reject his affection. It was lonely on this planet, she was a freakish outsider and yet she was accepted by a human who was out of his depth and couldn't care less. "I wanted a relationship with you," she said. "I like you a lot, but rebuffed your advances because it would be too complicated to explain." She stood up and smoothed down

## The Tourist

her clothes. "Do you still find me attractive? Knowing what I am?"

"What you are, Grace, is a beautiful and desirable woman... I've always found you attractive."

Grace smiled a little nervously. "Just give me a moment," she said.

Grace went to the kitchen and looked in the basin and under the counter to find what she needed. Luckily, He had them. When she returned to the living room James eyes almost came out of his head on stalks they were so wide. Grace had stripped naked and was wearing nothing except a pair of bright yellow rubber gloves for washing the dishes.

"Oh, wow..." was all he could say.

"Why don't you take your clothes off," Grace said.

He didn't need to be asked twice. He kicked off his shoes and wrestled his shirt buttons. Grace took hold of her wine glass to drink a little more and realised her fingers were trembling inside the gloves. The situation felt naughty. She was going to do something very erotic with a human who knew exactly what she was. It was a level of intimacy she had forgotten.

When he was naked she told him to sit down on the sofa and relax.

## The Tourist

He did.

Then Grace slowly moved to kneel beside him and whispered in his ear, except it wasn't a whisper that came from her mouth, it was the fine filaments of her nervous system, stretching forth from her lips like a possessed spider web. It touched his face and burrowed into his skin, wrapping around his nerve endings, connecting her nervous system to his, merging their pleasure centres together.

Grace ran her gloved fingers over his chest with one hand and cupped her own breast with the other. Both bodies nervous systems jumped in overloaded sensual touch. Sexual impulses cascaded along nerves, triggering fireworks of stimulation in the brain.

Wearing her dish-washing rubber gloves, Grace wrapped her fingers around James' penis and put her free hand between her own legs. The sensation was explosive and overwhelming. The room started to spin and lose focus, shapes of spirals and stars with comet's trails moved before her eyes. Their heartbeats fell into synchronicity and their bodies swayed in gentle rhythmic harmony, growing with pleasure, building with intensity until a climax of overwhelming intensity shocked their connected nervous systems into a literal scream of pleasure.

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They fell back on the couch, naked, exhausted after only a minute or two of gentle touching.

It was the best sexual experience either of them had ever known.

It was weird alien sex and it was out of this world!

----- X -----

Frogner slept on the couch in his office. When he awoke he felt sluggish. When he looked in the mirror he cried. His skin looked like it had a thin coating of grey mud. His neck was fat, almost as big as his head as though it was losing shape. Grace had given him a temporary reprieve. She'd given him enough amino acids to turn him male, meaning his breasts had subsided and a partial beard had grown under his chin, but he was a long way from being okay. He needed K.F.A's now more than ever. Without them he would slowly turn into a blob of filth, unable to move, slowly becoming a pile of slime, until eventually he would be little more than a stain on the carpet. He would feel the tortures of the damned every step of the way.

Suicide seemed the only good option. He had a gun, but hexbase life could usually

## The Tourist

morph bullet wounds away. He had no power left to morph. He needed death pills.

The phone rang.

“Frogner. This is Harry Sloane.”

“Hi, Mr. Sloane,” his voice sounded awful and croaky. “Shall I come down to The Corridor and tell you what Miss. Ripley discovered last night.”

“What did she discover.”

“A lead,” Frogner said with as much enthusiasm his destabilizing body could muster. “She got a forwarding address for Taiga.”

“What is the address,” Sloane said.

“I’ll bring it down to The Corridor. I’ll be there in about...”

“WHAT IS THE FUNKING ADDRESS, FROGSPAWN!” Sloane yelled. “Don’t test my patience Frogner, I swear I will hurt you more than you could believe possible. You want my help? You want back into The Corridor? Then give me the address.”

“It’s on Riverside,” he said feeling beaten. This was a bad idea, this was his trump card and he was giving it away with nothing in return. He looked at his hand and noticed that two of his fingers had fused together with the mud layer. He was out of time. He would die very soon. “Okay, Sloane, you win. I’ll give you the address, then I’m coming to The Corridor.”

## The Tourist

----- X -----

Grace awakened slowly. She didn't stir much, but her eyes opened. She glanced around seeing recessed ceiling lights that weren't hers. She was at James Crosby's. She remembered.

She tried to turn and found that she couldn't, her muscles were stiff, her... Oh, my God!

"James. JAMES!" She screamed as loud as she could. There was movement beside her. She fought hard against the bonds and cracked the cocoon.

"What is it," James said. "What the heck is this?"

They were covered in an eggshell cocoon of hardened powder. It felt like Plaster of Paris but was much stronger than it ought to be. "Break it. Get it off," Grace yelled getting off the sofa and peeling shards of the cocoon off her skin. "Get it off or it will kill us. Quick, we need to shower."

They made it into the shower cubicle together. Grace scrubbed frantically, the powdery shell dissolving to a grainy dust. James scrubbed less vigorously, taking his time to look at Grace under the water. She looked beautiful.

"What is that stuff?" He asked.



## The Tourist

“That... was me almost being pregnant!”

----- X -----

“Vargas, get in here.” Sloane shouted.

The cowgirl doorman sauntered into the office, thumbs hooked in the waist, elbows out, ready to line-dance and sauntering with a cool-as-cucumber swagger. “Mornin’ boss,” he said.

“That dipstick, Frognuts just called,” Sloane handed over a piece of paper. “Said this is a lead Ripley turned up on Taiga. A forwarding address.”

Vargas took the note. “It’s probably nothing,” the doorman said.

“Yeah, well. Make sure it’s nothing, cowgirl. Get over there and sniff it out. Be thorough, make sure there’s no hexbase over there.”

“And if there is?” Vargas asked.

“If there is... make them talk!”

----- X -----

Grace and James took some breakfast together at a diner close to Seaman and Seaman. Orange juice, coffee and bagels to start the day the New York way. Grace couldn’t find any way to start a conversation. James would smile at her

## The Tourist

and occasionally give her a wink. There wasn't much talk and things had definitely gotten weird between them; worse still, Grace realised she was the one being weird. James was being the gentleman, she was tongue-tied and lost. James didn't seem to care. He started little conversations and she finished them with one word answers.

After the stilted breakfast they went into the building and separated to their respective offices as though it was any other day.

"Oh, Grace," Marty called. "I've been here since eight and a guy has phoned for you three times already. His name is John Taiga."

Grace felt her heart lurch. "What did he say?"

"He said he would call back. He's called every thirty minutes, so I guess it's important."

"It's very important, Marty. It's very important."

Grace moved to her desk slowly, she sat down and paused. All she could do was watch the telephone. Nothing else mattered. Fifteen minutes later, the telephone rang. Marty answered. "Hello, Grace Ripley's office, Marty speaking... Yes, Mr. Taiga," Marty started waving to get Grace's attention not realising that Grace's hand was already on the handset waiting for the call to be transferred. "I'll put

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you through now.”

The phone on Grace’s desk rang.

She answered. “Hello...”

“Miss Ripley?” The voice sounded deep and masculine. There was a soft edge to it, a well spoken and clear tone. Confident words from a confident man.

“Yes, I am Grace Ripley, are you John Taiga?”

“I am.”

“Mr. Taiga... I... have been searching for you for some time. I’m a materials scientist and can produce various interesting products that may be of use in specialised engineering projects.”

“I am looking for raw materials, Miss Ripley.”

“Mr. Taiga, I would very much like to meet you.”

“I think it would be good for us to meet,” Taiga replied. “Can you visit my Riverside address in one hour?”

“I’ll be there!” Grace said.

----- X -----

Grace was feeling excited and exhilarated. The taxi dropped her off at the Riverside home. There was an old Cadillac pulled up outside that

## The Tourist

wasn't there last night. Taiga's car, perhaps.

Grace approached the doorway and saw that it was open. She pushed the door with fingertips and saw... an eyeball.

There was blood, streaked as though a bleeding body had been dragged.

Noise from a room. The sounds of struggle.

Grace stepped forward very cautiously and peeked around the door.

Vargas the doorman was on his back, his clothes ripped. An alien was between his female legs, penetrating him, raping his female body. It looked human apart from the scales on its back and quills along its spine.

It was Grace's worst nightmare.

It was Karpalian.

"Are you Grace Ripley?" It asked whilst continuing its rape of Vargas.

Grace nodded. The Karpalian nodded to an armchair indicating she should sit.

"Are you... are you John Taiga?" she asked in a tiny whisper. Vargas held a hand out to her as his face began to shrink in on itself. It was as though the Karpalian was vacuum sealing Vargas, sucking his insides out to pull the skin tight across the skeleton. It was killing him.

Vargas eyes rolled over to white and his whole body went limp.

## The Tourist

The Karpalian stood up and stretched. Grace watched as the quills on its spine retracted and the scales morphed to human skin.

Karpalians were the worst. At a point in distant history the Dalipox and the Karpalian were male and female of the same species. The females were worm-like and the males were quadruped lizards; but over time they evolved to be hermaphrodites and the species split. The Karpalian were still the masculine animal and loved nothing more than to assert their dominance by raping poor defenceless Dalipox... like Grace.

Could this Karpalian know she was Dalipox? Could he sense it? Would he rape her if he discovered and suck her dry of K.F.A's? Grace looked at the emaciated body of Vargas. A male hexbase in the body of a beautiful human woman, sucked down to her skeleton until dead.

"Why did you kill him?" She asked, worried for her own safety.

"He killed my lovers. I arrived too late to save them."

"Your lovers?" Grace questioned.

"The mother and daughter who live here."

"They're dead?" Grace asked with the right degree of shock. "I met them last night, I

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was looking for... for John Taiga.”

The Karpalian turned to face her, standing naked, coated in a fine layer of sweat. The human form was clearly assumed from Richard Gere in the movie *American Gigolo*. The thick, dark and wavy hair, the lost eyes and immaculate physical form. “I am John Taiga,” it said. “Do you know this one,” he pointed to Vargas.

“His name is Vargas. He is a doorman at a club for hexbase called The Corridor. He works for a man called Harry Sloane. I’ve only met him once, we spoke only for a minute or two.”

“He killed my lovers.” A single tear fell from Taiga’s eye. “He was looking for me. The younger, the one who disguised herself as a young girl who you met last night... she said you were different and that I should trust you, that I should give you a chance.”

“Yes,” Grace said.

“But now she’s dead because she thought I should trust you.”

Grace paused a moment and went straight to business, anything to deflect from the perception of her guilt. “I was trying to find you because I was told you are a spacecraft engineer. I want to get off this planet. I can manufacture materials used in space travel.

## The Tourist

Can you build spacecraft?"

Taiga stared at her. "Can you produce compound amber? Organic, compound amber?"

"Yes, but only in small quantities so far. Now that I've got the basic process in place, I hope to be able to mass-produce within eight to twelve months."

"Come with me," he said, walking to the door. Grace jumped from the chair and followed. Taiga walked out through the front door but Grace held back for a moment to follow the blood trail that had begun with an eyeball. It led into the kitchen. She saw the liquefying remains of the Autumn-Dog woman and the young girl. They were piled atop one another and fused. They looked like they had been dismembered and stitched back together as a single entity and the whole mass was now dissolving.

Grace exited the home and found Taiga around the back of the house. There was a flying saucer, a perfect black disk with a glass bubble in the centre. It was about the size of two cars and was as simple as it could be.

"This can't get into space, can it?" Grace asked.

"No. This can only be flown over short distances." Taiga climbed onto the disc and

## The Tourist

opened the glass bubble. "Please," he said. "Get in."

Grace climbed onto the disc and saw the bubble contained two seats. She sat in the one with the least controls. Taiga got in next to her and closed the bubble, sealing them in.

"Aren't you afraid that humans might see us?" she asked.

"There was a time a few years ago," Taiga said, "I was living in Canada and I was so lonely that I introduced myself to a truck driver. I told him exactly what I was, I morphed so he could see, I showed him this craft and took him for a flight over the truck stop."

"And did he report it to the police or anything?" Grace asked.

"He went on television to say he had been abducted by space beings from the planet Clarion. He said the space beings were two feet tall with dark skins like Italians. He said their leader was a woman who wore a black and red beret... These humans are idiots!"

----- X -----

Frogner was coming to the end of his life. The mud on his skin felt as though it were being sweated out through his pores and was peeling away. He was dissolving. His neck was fat and



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his ankles were fatter. He worried that by the time he lost mobility he would look like a frog, with fat legs, collapsed on his haunches and with a neck as fat as his body.

He pushed his way into the grief clinic and through to Sloane's office.

"I need back in," he said as a distorted croak.

"Back into what?" Sloane asked.

"You know full well. I need into The Corridor now or I'll die." Somehow Frogner knew that Sloane was going to play games and extend his cruelty. He wondered if Sloane realised just how close to death he was.

"Why should I let you back into The Corridor?" Sloane said slumping into his chair. He was grinning, playing a game with a desperate man.

"I brought you Grace Ripley because I thought she would attract Taiga. I brought you a new lead on where you could find him... Now let me back in."

Sloane shook his head. "No, not yet."

"Yes now... I'm freaking desperate, Sloane. It has to be now, I'm dying... It has to be now. IT HAS TO BE NOW!"

"Don't shout at me, Froggernuts, or I'll never let you ba..."

BOOM... BOOM, BOOM!

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Three shots. Frogner stood with his arm outstretched pointing the short revolver into Sloane's chest. Smoke snaked out of the barrel. Clear fluid poured from the wounds. Sloane was unconscious from the gunshots but wouldn't die from them. It would cost him a lot of K.F.A's to morph around those wounds, but it was nothing more than an inconvenience.

For Frogner things were much worse. If only he could end it all with the gun.

He dropped the revolver on the desk in front of Sloane and left the office sobbing.

----- X -----

The UFO landed behind a derelict diner in New Jersey. It looked like it was a factory complex at some point in the past. The buildings formed a convenient courtyard.

Taiga exited the craft and walked away, perhaps presuming Grace would follow. She did. He led her to a huge green wooden door fixed with an oversized padlock. He pulled the door open.

"Oh, my God. You've done it!" Grace said in awe. There was a spaceship.

"No, it is too badly damaged to survive flight into outer space. It crashed here."

Grace walked into the building, touching

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the craft, walking underneath it and tracing her fingertips across the hull. It looked like a jack, the children's toy, but made from compound amber and as big as a house. It moved slightly under her touch, floating on a mysterious suspension system.

"This is what they brought me in," Grace said. "Much bigger than this one, but the design was very similar."

"They brought you in one of these?" Taiga said with a tone of menace. "Then you're Dalipox... Don't try to deny it."

Grace took a step away from Taiga. "I'm an exile. Just like you. Looking for a way off this world. Just like you."

"The Dalipox exiled me here," he said.

"Six Karpalians raped me on a beach and then exiled me just for the fun of it... John, John that's in the past. We need to get off this planet. We can't survive here. You can build spacecraft, I can manufacture the materials."

Taiga stared at Grace with a little more edge to his glare. "Come with me," he said. "There's something else I must show you."

----- X -----

Frogner arrived at the live sex show in Times Square and was stopped by Marcel the robot

## The Tourist

the moment he entered.

“Mr. Sloane says you’re not welcome.”

“I need death pills. That’s why I’m here. Sloane wants me dead and I want to die.”

Marcel took Frogner down the stairs to the rooms with the prostitutes. He opened a broom closet and pushed Frogner inside then closed the door. For a moment, Frogner was alone in a tiny space with nothing but mops and cleaning solutions, then the wall behind him unlatched and opened as a secret door.

“Hello?” He called into the dark space.

The room was almost all black except for blue light coming from a fish tank. A single hexbase eel was swimming from end to end. Frogner approached the tank then was startled by a voice behind him. “What do you want,” the voice asked as a low cackle.

Frogner turned to see a robed and hooded creature sitting in a high-backed executive chair. Its face was hidden in shadow. “I want death pills,” Frogner said.

“And what are you prepared to pay for them?”

“Everything. Everything I have... I want to die. You can have anything I leave behind.

The thing in the chair cackled with a horrid laugh. It held out a hand made of long stick-like bones. Frogner cupped his hands and the

## The Tourist

thing in the chair dropped four blue pills into his hand. It already had them prepared.

“Go, Mr. Frogner,” it said. “Go away and kill yourself.”

----- X -----

Behind the jack spacecraft, Taiga opened another door and led Grace into a room that was more of a laboratory. It was filled with glassware and looked like a school science classroom where every piece of equipment had been put on display.

“This is what I want to show you,” Taiga said. He motioned to a glass and metal box that looked like a phone booth; it was connected via copper pipes to four glass pyramids, each flooded with ultraviolet light and with condensation running down the inside. Taiga pulled a face mask on a tube away from one of the pyramids. “Try breathing this,” he said.

“Is it safe?” Grace asked. Taiga smiled and breathed in a lungful of gas from the mask. Grace took the mask and tried herself. She wobbled, her hand waving through air, feeling for support. Taiga rushed in and caught her as she fell. She was limp, defenceless in his arms, her back arched as he leaned over as though about to kiss her.

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"I'm sorry, was the effect too strong?"

"The effect... was... amazing."

Taiga smiled at her. "It has all the K.F.A's you could ever need. We could never survive in space unless we breathed this."

Grace regained some of her strength. Taiga helped her stand. "How do you make it?"

"Plants," he said. He motioned the pyramids. "I have hexbase plants from the crashed ship. I've spent years cultivating them, protecting them. But they are dying just as we are. Without them we could never leave Earth. When the ship crashed, I salvaged the plants to build the transformation-pod," he pointed to the phone booth. "Inside, we can morph at will, supported by an atmosphere rich in K.F.A's. I was in partnership with Harry Sloane. I wanted to repair the spaceship and leave, but once Sloane discovered that compound amber couldn't be manufactured on Earth, he tried to kill me to keep the plants and the transformation-pod for his own ends."

"You know Sloane?"

"I know him. He is not to be trusted."

"So what do we do now?"

"We have two choices. We can work together and leave, or..." Taiga looked away.

"Or, what?" Grace asked.

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“We can make love.” He said it with the same serious and confident tone as everything else. There was no inflection to the comment

“I thought of that,” Grace said. “But I’m frightened. It’s too dangerous.”

“There would be extreme danger,” Taiga agreed. “But if we were to make love, it would make exile here worthwhile.”

Grace looked at the transformation-pod, the effects of the K.F.A. gas still coursing through her system. It was like a drug with an instant addiction. They could do it. They could overload on the gas, morph to their true selves and make violent, passionate love until one of them died. Death was the usual outcome when Dalipox and Karpalian got together, at least for one of them.

“I think we should try and go home first. I want to make love, but the practical thing is to get off this planet and survive.”

----- X -----

Spider O’Toole arrived at Grace’s office after a sleepless night filled with many questions. Who was the strange guy she had hurt in the alleyway last night. Spider had thought he was an amateur magician, a few tricks up his sleeve to impress the ladies. He said he was an alien

## The Tourist

from another planet. She'd seen just enough to believe him.

It was almost too crazy to be true and too congruent with what she'd seen to be false.

"Hi Spider," Marty said. "Nice of you to drop by. Wanna go to lunch?"

"I do. But I need to see Grace, is she here?"

Marty shook her head. The phone rang. "Good afternoon, Grace Ripley's... I'm sorry..."

In a phone booth across town, Carl Frogner was croaking and crying into the mouthpiece. "It's Frogner, I need Grace," he said.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Frogner, but Grace isn't here right now."

Frogner... the man from last night... he said he was an alien. Spider reached across the desk and pressed the hands free button on Marty's telephone.

"Please," Frogner sobbed. "It's a matter of life and death."

"Mr. Frogner, this is Spider, Grace's friend, I was working in the Black Orchid last night."

There was a brief pause on the phone. "Hello, Spider. I need to speak to Grace. I need to see her. I need her to come and see me, I don't think I'll be able to visit her. I don't have the energy." Then came the sound of crying.



## The Tourist

“It’s a matter of life and death.”

“Mr. Frogner,” Spider said. “She’s not here right now, but when I see her I’ll tell her to come... no, I’ll come... and I’ll bring Grace to you. Where will you be at around eight o’clock this evening?”

“I’ll be at my office... Please, this is a matter of life and death.”

“Give me your address, Mr. Frogner. I’ll bring Grace.”

----- X -----

Grace and Taiga spent the afternoon at a fried chicken restaurant a short walk from his workshop. They discussed Earth, the galaxy, K.F.A’s, Sloane, The Corridor, crashed spaceships, the stupidity of humans and the bigger stupidity of the Karpalian and Dalipox. They enjoyed talking on that subject as they both saw their history as an absurd joke. Karpalians and Dalipoxians had evolved from male and female of the same creature many eons ago, but they had gotten themselves to a state of behaviour that, if transposed to Earth, would look like every married human couple throwing frying pans at one another whilst trying to divorce.

Humans were stupid, but the Karpalian and

## The Tourist

Dalipoxian were stupid on an unprecedented scale. It was a battle of the sexes that had gotten so far out of hand it had led to an intergalactic cold war. To make matters even more intolerable they still craved sex with one another as an agonising biological desire, the problem was they fought so bitterly whilst making love that one usually ended up killing the other. It was idiotic but they just couldn't help themselves. That was why they'd come to the chicken shop. It felt safer to be in a public place to avoid temptation.

They ate together and spoke; but all the while, at the back of their minds, they both knew what the other was thinking about.

"How did you get here?" Taiga asked.

"I was on a survey mission which I now think was just a ruse. Something was wrong with it, but for the life of me I don't know what. We were dropped on a beach of deep red sand and crystal blue waters. It was hot and humid. I was attacked by six Karpalians; they raped me over many hours but didn't kill me. I have no idea why they spared me. Then they dropped me here. It all feels like some sick joke." Grace sipped her soda. "What about you, how did you end up here?"

"Politics. I upset the wrong people. I've been here almost fifteen years. I think that's

## The Tourist

a record. I would have been dead long ago without the plants; but what's the point of living if you don't have anything to live for? Earth is nothing but slow death and sexual frustration."

Grace raised her soda as though making a toast. "Sexual frustration, you got that right."

They stared into one another's eyes, both thinking the same thing. The transformation-pod was only a few minutes walk away. Taiga reached across the table and took hold of Grace's hand. His flesh liquefied and she felt barbs and quills morph from his palm and press into her flesh. It was wonderful. To a human it was the equivalent of a passionate kiss. She could fall deeply in love with John Taiga.

"I'm going to leave," Grace said. "Before we go too far. I'm going to return to my office. Let me know what you need, specifically, give me the details, the dimensions and tolerances for the amber."

Grace stood up and walked away.

"We'll make love one day, Dalipox," he called after her.

She turned her head to look back over her shoulder. "I know... I can't wait," she replied.

----- X -----

## The Tourist

Frogner was sitting at his desk watching the clock. He'd been unable to move since four in the afternoon. His chin looked as though it had slipped down onto his chest and his whole face was beginning to slide under the weight of gravity. Without Grace's help yesterday he would have died within hours. She had bought him a day of extra life, or at least a day of mobility. He wouldn't die for another week but he would slowly drip off the chair like a blob of lard in a heat wave, feeling pain as he degenerated. It was seven thirty. He needed to hang on another thirty minutes and hope that Grace's friend was as good as her word. He would have telephoned Grace's office again if his arms still had the strength to pick up the telephone. As of a few hours ago, his bones had turned to aspic jelly and couldn't lift anything.

He heard the door unlatch, the handle turned. "Oh, thank God," he said with a wobbly slurring voice. The door opened. It was Sloane.

"Hello, Frogspawn, you dipstick." Sloane had the gun with him, the gun Frogner had used to shoot him earlier. "You ruined my freaking suit by putting bullets in it, you melon farmer."

"You deserved it," Frogner slurred. "Look at me, you made me think I could go back to

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The Corridor, all the while letting me get into this state.”

“Tell me, Frogger, can you morph any more? Do you have any K.F.A’s left in your system?”

“Do I look like I have any more K.F.A’s?”

Sloane pointed the gun at Frogner’s shoulder and pulled the trigger. There was a splash of fluids that looked more like someone had burst a water balloon than fired a gunshot. Frogner croaked, a solid frog croak. His body juddered. “STOP!” he shouted. Sloane raised his gun again but didn’t fire when he noticed Frogner’s right eye sliding down.

There was a rap at the door, somebody coming to complain about the noise perhaps.

“Mr. Frogner, are you alright?” It was a woman’s voice. “Mr. Frogner... Mr. Frogner, I’m going to come in...”

The door unlatched. Spider O’Toole was there. She saw the lump of protoplasm that Frogner had become and stood transfixed by his appearance. Sloane grabbed her wrist and yanked her into the room, spinning her around and throwing her to the sofa. Spider yelped as she fell. She turned to find Harry Sloane pointing a gun in her face.

“Don’t,” Frogner croaked. “Please, don’t hurt her, she’s human.”

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Spider sat very still, staring down the barrel of the gun.

"I heard you bought death pills today, is that true?" Sloane asked. Frogner didn't answer. "Take them. Take them now, or I'll shoot this human."

"No!" Frogner barked. "Don't hurt her. I'll take them, just... don't hurt her."

"Take them. Take them now!"

"I need help," Frogner said.

Sloane waved the gun at Spider, beckoning her out of the chair and towards Frogner. She stood, she was shaking, her skin was ashen, her eyes wide open. "Help him," he demanded.

"What do I do?" Spider asked.

"In my desk drawer, there are four blue pills. Put them in my mouth."

Spider opened the drawer. There was a porno magazine and a clean, glass ashtray containing the pills. She lifted them, held them in her hands.

"Please," Frogner said. "Put them in my mouth."

Spider took a deep breath then nodded and did as she was asked. Frogner swallowed them making an amphibian 'rivett' sound.

Sloane laughed and fired the gun twice into Spider's stomach. She fell to the ground. Frogner tried to shout but found his body

## The Tourist

swelling. He suddenly looked as though his body was connected to a high pressure hose and was inflating. He was growing, expanding to bursting point, his skin growing thinner as the pressure inside built.

Spider rolled to her back and grabbed the bullet wounds of her stomach. Blood was running everywhere.

Sloane left the office and closed the door. He was laughing.

Spider was trying to sit, she was trying to pull herself around to see Frogner and ask him for help but before she could say anything there was a loud bang and a deluge of slime and fluid exploding all across the office. Frogner wouldn't be helping anyone.

----- X -----

Grace arrived back at her office at around eight in the evening. It was deserted. Marty was long gone and the lights were off.

She was worried about Taiga, fearful of him. Whilst with him her life, her body, had felt wonderful. She tingled, she craved more of the K.F.A. enriched atmosphere like it was a drug that had instantly put the hook into her. But despite the wonder and intoxication, Taiga scared her. She couldn't trust him. He needed

## The Tourist

her for amber but once he had what he needed he would take from her what he wanted.

Of all the hexbase on Earth, her engineer was a biological enemy.

“How do I do this?” she mumbled to herself. “What strategy do I use?”

The moment she tried to put things in order she made a terrible realisation. She could never get into a spacecraft with him. There was no way they could be confined together for several months as they traversed into deep-space, they would end up making love and he would kill her. The K.F.A. gas had knocked her senseless, made her woozy. How could she resist him for months in outer space if she was breathing that?

It was impossible. She could never trust John Taiga in space.

Grace rested her elbows on her desk and rubbed her eyes then dropped her arms to make a pillow for her head. This dilemma was unfair.

From the corner of her eye she saw notes from Marty. A call list of people wanting to do business. A note from Spider... from Spider?

Grace sat up and read the note:

‘Dear Grace. I have spoken with your friend Frogner. He sounded in terrible pain and was begging to see you. He said it was a



## The Tourist

matter of life and death. I am meeting him at his office at 8:00pm.'

Oh, my God... Frogner...

----- X -----

Grace took a cab and made her way to Frogner's building. The door to his office was ajar. She stepped inside, knocking as she went and found the place soaking wet and with slime pouring down the walls. In the centre of the mess was Spider O'Toole, barely conscious, clinging to life in a pool of her own blood and with two bullet holes in her stomach.

"SPIDER!" Grace yelled her name as she dropped to her knees. She grabbed at the wounds and put pressure on them. "Oh, my God. I've got to get you to a hospital."

"It's too late," Spider mumbled.

"Where's Frogner?" Grace asked.

"He exploded... a man came, he made me give Frogner pills, Frogner exploded. Then the man shot me."

Grace put herself into a better position to assist and cradled Spider. "A man shot you, do you know who he was?"

"No."

"Did he look like a slightly older, more athletic, more rugged version of Donny

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Osmond?” Grace asked.

“Yes,” Spider closed her eyes, her breathing going shallow. “Grace, I need to know... Are you from outer space?”

“Yes, I am.” Grace said.

Spider smiled thinly, using the last of her energy. “I would have loved to have seen that.”

Spider drifted into unconsciousness, heading towards death. It wasn't right. It wasn't fair. Frogner had come to the end of his life, but this was murder. Sloane. The cruel heartless Sloane had shot Spider for no good reason.

“Spider. SPIDER... keep listening to me. I'm going to do something to you. I'm going to bond with you. Hang on... Stay with me.”

Grace morphed her hand, she opened tiny mouths on the ends of two fingers and extended them into the bullet wounds on Spider's stomach. She squeezed her insides as tightly as she could and pressed, pushing her own fluids out into Spider. At the same time she extruded her nervous system off her lips and onto Spider's mouth.

“Stay with me,” Grace said entirely in her head.

“Grace, I can hear you, but I can't see you... I can't see anything,” Spider said in thought.

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“You’re unconscious,” Grace replied. “I need you to look inward, Spider. Turn your eyes around to look inside your body. The greatest pleasure is to see. All the secrets are there. You must use the pleasure and take the energy that I am giving to you.”

Grace projected herself into Spider’s mind and saw herself as Spider saw her. She was in a vortex of colour, her eyes spinning colours like they were made of prisms.

After an hour, Grace withdrew her nervous system. It felt like she was saying goodbye to an old friend, losing a part of her body, a strange sense of amputation as they separated nervous systems.

They weren’t entirely separated. Her fingers were solidly morphed inside Spider’s body as though they were conjoined twins. Spider stirred and wakened. She looked down to see Grace’s hand fused with her own abdomen. “What is that?” she asked.

“We bonded,” Grace replied. “I’ve shared my DNA with you. I’m an alien, Spider. I’ve shared alien DNA with you.”

Both women laid back, exhausted.

“That’s kinda cool,” Spider said.

“It stopped you from dying, but there’s going to be a terrible price. You’re going to need a type of chemical that doesn’t occur on

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this planet in any great quantity, we both need it, we need it now or we'll die."

----- X -----

Grace and Spider were leaning against one another like two drunks as they arrived at The Corridor. Grace still had her fingers fused inside of Spider. She needed more K.F.A's to morph them back out. If the worst came to the worst she could cut them off and grow them back later, but it would be better to get some juices now and do it naturally.

Grace opened the sonic lock. Vargas was dead, there was no doorman. "What you're about to see," Grace said, "is going to blow your mind, so try to act calm."

"Your fingers are fused into my intestines," Spider replied. "How much more freaky can it get?"

The door to The Corridor opened. A menagerie of galactic odd-balls confronted them. Two bird like creatures with a rainbow of colours nuzzled one another whilst sitting on a high perch. A humanoid male in a black suit with a face like a hammerhead shark sat with arms and legs spread in a booth whilst his three foot long penis sniffed the air like the trunk of an elephant. He raised his cocktail

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glass towards Grace in a toast.

Grace looked around. They needed help. The eight-limbed waitress slinked up about to ask if they wanted a drink but Grace ignored her and pulled Spider towards the one she wanted. It was the red clay-monster.

“Help us,” she said. The clay-monster looked up at her and Spider, it reached a thick clay hand to them and examined the fused fingers. It looked at Grace with sad eyes, then turned its attention to Spider. She looked terrified.

“Oo, mano, man-casa too matto. Oomana, oomana,” it said beckoning the women with a sense of concern.

Grace led the way into the booth as the clay monster guided them. It positioned Grace and spider to face it with them sitting on the table. Grace felt a snakebite against her inner thigh and saw Spider react to it too, the bite venom coursing through her fingers and into Spider’s body. The clay monster fumbled at the buttons on Grace’s blouse, then gave up and lifted Spider’s sweater, T-shirt and bra to release her breasts. Grace unbuttoned her blouse to release her own breasts feeling a tentacle between her legs, poised to enter.

Grace looked to Spider. She had turned white with fear. “It’s okay, Spider. Don’t

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worry.”

No sooner had she spoke, the tentacle penetrated between her legs. Four more tentacles appeared from beneath the table opening little mouths on the end of each. The tentacles squirmed and waved as they sought out the nipples of the women, latching on with soft sensual sucking action. It looked like a biological milking machine of red clay tubes nursing milk from their breasts.

It was mind blowing.

Both women fell back on the table, squirming, writhing in sexual ecstasy as the clay-monster pumped Grace with K.F.A's and in turn, Grace passed them on to Spider until her hand burst free from Spider's stomach with a powerful orgasm.

“What the hell is going on here,” it was a man's voice.

It was Sloane. “You,” he yelled at Grace, “get the hell out of my club before I have Vargas rip your head off.” Grace rolled off the table. She was primed, full of energy, loaded with K.F.A's. She was ready for a fight. “And what the hell is a human doing in here. You know the Ethy code, we can kill her now you farming bootch!”

“She's not human,” Grace said, “she's a hybrid, we've bonded.”

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Sloane threw a look of absolute revulsion. “Oh, my God, you bonded with a human, that’s disgusting.”

“And Vargas won’t be ripping off anybody’s head... because he’s dead.”

The red clay-monster gathered Spider in his arms and hugged her close to protect her. He put his hand across her abdomen. Spider was weeping fluids, as yet unknowing how to morph the wounds close.

“But more importantly,” Grace said. “You had Vargas kill the lovers of John Taiga. Then you killed Frogner by making him eat death pills and then you tried to murder my human friend.”

With that she launched herself at him, morphing her head and shoulders to her true slug-like form and flattening it out like a cobra. She hit Sloane as hard as she could with her slug body sending his flying across the floor. Grace jumped on top of him, her hands turning to spear-heads and stabbing into his flank. Grace wrapped her flattened slug-face over Sloane’s head and squeezed down hard.

Dalipox... The preying mantis of the intergalactic world.

With one tight squeeze she bit off Sloane’s head. His body writhed, his hands shook, all the while Grace’s spear hands pumped in and

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out of his body.

All she could think was, ‘he mustn’t survive this.’

The mating took only minutes. Her violence was unparalleled. She ingested Sloane’s head into her slug-form and broke it down for a year’s supply of K.F.A’s. She could have taken the rest of his body, but there was something more fitting she could do, one trick of the Dalipox mating ritual reserved for special occasions.

With all of her might she forced as much fluid as possible into her shoulders and sent it along her arms like a shockwave into Sloane’s decapitated body. “This is for Frogner,” she yelled.

Sloane exploded into a million little beans of matter. They flew into the air, they landed on tables, in drinks, they were instantly trodden underfoot. Within seconds each bean had opened a little mouth to scream and the beans tried to inch their way to safety like maggots, bunching their bodies and stretching out, pushing and pulling, contracting and expanding to move away, all the while their little mouths screaming with Sloane’s pain and terror.

“Hey everybody,” Grace yelled from a slit in her cobra hood. K.F.A’s for everybody.”

With that, the whole club began scooping



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up the beans of Sloane, eating them as they screamed and tried to crawl away. Some aliens dropped the beans into their drinks and clinked glasses in toasts to good health.

The beans of Sloane were the K.F.A. filled caviar of the intergalactic world. They were tasty, they were nutritious... and wow, they sure were satisfying to those who were eating them.

The eight limbed waitress slinked up to Grace, chewing on a mouthful of Sloane beans. "Whosss gonna runs The Corridorss now? Hows wes gonna survivessss?"

"Grace stared at her with intensity. "I'll run it. If nobody else wants to. Don't worry about it. Without Sloane we'll run the place fairly."

Grace morphed herself back to human form and began buttoning her blouse. "Can you look after my friend," she said to the clay-monster. She wasn't sure whether it spoke English, but it seemed to understand, nodding it's fat head and cradling Spider tenderly in its arms.

"Spider," Grace said. "Stay here. "There's something I've got to do and I've got to do it now whilst I'm strong enough."

----- X -----

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The ride to New Jersey took the best part of an hour. John Taiga was in his workshop when Grace arrived.

“I want sex,” she said. “I can’t hold back. I want you now.”

Taiga sat upright on his stool. “I think that’s a bad idea,” he said earnestly. “We need to produce the amber first and prepare the craft.”

Grace shook her head. “I have an idea. Why don’t you use the transformation-pod to change, but I won’t, I’ll be weak. You can make love to me and I won’t be able to resist. I can trust you not to kill me because you want compound amber badly enough to ensure my safety. I’m offering myself to you in a weakened state so that you can use me and abuse me as you wish.” Taiga looked away and pondered this for a moment, then slowly nodded. “I’ll use the transformation-pod afterwards,” Grace added. “I’ll use it to help morph back to a human shape, but not before... I need you, John. I want what you can give me. I want to be powerless under you.”

Grace popped the button of her skirt and let it fall to the floor. She stepped out of it and slipped off her shoes. Taiga watched her undressing for a moment, then joined her, removing his clothes to show his Richard Gere

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inspired body.

Grace finished undressing and stood naked, she knelt down, then stretched herself out on the floor and began loosening her form, flowing back towards her true, slug-like self.

Taiga was aroused, his human penis flushing, becoming erect. He backed away and stepped naked into the booth. Once she saw him step inside, Grace softened her body and opened eyes at the front to see better.

There was a hiss of gas as the doors to the transformation booth opened.

Taiga stepped out as his true self.

He was beautiful.

To human eyes he would look like a dinosaur of sorts, a brown, scaled creature with a long tail and quills along his spine. His feet had talons, his short arms held claws of strength and sharpness whilst his mouth stretched to a snout filled with teeth.

Grace lifted her slug-body onto an end and flipped over, end over end over end, like a gymnast performing handsprings. Taiga watched her mating display and plodded forward, drooling, his claws flexing.

He hung his head low to the ground and raised his tail high, swinging it left and right with each step forward that he took. Grace continued her flips and gymnastics, showing

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the suppleness and fluidity of her soft body.

She aroused him.

He went for her with a charge and a roar.

Grace flattened herself to accept him.

He penetrated.

Grace fought the desire to submit and morphed her body around his neck, twisting it to the side with an explosion of power and speed he didn't expect, she pulled him down, strangling his hard body with her suppleness. Taiga felt things go wrong instantly and began kicking and clawing wildly with his talons, slicing into her flesh, tearing at her to free himself. The razor sharp claws slicing Grace's body into slimy ribbons... but it was too late. Grace had extruded her own hermaphrodite penis and rammed its sharp spike into Taiga's ear. Her penis was inside his brain and it was swishing and cutting and slicing his mind into pieces. Within minutes he was dead.

Grace spent the next few hours lying with her dead lover, slowly absorbing his body, feeding off his K.F.A's. The damage his claws had done to her was formidable. She had to repair herself before she even tried to morph back to human; but it was worth it.

She had lost her engineer, the one person who could build a spacecraft, but she had gained a damaged spaceship and a machine

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that produced a K.F.A. rich atmosphere. She'd also gained The Corridor if she decided she wanted it. There were no other hexbase life forms she'd met so far with the skills to run a club. Perhaps Spider could run it.

With her major wounds of love healed, Grace slid herself into the transformation-pod and inhaled the rich, life giving gasses.

It was too bad that she'd had to kill John Taiga. He was a beautiful male, but in the battle of the sexes she had won the way the female always wins, by temptation, by luring her prey with promises of sex and doing so for her own ends.

She still needed an engineer, but now that she had the technology and the new lease on life it felt like only a matter of time before she solved the problem. It would soon be time to leave this stupid planet. She was tired of being a tourist. It was time to go home.

## Other Books by Lee McGeorge

Gingerbread Economy  
Vampire “Untitled”  
Vampire “Unseen”  
Vampire “Unleashed”

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