

Chuck McKenzie's

Nasty Little Bits

Bite-Sized Morsels of The Macabre

Daddy's Always Right

Lucy presses her face up against the window, looking out at the planes as they trundle back and forth across the tarmac beyond. The plane daddy says they'll be flying in sits still, just a few metres away.

'When can we get on, daddy?' she asks impatiently.

Daddy, sitting in the row of seats just behind Lucy, says: 'When they've finished cleaning up after the last lot of passengers, Sweetie. Won't be long now.'

Lucy nods, satisfied. Daddy's always right.

Lucy turns and glances around the Departures Lounge. The old lady who smiled at her earlier is looking at her phone with a worried expression on her face. So are some of the other people, who Lucy thinks are probably going to be on the plane with them.

Lucy moves away from the window and sits next to daddy. 'Daddy?'

'Mm?' Daddy is reading his book, not really paying attention.

'Why is everyone looking scared?'

Daddy looks up from his book and glances around, then gives Lucy a smile. 'There's some fighting going on in another country, and I think some people are just a little spooked. But it's nothing for you to worry about, okay Sweetie?'

Lucy smiles back. Daddy's always right.

Daddy goes back to his book.

A man sitting nearby jumps up, and walks quickly out of the lounge. Other people begin to do the same. The old lady starts to cry quietly. Lucy clutches daddy's arm. The chairs vibrate suddenly, like when a truck goes past their home.

'What's that shaking, daddy?'

Daddy doesn't even look up from his book this time. 'Just planes landing, Sweetie.'

Daddy's always right.

Lucy gets up and walks back to the window. People are beginning to run across the tarmac in all directions. A sudden blinding glare on the horizon makes her gasp and shield her eyes with both hands.

'*Daddeee!*' she says loudly, frightened now. 'What's that light? What's that light, daddy?'

Daddy sighs (Lucy can tell he still hasn't looked up from his book) and says in his familiar I'm-being-silly voice: 'Well, I think it must be the end of the world, Sweetie.'

Then everyone starts to scream. It's the last thing Lucy hears.

Daddy's always right.

Conquest

The vast alien spacecraft plunged downwards through the atmosphere and came to a screeching halt (figuratively speaking) just above Parliament House in Canberra, hovering silently in the air like an enormous floating thing. Moments later every TV set, PC, laptop, tablet and smartphone worldwide turned itself on, revealing the image of a hideous, octopoid alien equipped with far too many eyes and teeth.

“Earthlings!” the creature snarled. “In order to avoid a practical demonstration of superior Zrrgon firepower, we strongly urge you to comply with our one, simple demand!

“We want your women!”

The response from local military forces was immediate and merciless.

When the smoke cleared, Canberra was gone. The spaceship, however, very much wasn't.

“Imbeciles!” the Zrrgon spokesthing snarled. “Try that again, and we'll vaporise something important! Now—we want your women! Immediately! Twenty thousand of them, whether biologically so or identifying as such, and representing every race, creed and colour upon this miserable planet, to be assembled beneath our ship exactly one Earthly week from today! Failure to comply—well, you get the idea. Oh, and we demand the loan of a lectern as well! Thanks!” Cackling maniacally, the spokesthing terminated communications, and the kids were finally able to access TikTok again.

The public response worldwide was of absolute outrage. The aliens want our *women*?? For what terrible purpose?? As sex-slaves?? As incubators for hideous alien larvae?? The possibilities raised were all pretty horrifying, and citizens everywhere desperately lobbied their governments to reject the Zrrgons' demand.

Unfortunately, the governments of Earth didn't feel they had much choice in the matter. Not if they wanted to be around for the next round of elections, anyway.

And so, a week later, twenty thousand women stood in the shallow crater beneath the hovering Zrrgon spacecraft, all nervously awaiting their fate.

With a deep rumble worthy of the Industrial Light & Magic audio workshop, the bottom of the spacecraft irised open and the Zrrgon spokesthing came floating down to earth in a beam of light. Drooling with lustful anticipation, the spokesthing squelched over to the lectern—thoughtfully provided by the (former) supplier of office furniture to the (former) Australian government—and moistly cleared its multitude of throats.

“Greetings!” it gargled. “Now, I suppose you wretched Earthwomen are wondering exactly what the Zrrgon have in store for you! Well—wonder no more!”

An orifice in the spokething’s side opened, disgorging a slime-coated, metal attaché case.

“*The Zrrgon are here to conquer Earth!*” the spokething gloated. “And you, Earthwomen, will be the *instruments* of that conquest!”

With a sinister *Click!*, the case opened.

The crowd drew back with a collective moan.

The spokething reached into the case and pulled out a small glass vial, which it held aloft for all to see.

“Behold!” it drooled. “The Dermatone XK5—scientifically proven to reverse dermal aging in over two thousand known sentient species!”

Slowly, as though hypnotised, the crowd edged forwards, all eyes fixed upon the vial.

“The recommended retail price in your local currency is seventy-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents,” the spokething continued in a very businesslike tone, “but if you ladies sign up as distributors for Zrrgonetics today, the price for you is only twenty-eight dollars and forty-three cents per unit, plus you’ll receive—at absolutely no additional cost—this handy and attractive branded carry case...”

Kindred

After stowing his backpack in the trunk of the aging pickup, Bruce slides gratefully into the passenger seat. “Thanks so much for stopping!”

Colin waves him off. “Eh, it’s fine. Long, empty stretch of Highway 97 coming up. Couldn’t just leave you here.”

“Dangerous area?”

Colin shrugs. “Australian, eh? On vacation?”

“Yeah.”

“Cool. Drink?” Colin hands Bruce a bottle of water as they barrel along the otherwise-deserted stretch. “Sorry, broke the seal already, haven’t drunk from it.”

Bruce nods, unscrews the loosened top, and takes a grateful swig. “Thanks. Tastes different from American water.”

“Cleaner, probably.”

Bruce nods thoughtfully. “Yeah, I s’pose so. Only been in Canada a day, and already seeing a huge difference between you guys and the U.S.”

Colin smiles, not taking his eyes off the road. “Oh yah? Like what else?”

“Well, for starters, you were the first vehicle I saw after leaving the rest stop on the border, and you stopped for me. When I was backpacking through Washington State it sometimes took an hour to get picked up, even with plenty of traffic.”

Colin nods amiably. “Well, yah, courtesy costs nothing.”

“And even the people who gave me a lift were...not *rude*, exactly, but really *intense*, y’know? Brusque. Rapid-fire questions all the way. You, on the other hand, seem pretty laid back.”

Colin glances at Bruce, smiling again. “Yep. The Aussies I’ve picked up before usually tell me Canadians remind them a lot of Aussies.”

Bruce nods again. “Yeah, that’s a pretty common opinion back home. Aussies and Canadians sort of seem...kindred. Being laid back, mostly being polite and accepting when we travel overseas...” He yawns. “Oh, ‘scuse me.” He takes another swig of water. Frowns. Looks at the bottle. “Yeah. Aussies and Canadians. More similarities than differences.”

“Oh, you have no idea...” Colin says quietly.

“Huh?” Bruce stifles another yawn.

“Maybe take a nap?” Colin suggests. “Many miles to go. Many long, lonely miles. Just the two of us.”

Bruce nods drowsily. He glances out the window, around the cabin of the pickup, then over his shoulder. “Why do you have rope and gaffer tape in your back seat?” he asks.