

BEETLE BRAIN



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I Died In A Bed Of Roses



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Author's Note:

This novel is literally the byproduct of misheard lyrics. I often mishear lyrics when I listen to music and I am an unabashed singer-along. I don't care if I know what the vocalist is saying or not. I'll make the shit up so I don't have to stop singing. I know you do it, too. Don't lie. We all do.

So how the hell could a misheard lyric inspire a novel about a slutty stripper controlling a horde of giant flesh eating beetles?

Easy. I was listening to "Attitude" by The Misfits and heard the chorus as "Inside your beetle brain, there's probably a whore!"

After driving around belting that little gem out a few times I caught myself and laughed. Danzig actually says "feeble" right there, but I had inadvertently hit on an awesome book title.

It didn't take long for me to come home and drop it into my story ideas folder with a small synopsis about a whore with a beetle sticking out of her head taking over the world.

Then, like most story ideas, I forgot all about it for years.

If you read my last book, "I Died In A Bed Of Roses" you know that last year, I flew up to the Oregon coast to write novels with my literary hero and friend Carlton Mellick III. On that trip, I wrote "Bed Of Roses" in only four days.

We both marathon wrote from the time we woke up until we went to sleep and cranked out our novels. I finished mine a few days earlier than Carlton finished his, so with nothing else to do in a small ocean-front cabin with no internet, cable or phone, I decided to simply start writing another book.

I knew I wouldn't finish another whole book in just two days, but I decided to see how far I could get.

I opened up my story ideas folder on my computer and scanned through my book ideas. Killer Batsquatch float trip book? No. Post-apocalyptic mech book? No. Giant cancer zombies book? Nah.

I stopped on Beetle Brain and laughed again at how absurd the idea was, and knew that it was exactly the book I wanted to write.

After a complicated and emotionally charged book like “Bed Of Roses” I needed to cool off and loosen up. Jumping back and forth through time periods and setting up mysteries and reveals in “Roses” took a lot of complex thought and writing tricks. But “Beetle Brain?” I could really just unleash a torrent of sex and death onto my pages and see how offensive and shocking I could really be.

I love hardcore horror. Richard Laymon, Edward Lee, Jack Ketchum, these are my literary heroes. And while I've written some pretty disgusting stuff before, I wanted to go all out with “Beetle Brain.”

As I sat there listening to the ocean waves crashing outside the cabin door, I started writing with just one thought: I want every decision this girl makes to be worse than the last. I wanted Sue Ellen to put train-wreck hot mess celebrities like Lindsay Lohan and Paris Hilton to shame. I wanted her fuck ups and mistakes to cost her not only her regular life, but to destroy the very world around her.

I didn't finish this book while on the coast. I knew I wouldn't. But I got a good ways in, laughing the entire time, lightening the mood after the emotionally heavy “Bed Of Roses.”

This was exactly the book I needed to write and I hope it finds you at a time when laughing at the worst life has to offer us is exactly what you need to read.

Enjoy the shit-show.

Kevin Strange
7:48pm
8/18/2017

For other sick fucks like me.

Chapter 1

Sue Ellen wasn't aiming to get fucked that night, but as fate would have it, she would end up with a dick in her ass—both literally and cosmically—before dawn.

The guy was nice enough. A small time politician from Chicago with more money than brains and more drugs than faith in the sanctity of marriage.

Sue Ellen was a couple hundred dollars short on rent, and the strip club was dead as a door-nail like it was every other Tuesday night since the city passed an ordinance requiring all dancers and waitresses in strip clubs to register with the state. Thing was, there was only ONE strip club in Hopp's Hollow. This was the city's way of pushing them out, even though they'd been grandfathered in when the new mayor decided to “clean up” the downtown area.

“Downtown area. Yeah right,” Sue Ellen thought as the politician balled her rear end in one of the lap dance rooms near the back of the club. He'd paid the bouncer Jackson a hundred bucks to keep watch. Not like it mattered; Quinton, the bartender, was the owner of the Twin Moon, and he knew exactly what they were doing back there, how illegal it was, and how quick he'd end up in jail if he got caught whoring out his strippers. But with business at an all time low, he took his chances, knowing she'd split the loot with him later that night.

Hopp's hadn't had decent downtown nightlife in fifty years—not since the mills shut down and the barges that ran up and down the Mississippi river started using Hopp's as nothing more than a gas station.

Business dried up and the millionaire families who'd started those mills sold their mansions for pennies on the dollar. Now the huge buildings were havens for prostitutes and drug dealers. The beautiful, ornate rooms overlooking the waterfront had been stripped bare and converted into efficiency apartments. They stood in ruins all over the city. Once grand landmarks, now so dilapidated, they gave Hopp's Hollow, Illinois the distinctive honor of being considered one of the most haunted towns in the entire world.

“I'm gonna cum, baby!” The politician spun Sue Ellen around and pushed her to her knees.

He unloaded all over her face, grunting and dripping sweat. When he was finished, he halfheartedly pulled up his pants and stumbled into the hallway.

Sue Ellen had collected the cash before she let him enter her rump: five hundred bucks for ten minutes of work after she peeled off half for Quinton. *Not bad. And at least he didn't make me put his dick back in my mouth*, she thought, pulling up her panties.

She didn't clean off her face, though. That would cost her the other hundred bucks she was about to make. Sure enough, Jackson scooted through the satin curtain. "Oh... Oh that's fucking hot."

Sue Ellen sat still as Jackson unbuckled his pants and started jacking off. As he got closer to climax, he'd start rubbing his fingers through the other man's cum on her face.

Sue Ellen thought about how many groceries she could buy with six hundred smackaroos.

"Oh yeah. Oh *fuck* yeah!"

And there he went. As he got off, Jackson always licked the other guy's cum off her face. As soon as he'd recovered, he would grumble something about not being gay and drop the cash in her lap. They'd never actually spoken about Jackson's peculiar fetish, she just caught him whacking it after she'd finished up with a client one night and told him if he didn't pay, she'd tell Quinton and get him fired.

"*Dudes are fucking weird*," she thought as she wiped the rest of the spunk and saliva off her face, touched up her makeup in the mirror inside the tiny booth and then returned to the front. Her song was playing. It was her turn to dance for an empty house.

When she walked out front, she saw him.

The man who would forever change her life.

The man who would make her a queen. Just not the kind of queen any woman in her right mind would want to be.

He'd make her the Queen of the Beetles.

Chapter 2

A Perfect Circle's "Judith" blasted over the speakers as the DJ introduced her. "Aaaaand Lilith joins us on the main stage! As fierce as she is sexy, you're gonna wanna get right up next to this little hottie. You don't wanna miss her big finale!"

There was one customer in the entire club. Bless Joshy's heart, he came in here and gave it his all every night. No matter how crowded or dead it was, he was at the top of his DJ game.

The customer was a strange little foreign man. He waddled up to the stage and sat down. He had about six strips of wispy black hair that he had combed up over the top of his head.—not well, either; it was sticking up and jutting out at weird angles. He was dark-complected with brown eyes and big sweaty lips on top of jowls that reminded Sue Ellen of rotten pudding. She dropped to her knees and crawled up to him like he was a king or a god all the same. It was her job. This is what she did to keep the lights on. She didn't even see the creepy little men anymore. Her mind was always far away. When she needed to get away from reality, she always imagined herself on a beach in the middle of nowhere. Shipwrecked. Stranded somehow. Abducted at the beach by the uncivilized natives who stripped her naked and prepared to gang rape her right there on the shore until they saw a birth mark or some other fantastical telltale sign and realized she was their long lost queen.

The thought always made Sue Ellen smile, even on the worst days at the club with the creepiest creepers copping cheap feels on her tits and ass without a dollar to their name to show for it. She imagined herself on a throne of gold, natives at her feet worshiping her. Singing songs in her name.

"Fuck yeah," she thought. *"Worship me, bitches."*

Back in the real world, back in the club, she popped the strap on the back of her bra and let her tits fall out. She shook them in the little dark man's face and purred in his ear, "I'm Lilith. What's your name?"

Lilith was her stripper name, by the way. Adam's first wife in the bible. Made her feel deep

and shit, but the truth was, she hadn't even given herself the name. A veteran stripper with the name of Annabelle had felt sorry for her on Sue Ellen's first night at the club, all wide eyes, quick to tears. She'd run away from home after her mom ended up in jail for the third time for check fraud and her step daddy and step brother had decided to turn her into a human shish kabob, fucking her from the front and the back at the same time.

The boyfriend she'd had at the time was such a fucking junkie, he'd passed out high in the car during her audition and had a fucking overdose. She was hired on the spot and had to go back to fucking work that night just to bail him out of jail after the club had called the cops on him for trying to die on their property.

To say she'd been a bit frazzled was an understatement. When it was her turn to dance, the DJ asked her what her name was. She'd told him it was Sue Ellen, not understanding that he meant her stripper name. Annabelle had been nearby and swooped in to her rescue, telling the DJ to call her Lilith.

"That's a pretty name," she'd said, wiping tears from her eyes for the third time that night. Annabelle had explained what it meant and the name stuck. Annabelle was a nice girl. Annabelle showed up decapitated in a dumpster in north Hopp City three months later after ripping off her crack dealer one time too many.

When the dark man in front of her didn't respond to the name question, she moved onto her next routine. Acting like you gave a fuck about a client's name and job was an easy way to score an extra twenty or two when you told them about how hard you were working in college, just stripping on the side to pay tuition (yeah right—Sue Ellen barely made it through her freshman year in high school before she got caught with the lesbian P.E. teacher, letting the lesbo bitch eat her out in the locker room for an easy A).

"Privates are only twenty bucks," she whispered expertly into his ear. As a stripper you either learned how to be sultry and seductive on the outside even if you were screaming and crying on the inside, or you didn't make money. That's how the strip club business rolls. There's always another pretty girl short on shame who loves cash money to take your place.

Some dudes don't want to tell you anything about themselves. They're always married, but some of them have a lot to lose if their fat bitch wives ever found out they hung out in strip clubs with all that young sexy pussy flaunting around. Some guys wanted to get right to the point. They wanted tits and ass in their face and they wanted to blow wads in their pants (or all over your face, if the money was right).

"I had something more... lucrative in mind," the pudgy little creep said, flashing a wallet full of hundred dollar bills.

Sue Ellen raised up, shaking her tits over the man's face before dramatically falling backward, letting her shoulders hit the stage while she thrust her crotch lustily in his face.

Really what she was doing was eyeballing Quinton at the bar. She already had to tip him out for the buttfuck she'd received earlier, she wasn't looking to split two tricks with him tonight. She had plans for this money. She was going to blow this crappy town and head to Vegas where she could get a real porn career going. She was sick of taking dicks up the ass for pennies on the dollar when she could be a real star and take dicks up the ass for six figures.

Sue Ellen might have rolled snake eyes in the luck department when it came to her childhood, growing up with a crook of a mother and a molester of a stepdad, but at least she'd hit the genetic lottery when it came to her looks.

It didn't matter to these fucking perverts how fucked up in the head you were if you had a pretty smile and nice tits or a big ass. All they wanted was to get off. You were a fantasy to them. an unattainable beauty in which to target their lust once their wives had shat out a few of their little brats and got all lumpy and soft in the wrong areas. Once they stopped sucking their husbands' smelly little dicks.

That's all Sue Ellen was: a hot piece of ass to aim their dicks at. And she was totally fine with that—for now, anyway. She'd run away to Vegas and make the most of her perky tits and plump ass 'til they started to sag. 'Til she became that tribal queen in her fantasies.

Quinton was flirting with one of the blonde waitresses, the one with the pierced nipples and bad breath. He wasn't paying any attention.

Sue Ellen leaned in to the little man in front of her again. “Oh yeah, baby?” She licked his ear. It tasted bitter, thick with wax. Her stomach turned over a bit. She swallowed it down like the pro she was. “Tell me more.”

“Meet me at this address after your shift.” The dark man slipped a business card onto to the stage, wrapped in a hundred dollar bill. “I won't get into specifics here. Come alone.”

Sue Ellen opened her panties, giving him full view of her shaved pussy, and dropped the money and card inside, letting her panties snap back against her glistening skin. She patted it for good measure. “I don't meet strange men by myself, sugar. I got more sense than that.”

He smiled, showing several crooked and yellowed teeth. “I'm sure you do, sweet Lilith.” He slid another hundred into her bra as she gyrated in front of him to the rhythm of the music. “A public place then, would be more to your liking?”

Sue Ellen smiled slyly, ecstatic that she'd scored another two hundred bones just for having a minute-long chat with some rich creeper. “Sure, baby. Meet me at the Waffle House down in Pontoon Beach at five thirty.”

The little man leaned forward and slid a final hundred into her G-string just above her butt crack. “You'll be there?”

“With bells on, honey.”

The freaky man curled his finger back in a “Come closer” motion. She giggled, feeling a twinge of revulsion for allowing herself to be commanded by such an odd little twerp, but she did as he asked, leaning in close enough to kiss him.

He whispered, “There's two thousand dollars in it for you if you actually show.”

Sue Ellen sat back on her haunches, stunned. That's the kind of loot she hoped to save up over the next three months. Two Gs was all she needed to escape to Vegas. She hadn't actually considered meeting this guy at Waffle House. Dudes tried to pick her up at the club every night. It was all part of the game: Make them think they were somebody special, somebody you really wanted to fuck. Get them to invite you out for breakfast after work, then drain their wallets while they were still in the club.

No girl in her right mind would actually meet one of these weirdos out in public away from the safety of club security. Not alone, anyway. But for two grand? She'd let this guy's friends take turns fucking her in a hotel room for two grand. Shit, they wouldn't even have to take turns. They could all gang up on her at once for that kind of money.

Would she really be able to skip town and leave Hopp's Hollow in the dust tonight?

The thought made her dance up off the table and do her first pole tricks in two years. With hardly ever any customers, there was no reason to get fancy with it. But tonight? Tonight there was cause to celebrate!

She climbed up to the top, flipped upside down and into the splits, slowly spinning as gravity pulled her back down toward the floor, smiling the whole way.

Never guessing that meeting with the dark little man would be the worst mistake of her whole shitty life.

Chapter 3

When she pulled into the Waffle House, the parking lot was empty.

“Fuck,” she said, smacking her steering wheel. “My fucking luck!”

Never mind the nine hundred dollars she'd scored between her ass-loving client and the little freak, Sue Ellen was pissed off that she wasn't going to see that two grand he'd promised her.

She turned into a parking spot and killed the ignition, silencing the blaring heavy metal. She peeled her fluffy green wig off and tossed it onto the seat next to her. She frowned into the rear view mirror as she tried to tease up her dark, matted, shoulder-length hair, flattened to her skull from hours of being tucked under the wig. It was no use. There was no way she'd be able to make it look sexy tonight.

She pulled out her cell phone. It showed six new texts from Johnny Boy, her current boyfriend. He had a habit of blowing up her phone as soon as she got off work. If he was just checking to see if she was alive, that would be one thing, but all he was interested in is how many dicks she'd sucked that night. He never even asked how much money she made. He was kind of a pervert; which, under normal circumstances, was why she liked him. But tonight, now knowing that she'd been flaked on by Mr. Creepy and that her escape money was bullshit, she was in a rotten mood. Too rotten a mood to even take out on her twerpy, long-haired boyfriend like she usually did (he seemed to get off on getting screamed at and insulted by Sue Ellen when she was in a shit mood).

“Fuck that,” she said, tossing her phone back in the console.

She pulled out the card the weird guy had given her and looked at the handwritten address. She knew exactly where it was. It was a hotel only a few miles away from the Waffle House. She flipped the card over, but the reverse side was blank.

Sue Ellen blew air out in frustration, scratching her mousey hair. What she'd scored with her tits and ass, she definitely lacked in the hair department.

She looked down at the card again, thinking about that money. She could buy a whole lot of

wigs with that amount of cash...

“Two thousand smackeroots,” she said out loud to her reflection in the mirror. “Vegas, baby. Hard anal, interracial, and gangbangs!”

She didn't just watch porn; she researched it. Sure, she loved to watch bitches get their faces, pussies, and assholes split open and dominated by huge cocks. She gave herself orgasms watching that shit every day. But she'd also learned all about the financial aspect of porn by watching behind the scenes interviews on porn sites and reading all the articles she could find on the internet.

If you were willing to suck those huge black dicks you see in all interracial porn movies, you'd get paid considerably more than sucking white dicks. Even sucking big white dicks didn't pay as much as sucking regular sized black ones. And taking *any* dick in the ass paid better than regular vaginal porn. Extra if you were willing to do ass to mouth, which Sue Ellen had done plenty of times for free when she was wasted and fucking particularly inspired perverts. But taking black dicks up the ass paid almost the best of all. Better than any other type of legal porn besides gangbangs. That's where the real money was at. Gangbangs.

If you let a gang of dudes smash your holes then cum all over you, you could pull in two or three grand a week. And you could do that every single week if you were on the type of birth control that kept you from having a period.

“Twelve thousand bucks a month!” she said to her reflection, making kissy faces at herself. AND you get internet famous to boot. Sue Ellen followed plenty of porn stars on Twitter, their pervy fans sending them nasty tweets in an endless stream of debauchery.

That's the kind of attention Sue Ellen wanted. And that's the kind she'd get if only this fucking weirdo would show up! She checked the clock on her dashboard. Almost 6am. He wasn't coming. Her phone lit up again. Johnny Boy. She still wasn't in the mood to talk to him, but maybe...

She looked at the business card again, squinting at it, as if the right choice would suddenly appear in writing. Maybe if she asked the hotel desk clerk to call the little man's room, he'd be forced to meet her in the lobby and show his face to a witness. If he planned on ax murdering her in the room, he'd have to also kill the clerk and erase the security tapes.

Sue Ellen couldn't imagine how all that would be worth it just to kill a pretty young stripper. “Stripper about to be a famous porn star!” she shouted to no one.

“Fuck it!” she yelled, starting her car, screaming along with the metal music as she tore out of the parking lot and raced down the street, headed for the hotel.

It was nearly 6:30 when Sue Ellen sauntered into the hotel lobby. There were several guests checking out at the front desk. Blue collar types who used the local hotels when they had labor work to do, headed home now after a long week of work.

Their jaws dropped when they saw Sue Ellen walking in the door in all her stripper makeup and glitter, a metal band hoodie with no shirt or bra underneath, short shorts and knee-high stripper boots. She was used to getting gawked at by civilians. It made her wet.

Even as a teenager she'd loved showering with the other girls in the locker rooms at school. Even if they only stared because they were bitter and envious of her already curvy body, those eyes on her alone were almost enough to make her orgasm. That's how she'd ended up fucking around with her gym teacher.

One afternoon after the rest of the girls had already toweled off and gotten dressed, Sue Ellen had hung her towel back up and laid on the bench, masturbating, thinking about the prettiest, richest, cuntiest bitches in class talking shit about her in hushed tones. Calling her a slut, swapping stories about all the boys they knew from school who'd fucked her.

Right as she came, Mrs. Bottoms had walked into the room and caught her lying there, pussy dripping. The rest is Hopp's Hollow High urban legend that's managed to live on for damn near a decade.

Sue Ellen smirked at the memory as she pushed past the tan-faced grunts standing around the hotel counter. She wondered if they could smell her wet pussy as she dropped the card on the counter.

“Could you call room 237 for me and let the nice little man in there know his daughter is here to see him?” She smirked at the disbelief on the faces all around her. She loved fucking with men almost as much as she loved fucking them.

A few moments later the lobby elevator dinged and the squat little fellow waddled out. Sue Ellen ran up to him, knowing that the men in the lobby—still hanging hanging around even though they'd been checking out as she'd walked in the door—were staring at her jigglng ass as she ran.

“Daddy!” she yelled, wrapping her arms around his head, pressing her bra-less tits in his face. In his ear, as she spun him around, she whispered, “All these dudes just saw me with you and we're on camera. If you try to whack me up there, you're gonna have a lot of explaining to do, Mister.”

When she let him go, the dark man was wide-eyed, bewildered at the production she was putting on for the crowd. “May we go upstairs now?” he asked after she'd turned around and pulled her shorts up even further into the crack of her ass, asking, “Do you like my new shorts, daddy?”

As the elevator doors shut, she could practically see the men in the lobby panting. She loved being a chick.

Chapter 4

Sue Ellen slammed the hotel room door behind her. “Jeez, Mister. This room is fucking huge!” She dropped her purse in a chair and ran down the three small steps into the living room area of the hotel's master suite.

There was a huge sixty-five inch television screen on the easternmost wall, and two picture windows on the southern wall, which showed a grand view of the entire downtown area of Hopp's Hollow, including the waterfront and river. At this time of the morning, several barges lazily passed by, looking like miniature toy boats from her vantage point.

To the west and back up the small stairs, a king sized bed dominated the westernmost wall, with a bathroom wing to the north of that.

“Shall we discuss business then?”

“Listen, man,” Sue Ellen said in her best professional tone, which was laughable considering her high, squeaky voice. “I want the two thousand smackeroos up front, and I don't do freaky stuff!” She waved her finger at him in mock admonishment. “No animals, no kids. No blood shit. And no shit shit, either!” She shuddered, thinking of the one time she'd allowed a client to talk her into pooping on his chest. Never again.

“Whatever else you've got in mind—'cept killing me—I'm game.” She smiled slyly again and peeled the sweatshirt up over her head, tossing it at the little man.

He stepped out of its way and set twenty hundred dollar bills gently down on top of it. “I am not here to solicit sexual favors, my dear Lilith. I am here to make you a most... interesting offer.”

Sue Ellen furrowed her brow and put her hands on her hips, causing her sizable breasts to jiggle. “Huh?”

“Come, join me,” he motioned with his hand, sitting down on the small steps.

She did as he asked.

From his pocket, he pulled out an ornate golden box. The trim on the sides was smooth, polished onyx, and in its center was the most beautiful emerald beetle Sue Ellen had ever seen.

“Whoa!” she said. “Is that for me?” She reached out for the box, causing the little weirdo to laugh and pull it away.

“No no. Not the box, I'm afraid. But what's inside? Yes. Yes, it is indeed for you.” He unfastened the latch with his stubby fingers and threw back the lid.

“A bug?”

“Hmm?”

“It's a bug. You paid me two Gs to come up to your nice ass hotel room so you could give me a bug?”

Inside the box, a green beetle the size of a thumb lazily tried to climb its golden walls.

“This is no ordinary bug, Lilith.”

“Sue Ellen.”

“What?” the little man said, his train of thought broken.

“Lilith. My dear Lilith,” she said, mocking his accent and mannerisms. “If you gotta keep using my name like that, it's Sue Ellen. You're freaking me out with all this money and fancy stuff calling me by my stripper name.”

“Alright,” he said, flustered once again. “That's really not important. What is important is that you listen to the next part very carefully:

“This is a beetle. *Lucanus Cervus*, to be exact. A common beetle in Europe; but this particular *Lucanus Cervus* is very special. Would you like to know why?”

Is there more money in it for me? Sue Ellen thought.

The weird little man continued. “Many people died in order for this beetle to get here, into this box, in this hotel room, in my hands, in front of you, Sue Ellen.”

At least he's using my real name now. Sue Ellen scratched her arm and tried to appear focused, although she kept finding herself thinking about how incredibly big this guy's lips were. They smacked wetly when he talked. “Looks like any other buggy to me,” she said, tearing her eyes from his lips.

“There is great power inside of this 'buggy.' And soon there will be great power inside of you.”

“Look, man, I don't care how much you wanna pay me, you're not sticking that—”

“You're going to ingest it, Sue Ellen. You're going to eat this beetle and you're going to become Queen of the World.”

Sue Ellen blinked. “Come again?”

“Once the power is inside of you, you will rule over those who dwell beneath. Those who have been waiting for the stars to be right for countless aeons.”

Sue Ellen stood, sliding her hoodie back on over her bare chest, slipping the money into its wide front pocket. “So it's been cool and all, but my boyfriend's really worried about where I am and I told him I'd be home soon, so—”

“Sit down, child!” the little man yelled, with more command than Sue Ellen thought could come out of his tiny body.

She dropped back down to the steps, bouncing onto her plump rear as if she'd been scolded by her middle school principal.

“You are not yet prepared for this responsibility. But in time, you shall grow into a great ruler. Those Of Us Who Have Bled have seen it in prophecy.”

Was this really happening? Sue Ellen had never been spoken to like this in her real life. Sure she had fantasies about becoming a queen all the time, but she had absolutely no idea how to process what was being said to her as anything other than some really creepy way to get into her pants.

“I'm not fucking you, dude. Just so we're clear on that. You can call me the queen of your world all you want to. But you're not my type.” She crossed her arms and then added. “I'm not

giving you the money back, either.”

“Money shall hold no value in the new world. Those Of Us Who Have Bled have—”

“Seen it in prophecy, yeah yeah. So what? You really just want me to eat that bug and then you'll let me go home with the two thousand bucks?”

“Yes.”

Sue Ellen snatched the beetle up by its abdomen and popped it into her mouth, chewing noisily. It tasted like shit, but once you've had to eat your stepdad's spunk, nothing really tastes that bad anymore.

The little man leaped up, dropping the box on the ground. His eyes were wide. Were his hands shaking? “How do you feel?” he said, nearly breathless.

“Like I've got bug guts in my teeth. Can I go home now?”

“In time, my dear. In time. We must complete the ritual before it's too late!”

“Aw, this really is starting to sound like some weird sex shit. Look, man, if you give me another...” Sue Ellen thought for a second, “thousand bucks, I'll suck your dick. But that's it. OK?”

The little man scurried up the steps to the bedroom area and discarded his clothes.

Sue Ellen craned her neck around trying to get a look at his junk and see what she was up against. She loved sucking dick, but this twerp was sweaty and probably smelled...

She couldn't see his dick, but what she did see grossed her out even more: His entire body, from the top of his wrists to the bottoms of his ankles, was covered in scars. He looked like he'd been attacked by a weed whacker, or had been on the losing end of a thousand knife fights.

Some of the scars on his back even formed intricate circles with symbols all around them and inside of them. He was a real kinkster. The kind of creepazoid Sue Ellen liked to avoid.

Once she'd dated a guy who liked to put hooks in his chest and make her bite his dick while he hung from the ceiling. She fucked his brother and stole all the money he'd kept in a shoe box in his closet the first chance she got. She hated weirdos.

The little cultist hastily pulled on purple and green robes, then placed a hat on his head that had beetle mandibles jutting up from the top and looked the same as the bug she'd just eaten.

She decided to humor him. *What the fuck*, she thought. *All I've got waiting for me at home is a hungry cat and a boyfriend that wants me to tell him about fucking other dudes.*

“So why am I so special, huh? Why do I get to be the Queen of the Beetle People? Why not some rich girl or someone important? Who am I?”

As he stepped down into the living room area, once again he spoke. “Who are you? Oh, my dear. You are no one of any consequence. You are but the vessel for our queen. Your meat-life will bring her glorious essence to this dimension!” With that, he unsheathed a long ornate blade covered in the same kinds of symbols as those carved into his body.

Sue Ellen screamed and held her arms out in front of her in a Karate stance. “I know martial arts, motherfucker! I'll fuck you the fuck up!” Her bluff lasted for less than a second before she turned around and ran for the door. Her big stripper boots slid on the linoleum floor, causing her to cartwheel her arms and pitch forward, slamming into the door instead of opening it.

She might not know martial arts, but she wasn't about to let this sicko carve her up into a Christmas turkey. What balls he had—after the show she put on in the lobby, there's no way he could get away with murdering her.

Some dudes are just stubborn when they wanna stick a bitch, I guess, she thought.

Dazed, head swimming, she spun around and threw a kick.

The robed figure was right on top of her. Her leg connected with a resounding thump.

“Back off, jack off!” Sue Ellen yelled, hoping someone in the hallway might hear her.

The little man's eyes went wide. He staggered backward, blood pouring from his big ugly lips.

“W-what... have... you done!”

The huge knife stuck out of his stomach at an odd angle.

“You were gonna bleed me out!”

“We... WE are The Ones Who Bleed, you idiot!” He dropped to his knees, shuddering, his face completely pale from blood loss. “The ritual...” he mumbled, falling down the steps onto his back. A huge pool of blood leaked out onto the carpeted floor.

Sue Ellen took an unsure step forward. “Y-you weren't trying to kill me?”

The little man looked up to her, the life fading from his eyes. “You've ruined everything.” With one final retching, blood-splattering cough, the little weirdo died.

“Uh. Hello? WHAT THE FUCK!”

Sue Ellen stood there for a moment in shock. Everything had happened so fast. Her heart hammered in her chest as she realized she'd just killed someone.

It was self defense! He came at me with a knife! She imagined telling the cops, sobbing crocodile tears, maybe showing some cleavage if the officer seemed into her.

Yeah, fuck that. She'd had enough run-ins with the Pigs to know that shit never went her way when the boys in motherfucking blue were around. She had to book it out of there, and fast.

Suddenly her little stunt in the lobby seemed like the worst decision ever now that her squat companion was heels up and deader than a doornail.

“Stupid stupid stupid!” she said, running for the door. Vegas was her only hope. Get in the car and just drive. Cut her hair, buy a fake ID. Maybe get a fucking nose job with the cash from her first interracial gang bang.

She pulled her hoodie sleeve down over her hand and went to open the door, then thought better of it. She scampered back across the room, down the stairs, tiptoeing around the corpse so as not to get blood all over her stripper boots.

She ran up to the bedroom portion of the room, dug into the creep's pants and pulled out his wallet. He had another grand in hundreds stashed inside.

“Smart bitch,” she said to herself, grinning. With that, she sped out the door as fast as she could, taking the stairs down to a back entrance. She put her hood up, walking as casually as she could to her car, doing her best not to look like a murderer.

Chapter 5

“Fucking fuck!” Sue Ellen swore to herself, nervously tapping on her steering wheel. A cop car was behind her at the stoplight. All the weed and metal band stickers plastered across her back bumper and window made her car a beacon for cops. She got pulled over and searched all the time; almost once a month. Hopp's Hollow cops were such dicks.

The light turned green. Sue Ellen pushed the gas and accelerated as slowly as possible as to not draw attention to herself, probably drawing attention to herself in the process. But then she saw the left blinker switch on as the car turned at the intersection.

She blew out a sigh of relief and returned to the task at hand.

The plan was to swing by her crappy ghetto apartment, grab a bagful of essentials, and then get the fuck outta dodge before anyone at the hotel had a chance to find the creepazoid's body. It was 7 am when she pulled into her complex parking lot. Check out was at 11am if Mr. Bleeds For You (or whatever the fuck he'd called himself) had only rented the room for one night. That gave her four hours to get out of Hopp's Hollow before anyone would even begin checking security tapes and registration to figure out who'd gutted the fat little fuck like a stuffed pig.

“You ruined everything!”

Sue Ellen shuddered at the memory as she slammed her apartment door, threw her stripper bag in the middle of the floor, and collapsed on her dirty futon mattress, exhausted.

Her limbs felt as heavy as concrete blocks. She felt herself drifting into an uneasy sleep when her phone went off again, snapping her back to reality.

“Don't you fucking pass out now, bitch!” she said aloud. That was all she needed; to go into a twelve hour post-stripper shift coma and wake up with the gestapo banging on her door.

She pulled her phone out of her hoodie pocket along with the huge wad of hundred dollar bills. The sight of the money made her smile.

She checked her messages.

Johnny Boy: *Babes, are you home yet? I can't wait to hear about your night. I'm soooo*

horny. I hope you sucked a big fat cock like last week!

Sue Ellen sighed, dropping the phone to her filthy glass coffee table. There were scratch marks all over the surface from where her last boyfriend had used razors to cut up his heroin.

Her eyelids drooped again, and she realized that maybe some dirty talk and a good fingerbang was exactly what she needed. She wanted a cool head when she packed so she wouldn't forget anything vital, and she didn't want Johnny Boy to suspect anything was weird.

Nodding in agreement with herself, she slid off her booty shorts and picked her phone back up.

Sue Ellen: *Sorry baby, long night. I'm actually about to suck some dick right now. Lol*

Johnny Boy: *Oh shit. Did you let some pervert pick you up at the club?*

Sue Ellen: *Ya*

Johnny Boy: *And you're with him right now?*

Sue Ellen: *Yup*

Johnny Boy didn't care if the stories she told him were real or made up. He just loved hearing her talk about getting fucked by other dudes. He liked to jack off while she licked his nipples and told him about taking dicks in her ass. He liked to ask her how many times she'd cheated on him while he plowed her from behind. The more raunchy her answers got, the harder he'd fuck her.

At first, she was kind of turned off by his cuckold fetish, but the more she talked to him, the hornier he got, and eventually she got used to it. Hey, telling some pervert fuck about deepthroating complete strangers was way better than getting the shit beat out of you by junkies and alcoholics, which is all she'd dated before running into Johnny Boy at a metal concert last year.

Johnny Boy: *Did you pull your tits out yet?*

Sue Ellen: *Nope. He just gave me a beer. He's nervous. Lol he knows he's about to get his dick sucked...*

Johnny Boy: *Fuck. Will you snap a picture for me when he puts it in your mouth?*

Sue Ellen: *Battery's low babe. I left my charger at home. I'll text you when he grows some balls and whips his dick out though. Lol*

Lying to him was way sexier than breaking the mood and telling him that she was really just masturbating on her couch. But if she actually had been with a guy, she would have totally taken pictures. She'd taken plenty pictures of guys fucking her for Johnny Boy before.

The best was the time she let three of his friends jack off on her face the night before his birthday. They'd passed her phone around, cumming all over her and then wishing him a happy birthday before handing it off to the next one. That was epic. Johnny had fucked her like a prize stallion for a month after that little present.

She slid her hand down between her legs and tried to remember that night as vividly as she could, pressing two fingers against her moist clit. She still had the video on her phone if she really wanted to watch it, but she preferred re-living the experience in her mind.

Pulling her hoodie up over her tits so she could tweak her nipples, she remembered gazing up in all three of their faces while they jacked their dicks off right in front of her.

They all had beetle heads.

Sue Ellen's eyes shot open. "What the fuck!"

Johnny Boy: *Ohh yeah, baby. You should just take your clothes off and see what he does. lol Tell me if he's got a big cock, too.*

Sue Ellen sat up, shaking her head. She must have still been shaken from killing the weird little troll man.

"WE are the ones who bleed, you idiot!"

How was she supposed to know he wanted her to cut him with the knife? He could have been more specific with the kind of kinkery he'd wanted her to do. What the fuck was he thinking,

waving a knife around like that? Serves him right he got stuck, pulling a blade on a stranger...

She got up off the couch and went into her bedroom to load a bong. She was far too sober to relax, and she couldn't get a proper orgasm going unless she was relaxed.

That's when the headache hit her.

Right behind both eyes, it came on like a lightning bolt ripping from the left side to the right side, powerful enough to send her to the floor in a crumpled heap.

Sue Ellen cried out, hands up at her temples. She couldn't think, couldn't breathe. It hurt so bad she thought she was going to pee herself.

And THAT'S when the whispering started.

She couldn't understand what it said, the pain was too much. She wouldn't have been able to understand a person standing right next to her screaming in her ear. And then, just as fast as it came on, it was over.

“What the fuck was that!” Sue Ellen screamed, rolling over to her back. She was panting. She'd broken out in a cold sweat. A dull ache came over her whole body.

Did I just have a stroke? she thought. Even thinking hurt.

She kicked the door closed with her foot. It was pitch black in her room; her windows were completely blacked out with My Little Pony and Rainbow Brite blankets. She felt her way to her bed and crawled inside, throwing the thick comforter and several pillows over her head.

She was out cold within a minute. She stayed just like that, not moving an inch—until the cops came banging at her door.

Chapter 6

Sue Ellen sat up in bed, screaming. She'd dreamed that two human-sized beetles dressed as cops busted down her door and double-teamed her on her living room floor while the fat little man in robes chanted over her, spurting blood from the huge gash in his stomach.

BANG BANG BANG!

“Open up, ma'am. We hear you in there. We will break the door down if we have to.”

“Oh, fuck no!” Sue Ellen yelled, panic hitting her like a train. How long had she been out? Hours? FUCK! She'd blown her chance to flee to Vegas. She was about to go to jail for murder!

She jumped out of bed and ran in circles around her bedroom, tripping over the gigantic piles of stripper clothes strewn around and on top of every flat surface in the room.

“You have thirty seconds, ma'am! Then we're coming in!”

“Just wait a fucking second!” she screamed through the closed bedroom door.

Her head was pounding. The headache was back, but not nearly as intense. And thankfully the whispering hadn't returned...

What the fuck was she going to say to the cops? Self defense? Was that really her strongest play? She only had a few more seconds to get her story straight.

FUCK! They were going to take her to jail for sure. Johnny Boy didn't have any fucking cash to bail her out. Then she remembered the money she'd stolen off the little creep. YES!

Sue Ellen scrambled into the living room.

“Last chance!” the cop outside yelled.

“I'm naked!” she screamed back. “Let me put some clothes on! FUCK!”

Scooping the handfuls of hundreds out of her purse, she stuffed them into the bottom of a fake potted plant that sat against the sliding glass door that led to her balcony. She'd text Johnny Boy on the way to the cop shop and have him come by her apartment to grab her cash. He wasn't like her ex—he wouldn't steal it or blow it on dope.

Naked. *That's a great idea*, she thought, peeling off her hoodie, leaving herself butt naked.

Maybe there was still a chance she could avoid jail. She just hoped the cops were perverts. She swung the door open, grinning slyly.

Fuck. One was old, the other was a chick (a really cute blonde chick, at that).

She was screwed.

“What can I, uh, do for you... officers?” Suddenly she felt really awkward and slightly stupid.

“Could we come in, ma'am? We'd like to ask you a few questions,” the old cop said. He barely had any hair on his head, and what was there was completely gray. He probably hadn't had a boner in twenty years! How the fuck did he still have a job? Didn't they make pigs retire or something? That's what they were always doing in the movies right before they died; getting ready to retire.

“Please put some clothes on,” the little blonde said. Jesus Christ. Her hair looked like straw. She had it pulled back into a tight pony tail that was just screaming for some guy to use as a handle while he gag-fucked her spoiled daddy's girl face...

Even if she is a dyke, Sue Ellen thought, she hasn't broken eye contact with me for a second. No way I'm fucking my way out of this one.

“Uh, yeah. Yeah, come on in, I guess.” Sue Ellen stepped out of the way and let the cops in. As she shut the door, she covered her tits with her hands, feeling cold.

“Have you ever seen this man?” The old cop pulled out his phone and showed her a picture of the fat little troll.

I'm gonna get the fucking death penalty! Sue Ellen screamed in her head. Out loud, she uttered, “N-no sir. Never.”

“His Name is Grett Brossman, and he was killed a little over five hours ago,” the blonde said.

She'd been out for four hours? Stupid! If she'd just driven straight to Vegas she wouldn't be totally fucked right now. Her head was still pounding. She realized she was squinting against the daylight coming in through the windows.

The blonde continued. “We have closed circuit video of the two of you together just minutes before the estimated time of death. You really should put some clothes on.”

That's when the stomach cramps hit her. She let out a loud OOF and collapsed to the floor in front of the door.

“Ma'am, please stand up,” the old cop said. “We'd like to take you down to the station to ask you a few more questions.”

The whispers had returned. Her head felt like it was about to pop. Sue Ellen reached up and grabbed her forehead, then thought better of it and grabbed her stomach again. What was happening down there? It felt like a million insects were trying to crawl their way out.

“Ma'am, please stop.” The blonde knelt down and put her hand on Sue Ellen's shoulder. “You're only going to make things worse for yourself.”

Sue Ellen grabbed the blonde's shirt and screamed in the cop's face. Her eyes had gone bloodshot and she was foaming at the mouth.

The blonde fell back on her ass and pulled out her taser. “We've got an OD! Call for paramedics!”

Sue Ellen's back arched, and her arms locked in weird angles. She convulsed like she was possessed. The whispering became so loud in her brain she couldn't form a single thought. She was completely lost to whatever was happening to her.

The old cop backed up against the wall. He yelled into the radio attached to his shoulder for backup as the blonde cop scrambled back to her feet.

Sue Ellen was flopping forward and clawing at her own face to try to relieve the pressure in her head when it happened.

She puked a deluge of beetles onto the blonde's shoes.

Shrieking, the cop hopped up and down, trying to kick the beetles away, but they kept streaming out of Sue Ellen's mouth. An impossible number of insects. There was no medical way possible she could have eaten that many bugs and lived. And every one of them was running straight toward the female cop.

Blinking his eyes and shaking his head in disbelief, the old cop stood shocked, his mouth forming an O as the beetles continued charging up the blonde's pant legs, over her uniform, up under her shirt, onto her face and down her arms.

She wailed incoherently as she ripped her clothes off. Welts and spots of blood were already forming all over her body as the insects bit and scratched her. She did plenty of damage with her own nails after she'd stripped down to her bra and panties.

The beetles continued to emerge in thick numbers from Sue Ellen's mouth as the blonde cop collapsed under the weight of the army of insects.

The old cop started crying loudly as the writhing, pulsating pile of bugs ejected a bloody skeleton, still shaking and twitching from its flesh being consumed so quickly. But it was when he turned to look at Sue Ellen that he seized up and clutched his chest, his face turning white as paper.

For her part, Sue Ellen had made it up to her knees after the insects stopped pouring out of her mouth. The pain in her stomach had subsided, but the pounding in her head had increased tenfold.

It felt like her brain was trying to burst out of the top of her head. She reached up and touched the spot. When the next jolt of pain hit she actually felt a thump—*from inside of her head*.

Shrieking, she clawed at the spot, ripping the hair off in handfuls.

Another blow came from inside her head.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

CRACK!

A geyser of blood erupted from the top of her head, showering the old cop (who, by now, had slid down the wall and lay on the ground in the fetal position, grunting in pain through clenched teeth, eyes still wide and locked on the naked stripper in front of him).

Sue Ellen peeled back her own skull, relieving the last of the immense pressure as a pair of footlong pincers grew up out of her brain. She strained her eyes upward to see what her hands were feeling as the rest of the beetle head emerged from her own, until the bulk of the thing—eyes, mouth and all—came to a rest, jutting a foot and a half out of her skull.

That's when the cop died.

That's when the whispering finally stopped.

And that's when the world outside exploded.

Chapter 7

It felt like a series of earthquakes, but Sue Ellen had never heard of earthquakes in Hopp's Hollow before.

She scrambled to her bare feet, swaying back and forth as she acclimated to the extra weight on her head, careful not to step on the thousands of tiny beetles still running around her apartment after they'd devoured the blonde cop's flesh. She ran to the window after the first three or four quakes. She heard car alarms and shouting on the streets.

Ripping the curtains open, she gasped at what she saw.

Beetles. Beetles everywhere.

A long, chaotic line of cars stalled in every direction, their drivers honking at each other as the gridlock was smashed apart by three rhinoceros-sized beetles galloping through the streets, smashing vehicles into one another, flinging them onto the tops of others, and stomping them totally flat, leaving leaking fluids and mangled bodies in their wake.

Surviving drivers fled into the bloodied streets, only to be chased down and dismembered before Sue Ellen's eyes.

A terrified young couple ran through the middle of the street below Sue Ellen's third floor apartment as two dog-sized beetles gave chase. The male tripped on the curb, falling on his face. His female partner stopped and grabbed at his shoulders trying to yank him back to his feet, but he was clearly bleeding from the mouth and nose, dazed from busting his head on the concrete.

Seconds later, the beetles were on him, tearing into his stomach, slicing right through his flailing limbs with their elongated mandibles extending at least two feet from their hungry, squirming mouths. A wet spot appeared on the seat of the female's white shorts. She pissed herself and scrambled away, eyes blank from shock as she ran, blindly impaling herself on the mandible of an even bigger beetle, easily the size of a compact car. The beetle flicked its head back, slicing the piss-soaked woman in half before greedily devouring her bottom half as her top half feebly crawled away, leaving a red smear of entrails in her wake.

Boom!

Boom!

More quakes.

Tearing her eyes away from the carnage, Sue Ellen was drawn to the rooftop of a nearby building where a group of people with brooms, small caliber fire arms and other household items tried to fend off a dozen of the dog-sized beetles that had busted through their makeshift barrier at the rooftop entrance.

They were doing fairly well—shouting directions to one another, herding the insects into a single-file line, then knocking the advancing bugs off the roof one by one—when another swarm of beetles broke through the roof from the floor below, attacking from the side opposite the other beetles.

The second wave of bugs proved to be too much and the surviving people chose to leap off the roof to their deaths rather than be eaten alive by the insects.

Boom!

Another earthquake. The quakes were too irregular in frequency to be natural; but *something* was causing the earth to violently shake. A moment later, Sue Ellen understood their cause.

A huge beetle the size of a one-story house lumbered through the streets, smashing holes into buildings—

Boom!

Boom!

—devouring anyone unlucky enough to be standing inside. Smaller beetles swarmed off its back into the buildings to finish off anyone the larger beetle failed to draw into its mouth with its mandibles.

But the gargantuan insect wasn't what drew the hysterical scream out of Sue Ellen's mouth—the shadow it cast on her window allowed Sue Ellen to see her own reflection. It allowed her to see for the first time the beetle head sticking out of the top of her brain.

Instinctively, she reached up and grabbed at the mandibles jutting straight up from her head, trying to yank the beetle free. All she got in return was two slashed up palms when the razor-sharp mandibles closed, cutting up her hands.

She pulled them away, staring in horror as the mouth-parts of the beetle gobbled up the drops of blood running down its mandibles. It was alive. The beetle was alive inside of her brain. And somehow so was she.

Sue Ellen retched, her stomach roiling at the huge insect embedded inside of her head, but thought better of actually puking; that hadn't gone well last time. She didn't want to go through yacking up an army of little bugs again.

Jesus! What a nightmare! she thought, trying desperately to keep her wits about her. But she'd never had a nightmare this vivid. Never felt pain in a dream. Never tasted bile after puking. She knew as she tried to make sense of the bizarre scene before her that she wasn't dreaming. This was real. This was a living nightmare.

Boom!

Boom!

Sue Ellen's apartment shook hard enough to rattle the glass in her window. The giant bug was getting closer. It had turned south only a block north of her building. She would soon find herself one of the hapless people devoured by its massive jaws if she didn't make a run for it.

“Uh, uh...” she stammered, turning around in circles.

It was all too much to process. A few hours ago, her biggest problem was how she was going to shit today after being fucked in the ass for money last night. Typically after a good anal pounding, she had to gobble up a half a box of laxatives to get her poop chute working again.

But now? Now there were dead cultists, beetle-eaten cops, bugs growing out of her head and

the fucking end of the world happening outside of her apartment.

And Sue Ellen was still naked.

“Clothes!” she yelled out loud, finally focusing on the task at hand. “I need to put clothes on. Grab cash. My phone—”

Her phone! Johnny Boy! She needed to get to Johnny Boy. He'd know what to do.

Snatching her phone up off the counter she checked her messages.

Johnny Boy: *Baby? Baby are you there? Oh god, I hope you're sucking that dude's dick right now. Fuck! I'm gonna cum just thinking about you taking a stranger's cock down your throat.*

Johnny Boy: *Sue Ellen? Are you watching the news? Something weird is going on...*

Johnny Boy: ***BABY ANSWER YOUR GODDAMN PHONE! BUGS ARE EVERYWHERE! THEY'RE TRYING TO EAT THEIR WAY INTO MY MOM'S HOUSE!***

Johnny Boy: *Why won't you answer? Please be ok. I'm hurt. I feel sick. They got my legs, baby... I think I'm gonna die...*

That was the last message. Sue Ellen started to cry. “Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!”

She didn't have any other friends. She either spent her time at home sleeping and getting high, at Johnny's mom's eating her food and watching movies, or at the club making money.

All the other strippers were coke heads, on smack or both. Not that she gave a fuck; she'd done her fair share of blow and heroin (for free, of course). But she never invited the other strippers to her house because they'd just steal her shit or case the joint for their thug boyfriends to rob while she was working.

Sue Ellen was on her own.

She took a deep breath, nodded, and turned toward her bedroom to get some clothes.

That's when the giant beetle smashed through her front window into her living room.

Chapter 8

The impact of the shattering glass threw Sue Ellen onto the couch. The beetle roared, causing Sue Ellen to reflexively reach up and cover her ears. It sounded like an awful mix between an elephant and a chainsaw. The sound was deafening in the small space.

It flung its head upward, turning her ceiling and the floor of the apartment above hers into rubble in an instant. The bodies of her neighbors—a punk couple living on food stamps and booze—cartwheeled down into her apartment like toy action figures.

Climbing up into the apartment with one of its forelimbs, the massive beetle crushed the floor, sending the punks, the bodies of the dead cops, and all of Sue Ellen's furniture cascading toward the bug's expansive maw. Its hypopharynx sucked and slurped like a vacuum as its lacinia and maxillary paps sifted through the debris in search of fresh meat.

The skeletal remains of the female cop hit its mouth first. The gigantic insect swallowed it in one gulp. The dead body of the old cop was next, ripped apart with the razor edges of the beetle's sword-length lacinia before disappearing down its humongous throat.

Sue Ellen yelped as the couch slammed against her chairs and entertainment center. The furniture had bunched up and created a semi-barrier against what was left of the outer wall of her apartment, stopping Sue Ellen from sliding any further toward the bug's mouth.

The male punk—pink Mohawk laying flat, obscuring most of his face—scrambled up her floor and grabbed onto the arm of the couch, nearly yanking it back into the open, causing it to slide another foot toward the bug.

“Help, lady! Fuckin' HELP ME!”

He was pawing at her ankle, trying to get a better hold, all the while pulling the sofa that much further away from the furniture keeping it stuck in place. If he kept at it, he was going to get them both eaten.

So she kicked him in the face.

His eyes went all wide with surprise as a red mark appeared on his forehead where Sue

Ellen's bare heel struck. "You fucking bitch! Why would you do that?"

Sue Ellen yelled again and kicked him in the mouth, nearly losing her balance.

"Stop kicking him, whore!" the punk's girlfriend yelled from further down the massively sloped living room floor. She hung onto a lamp that was plugged into the jumble of extension cords and strip plugs that had been behind the entertainment center that now held the couch from falling into the bug's jaws. The punk girl reached up, grunting and straining, and pulled herself toward her husband. "Fucking help him!"

The male punk reached out again, this time getting a hold of Sue Ellen's ankle, pulling himself a little further onto the couch. In the process, he almost completely dislodged it from the pile of furniture. If he came any higher, the whole thing was going into the beetle's mouth.

Sue Ellen's grip on the sofa's arm was failing. She was about to tumble down the floor when she turned over and screamed, "Die, die die!" and kicked the punk in the nose over and over again with her free leg. Sue Ellen felt a painful tug. She looked down to find her toe caught in his overly large septum ring.

He let go of her ankle and grabbed his nose, shrieking in pain.

Below him, his girlfriend climbed further up the lamp, careful to not pull the cord loose from the electrical strip. "Hold on, baby! I'm almost there!"

Sue Ellen winced in pain. If she wasn't pulled off the couch, she was going to lose her toe. Her palms were sweating so bad, her grip was slipping. With one final yank, she heard a sick tearing noise, and was sure she was one digit light. When she forced herself to open her eyes and look down, her toe was still attached to her foot—along with a ring, and part of a nose.

Crying out, the punk tumbled backwards end over end, blood gushing from his face where his nose ring had ripped free. He fell directly into the beetle's mouth.

Sue Ellen scrambled back up the couch and gagged as she peeled the gory jewelry off her toe. "Grosssss!" She tossed the bloody ring, watching as it bounced off the rubble of her living room, past the giant bug, and out the broken window.

As for the ring's owner, he hadn't made it very far down the monstrous beetle's throat. Sue Ellen could still hear him screaming as his girlfriend wailed curses in her direction from below.

"I'll fucking kill you, bitch! You fucking CUNT!"

The punk woman's teeth were bared as she pulled herself further up the lamp, now almost within reach of the far end of the couch. If she reached it, she would for sure pull them both to their deaths.

That's when the cord snapped, sending the blue-haired punk spiraling downward.

She clawed at the hardwood floor, frothing at the mouth, desperate to find a grip and save herself from certain death.

No such luck.

Landing with a thud, the punk was quickly sliced in half by the bug's paraglossa. Still screaming, her upper half clawed at its labial palps as they pushed her bloody torso into its mouth. Her boyfriend's screams faded away as both punks were finally swallowed, leaving Sue Ellen alone in the ruined apartment with the huge insect on a couch that was about to slide directly toward its deadly maw.

The giant beetle roared, shaking the building, knocking loose the last of the perilously balanced furniture keeping Sue Ellen out of harm's way.

"No, no, no, no!" She scrambled up the couch, reflexively as it began its slide toward the insect's waiting pincers. There was nowhere for her to go, but she leaped off the highest point anyway, flailing her arms in the air in the desperate hopes that they would grasp onto something, anything.

And then she closed her eyes as she began to fall to her death. Her body tensed as images of herself being sliced to bits flashed before her eyes. Her dying thought? That she hoped she'd at least

be dead before her body made its way to those angry punks down in the beetle's stomach.

But she didn't fall any farther. She didn't get eaten by the giant bug. Sue Ellen opened her eyes, astonished. She'd jumped just far enough off the couch for her head to reach the ceiling fan. She hung there, stupefied for a moment before she realized what was happening. The beetle growing out of her brain had clamped onto a fan blade with its mandibles.

Sue Ellen stared up at the beetle brain in disbelief. Below her, the giant beast roared again, slamming its huge mandibles against what was left of the floor, causing the entire building to rumble and shake.

The whole mess threatened to come down around them.

That's when the ceiling fan broke loose from its mooring. Sue Ellen yelped as she fell another foot toward the mammoth insect's jaws. The wiring caught, jolting her, but held steady; for the moment.

"You could be a little more help!" Sue Ellen yelled up to the beetle jutting out of her skull.

Several of the wires keeping her attached to the ceiling popped, dropping her another six inches. In another moment, she'd be bug food.

"You could always tell it to go away," a voice said. It was polite. Male. And British.

Sue Ellen looked around, dumbfounded. There was no one left in her apartment, alive nor dead. The big beetle had eaten them all.

Another wire popped.

"W-what? Hello? Is somebody there?"

"I'm very much here, Sue Ellen. You don't have to shout."

That's when she realized the voice wasn't coming from her demolished living room. It was coming from inside her head.

"Who, who the fuck are you? What are you doing in my mind?!"

"We really don't have time for this right now. The big bastard won't stop until he's eaten you unless you ask him politely to go away. He's big and loud, but he's a softie once you get to know him."

The second to last wire popped.

"I'd tell him myself, but as you can see, my mouth is a tad bit occupied right now."

That's when Sue Ellen realized the voice in her head belonged to the beetle bursting out of it. She reached up and punched it as hard as she could.

"Get the fuck outta my head!"

"Sue Ellen, please. This is no time to get emotional. We are indeed in great peril!"

Sue Ellen punched the beetle again, this time with both fists. She flailed at it like a baby throwing a tantrum at bed time.

"Get. The. Fuck. OUTTTTT!!!"

That's when the gunfire started.

From down below the giant insect, people were shouting. Some kind of bomb went off. Then, what must have been a missile exploded on the side of the big beetle's head, knocking it off balance. It roared and tried to pull itself free of Sue Ellen's apartment. Great torrents of white bug juice gushed from its side as it dragged itself out of the hole it had created. In the process, the entire building began to shake as the last of its structural integrity gave way, having nothing left to hold itself up without the giant beetle to lean on.

The walls quaked as Sue Ellen flailed around on the ceiling fan, screaming her head off.

If the beetle in her brain had still been trying to speak to her, she hadn't heard it. As the walls came down in a plume of smoke, the final wire gave way, and Sue Ellen fell into the smoky blackness, still naked, still punching the insect in her head the entire way.

Chapter 9

Sue Ellen opened her eyes. Relief washed over her.

That was the goddamn WORST nightmare I've ever had in my whole LIFE! she thought.

"No more meeting clients after work. Ain't no amount of money worth all this stress," she said to herself as she tried to crawl out of bed.

But Sue Ellen wasn't in bed. She was laying in darkness alright, but not tucked safely in her bed at home. Her home was, in fact, laying on top of her.

She realized this when she reached up to grab her aching head, only to feel the slick hardness of the insectoid pincers jutting up out of where her forehead had been.

She screamed and started punching it again.

She didn't stop until she heard a faint human voice. It sounded like it came from miles away. She couldn't quite make out the words.

"Get me outta here!" she screamed, trying to move. She was somehow unharmed outside of some fairly significant bumps and bruises, and seemed to have full use of her limbs. She hadn't been crushed in the fall, but she was trapped under the rubble of her apartment building.

Still unable to make out the muffled voice above, Sue Ellen ceased punching the insect in her head and instead began pounding the concrete slab laying a few inches above her.

"HEEEELP! HELP MEEEE!"

She stopped hitting the slab and listened. Her own heavy breathing and heartbeat slamming into her chest was all she heard.

Then a noise.

A grinding, shifting of weight above her.

She held her breath.

"Somebody down there?"

The voice was still muffled, but more pronounced than last time.

Sue Ellen's thrashing and screaming increased tenfold as she smacked her hands against the

concrete above her until her hands were numb.

“GET ME THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!”

And then there was light. Sue Ellen covered her eyes as the slab above her was pulled away.

“Jesus, lady, are you ok? I thought I heard some banging and—”

Sue Ellen crawled out of the hole, stopping her rescuer mid-sentence when he saw her naked body. Bruised and battered, but still strikingly beautiful in its full nudity.

“Wow!”

The rescuer was a kid—maybe twenty—with a dirty blonde flop of hair on his head, slick with sweat from exertion.

He nearly swallowed his tongue when Sue Ellen stood up. He gulped several times, trying to find his voice. Finally he said, “Th-the guys aren't gonna believe what I found out here! W-we thought the bugs got everybody! I was just out here looking for food!”

His eyes wavered from her tits long enough to peer down at her flat stomach and shaved groin.

Sue Ellen looked around. Her entire block and three blocks beyond that were demolished. Corpses and dead beetles lay strewn all around the smoking ruin of downtown Hopp's Hollow. Nothing recognizable remained standing. Her entire neighborhood existed now as gray and brown and black rubble.

And at the center of it all lay the carcass of the giant beetle that had so recently destroyed her apartment and eaten everyone inside.

“Where are the others?” Sue Ellen asked, realizing just how hungry, thirsty and exhausted she was. She needed somewhere safe to lay down, and this horny kid was just the kind of luck she needed.

“Oh, we're holed up inside the body of that huge bug,” the blonde kid said, pointing behind him. “I hooked up with some real cool dudes who had a bunch of weapons and food and all kinds of ___”

He stopped talking.

Sue Ellen looked away from the dead bug and realized why. The kid had finally peeled his eyes away from her tits. He was staring at her head.

“C'mon, let's get over there before more of those things show up,” she said quickly, trying to distract him from the insect jutting up from her head.

“W-whaa?” was all he could stammer out as he took a step backward. His finger slowly lifting up, pointing at the deformation.

“What, this? Oh, it's nothing. It, uh, it happened when my apartment fell. I'm fine, though. Really. Your friends can take a look at it and see if they can pull the fucking thing out of my head.” She flicked it offhandedly and made a silly face, as though the beetle comprising of more than half of the entire mass of her head was just some minor inconvenience, like a hangnail or an errant eyelash.

The kid's mouth fell open.

The beetle in Sue Ellen's head flexed its jaws and made loud clicking sounds with its mouth parts.

The kid stumbled and fell down, got up, and ran in random zigzags, as though changing directions would somehow get him away from Sue Ellen faster. He continued running, managing to fall over himself several more times before leaping back to his feet and screaming until a pack of dog-sized beetles burrowed up from under a collapsed storefront and tore him to pieces, eating him alive.

“Fuck!” Sue Ellen screamed. “FUCK FUCK FUCK!”

She started punching the beetle in her head again.

“Sue Ellen, this is not productive...”

The beetle was talking to her inside of her head again, still using that polite British voice.

This served only to intensify her fury. She ran over to the slab that the blonde kid had pulled off of her and started bashing her head against it.

“GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT!”

“Ma'am, if I may, you're not going to accomplish anything with this behavior.”

“BUGS DON'T TALK!” she screamed. Bracing herself, she redoubled her headbanging until the thud of the beetle's carapace against the concrete echoed off of the ruined buildings all around her.

She didn't stop slamming her head until she heard gunfire coming from behind the dead body of the giant beetle a block away.

She put her hands on her hips and scrunched her mouth up in concentration. After a minute, she turned around and scanned the rubble of her apartment. Spotting what she needed, she scooped up a blue dress from a smashed pile of wood and splinters that had once been her dresser.

Ripping the dress down the middle, she took the widened fabric and wrapped it around her head, concealing the beetle sticking out of it.

With that, she took off walking toward the sound of the gunshots and shouting men.

Still completely naked.

Chapter 10

Jackson steadied himself against the wide-open jaws of the dead behemoth beetle.

“Steady! Wait!” He held his arm out, signaling his men to hold their fire.

The beetles screeched and charged at the small group using the dead giant beetle as shelter.

There were nine. Only nine people had survived the initial surprise attack by the legion of killer beetles. When it started, Jackson had rallied over twenty people together inside a small gym and attached coffee shop.

Jackson wasn't military. Hell, he'd only owned one gun in his entire life. He was a martial arts instructor on the North side of Hopp's Hollow, bounced bars on occasion, and seen his fair share of his own blood in his lifetime. Mostly, he was a just a big, black, badass motherfucker.

No, he wasn't any kind of hero. He was just the right guy at the wrong time with just enough luck to stay alive through the insanity that had burrowed up from under the ground and eaten everyone's fucking face off.

They were able to fend off the bugs long enough to make their way across the street to a gun shop, allowing them to mount a reasonable defense against the bloodthirsty creatures.

And that's when people started dying.

He'd known the gym manager well enough. Big dude, over two hundred pounds of body builder. Professional competitor. Short blonde hair with a round babyface, bad back acne and even worse tattoos. Name was Ricky and he loved to talk about steroids—was always on something new. Whatever he took seemed to be working. Jackson had always wanted to ask him why he didn't just stick to one drug, but Ricky was always so excited to talk about the next one, Jackson didn't have the heart to question him.

Ultimately, when the shit hit the fan and the beetles swarmed the city, Ricky had been the first to die.

Most of the gym rats and coffee shop patrons didn't know how to fire weapons, so Jackson was forced to give a crash course in a matter of minutes.

“Point it at the fucking bugs trying to fucking eat you and pull the trigger until either they're dead or you are, whichever happens first!”

He passed out all the rifles, shotguns and handguns he could find without safety locks on the triggers. He didn't have time to find all the different keys for all the different locks. When he was done, fifteen of the twenty survivors were armed.

“Grab all the ammo you can find. Shove it in your pockets and any bags or totes you can find. These guns are worthless to us without something to shoot out of the pointy end!”

“We're wasting time, Jackson! We need to get to higher ground!” Ricky still thought he was in charge. He was making things difficult.

Jackson shoved a box of shotgun shells at the bigger man's wide chest. “And what? Starve? Ain't nothing up there but the hot ass sun. We lose our cover, we might as well be bug food.”

Ricky took the shell box and stuck it into the side pocket of his cargo shorts. “We need the high ground. We can make a stand up high.”

Jackson slammed a full magazine cartridge into his rifle and cycled a round into the chamber. “You see how many fuckin' bugs are out there, man? I lost count at about a hundred and fifty as we crossed the street.”

Jackson leaned in to Ricky so no one else would hear. “There's no fighting these things. We're gonna get overrun if they know we're in here. We gotta lay low and be quiet. Let them pass. Like a plague of locusts. Let 'em eat their fill, then move to the next town.”

“A plague of— Are you kidding? You think this is some kind of biblical shit?”

Jackson slung the rifle over his shoulder and moved out from behind the counter. “I don't know, man. I'm just trying to keep these people alive.”

“By hiding like a coward? Fuck that.” Ricky loaded his shotgun with shells from his pocket and walked out into the middle of the gun store. “You wanna live? Follow me to the roof! We're gonna show these dirt-dwelling fucking insects that you can't fuck with America!”

Several of the gym rats cheered and raised their guns. Most of the survivors murmured among themselves, trying to understand the mixed messages the two big men were sending. “Ricky, shut the fuck up,” Jackson said, standing between the musclebound gym manager and the stairs to the roof. “I told you we're laying low. We're totally outnumbered.”

Ricky shoved the smaller man out of the way and stomped forward. “Stay down here and die with this pussy ass motherfucker, or come upstairs with me and spray some fucking bug guts!”

“Ricky, god dammit!”

But it was too late. About half of the survivors ran up the stairs behind Ricky before Jackson could get another word in.

Within a few moments the sound of gunfire—then screams—erupted from the top of the gun store.

“Should we go help them?” a muscular woman named Debb asked. She had half her head shaved, and the rest dyed purple and combed over to one side.

Jackson usually found girls with rainbow hair trashy, but with the entire world outside being eaten by giant bugs, he really didn't give a fuck about her choice of hairstyles. He was just glad she hadn't run upstairs with the rest of the lunatics following Ricky.

The sound of shrieks followed by bodies hitting the ground outside was all the answer she needed.

A moment later, the building shook, as if something huge had slammed up against it.

“We gotta go NOW!” Jackson said, grabbing one more full magazine of rifle rounds. “Out

the back door! We need to find new cover!”

“Jackson, wait!” Paul, the wiry little barista from the coffee shop, yelled from the store room in the back of the gun shop.

“What'd you find?”

“A rocket launcher.”

It was Debb who lost her nerve, sitting up there atop the dead beetle, watching the massive contingent of bugs as they rushed forward.

She hadn't told Jackson and the others; didn't want to seem weak in the face of danger. Even though her exterior was thick and tauged, muscled and tattooed, inside, she was terrified. She had a severe phobia of bugs: Little ones, creepy crawly ones, big flying ones—it didn't matter. They made her skin itch. What if they got in her hair? What if they got *inside* of her? And that was normal sized bugs. These were... These things were her worst nightmare made of flesh.

She shuddered, wiping cold sweat from her face. She was doing everything she could to keep it together for Jackson—for everyone.

Then she heard the clicking of their claws against the concrete—like ten thousand nails against a chalkboard.

Goosebumps rose up on her arms. Her breath came in short, shallow gasps. Her vision swam. She blinked and took a drink from the water bottle she'd grabbed from the gym, trying to clear her head.

Man up, bitch. They're counting on you, she thought.

The first wave of bugs was less than ten yards away now.

Just as she got used to that awful sound, she saw their big shining eyes. Unblinking. Like doll eyes. Then she saw the mouths. Their mouth parts—the size of pencils, masticating with the speed of a blender—were too much for her.

She snapped.

Shaking, she let out a short burst of ammo with her semiautomatic rifle. Gravel and smoke shot up from the ground in front of the dead giant. She hit two dog-sized beetles, and they exploded into white chunks.

“I told you to wait, goddamn it!” Jackson yelled.

The remainder of the beetles charging up Debb's side of the street veered to the other side, adding a disproportionate amount of bugs running toward Jackson and the men stationed atop the giant's shattered and empty head.

“Shit!” she yelled, wiping sweat from out of her eyes.

Nelson, a little wiry Asian kid in charge of Cross Fit at the gym, stood up and started firing, trying to cut the beetles off before they swarmed the men on that side.

“Stop fucking shooting!” Jackson screamed.

But it was too late, the horde of insects dove back into the earth, chewing through concrete like it was wet clay. Just as fast as they'd appeared, they were gone again.

Nelson and Jackson looked at each other from across the wide expanse of the titan beetle's corpse for a long moment. But before Debb and Nelson could apologize, the ground beside them exploded as a group of beetles shot up from the ground, flanking the eviscerated giant.

The first bug caught Debb in the midsection. She flew back, landing awkwardly. She let out a reflexive *Oof!* before the pain set in. The sharp, hot sensation at her belly caused her to look down.

And scream.

The dog-sized beetle's mandibles had penetrated her belly and dragged her guts out. Its smaller mouth parts worked with lightning-fast precision, feeding bloody lumps of her vital organs

into its mouth.

Screaming out in horror, she jammed her rifle's barrel into its face and opened fire, blowing its head to pieces. Unfortunately, Nelson was standing directly behind the beetle with his back to her.

He took three bullets to the back of his head and five more to his back before he fell silently into the climbing throng of insects. His body was torn to pieces and devoured in less than three seconds; in five, there was no indication he'd ever been there.

"Hang on! Fuck!" Jackson screamed. "Everybody out! Get the fuck out here!"

The remainder of the survivors exited the exploded stomach of the giant bug and trained their fire on the flanking horde pouring from the ground directly beneath Debb.

But it was too late for her. She hitched her breath and raised herself up on her elbows. Her entire midsection was flayed open. It looked like a grenade had exploded from the inside.

She tried to move her legs and found that she couldn't feel anything below her wound. The beetle had severed her spinal cord when it attacked.

She began to hyperventilate as Jackson rushed over from the ass end of the enormous insect.

"Don't try to move! Just hold on, I'm coming!" he yelled, breaking into a full jog as the rest of the survivors battled the monsters below.

Debb checked the magazine of her rifle. Empty.

She pulled a handgun out from her waistband and glanced one more time at Jackson as he rushed to her aid.

Then she placed the barrel against her temple and pulled the trigger.

Jackson skidded to a halt. His heart was pounding in his chest. "Fuck!"

Debb's body fell limp, a bloody mangled mess. He put his hands on his hips and turned away. He closed his eyes. He knew he had to walk over there and retrieve her guns and ammo and any supplies she might have near her.

He took a deep breath and pinched the bridge of his nose. Debb was a good woman. A good fighter. And yet another casualty in this insane battle with the bugs.

At this pace they wouldn't last through the night. It'd been his idea to post up inside the body of the giant bug after they'd blown it off the apartment building it had been climbing on.

The rockets had hollowed out its body. He figured that would make as good a spot as any to hold a stand against the insects. They'd been gutting the buildings around them from the inside out. None of them in close proximity were structurally sound anymore.

Maybe it was all futile. Maybe it didn't matter where they hid. Maybe they were all going to die sooner or later at the hands of these monsters no matter what they did.

Pushing the negative thoughts aside, Jackson finished walking toward Debb's body, grabbed her weapons and ammo, then knelt next to her, doing his best not to look at her excessive wounds. He reached out and closed her eyes, saying a silent prayer before he stood and rejoined the rest of the survivors in clearing out the swarm of beetles at the base of the giant corpse.

It took another twenty minutes to fight the bugs back. Jackson and his men were running seriously low on ammo (and even lower on morale) when they shot the last bug and retreated back inside the giant's gargantuan body.

That was about the time the naked woman with the towel on her head walked up out of nowhere and said hello.

Chapter 11

Mickey and Larry sat in the husk of the titanic beetle, all the way in the back of the hollow abdomen.

“Twenty rounds for the semi-auto, three magazines left for the fifty cal, and only ten clips left for the handgun.” Larry dropped his ammo in frustration.

“About the same,” Mickey said, pumping a round into the chamber of his shotgun. “We won't survive the next wave.”

Larry's face was tightly wrapped with ripped fabric from random clothes. His nose had been shorn off when a swarm of rat-sized beetles had scurried up from a sewer hole in the curb he'd been standing next to when the survivors were making their way from the gun shop to the freshly eviscerated corpse of the giant insect. Before he could scream, they'd buzz-sawed deep gouges in his legs and chest. Mickey and several others cleared the small attackers off of him after he'd shrieked in protest, but not before one of the little savage bugs managed to climb all the way to his face and take off his nose.

Mickey and Larry weren't gym rats, nor were they baristas at the coffee shop. They were just in the absolutely worst place at the absolutely worst time.

They were in the process of emptying a sizable bank account at the ATM attached to the same strip mall as the gym and coffee shop.

They were connoisseurs of several kinds of petty criminal activity. In this case, they were attempting their first kidnapping.

In their trunk was the college-aged daughter of an affluent local Hopp's Hollow investment banker who owned most of the commercial properties in town (he was also a complete scumbag and a known slumlord).

Mickey and Larry were living in one of his more run-down apartment complexes. When the air conditioning had gone out the month before, and Mr. Mike—as the slumlord liked to be called—had yet to so much as schedule a maintenance visit, Mickey had suggested the plan.

“Are you smoking crack again, Mick?” Larry quipped as he rolled a joint in their tiny sweat box apartment.

“Nah, man. Think about it! That fat bitch goes to community college right down the street. Her fuckin' dad's got all that money and she's still going to the poor school. He's a piece of shit! We'll grab her after fuckin' geometry class or whatever the fuck, take some pics with her phone and send them to dear ol' dad. We'll keep roughing her up more and more 'til he gives us access to one of his fuckin' slumlord bank accounts!”

And that's exactly what they did.

Until the beetles attacked.

“C'mon! Hurry the fuck up, Mick! I'm losing my shit standing out here in the open like this! We're gonna get fuckin' busted. She's right there in the—”

That's when the street behind them exploded and dozens of bloodthirsty insects had burrowed up from somewhere inside the earth and started eating everything in sight.

Including the girl in the trunk.

A beetle the size of a dump truck had come up straight under Larry's dumpy Honda Civic, slicing the car right in half with its goalpost-sized mandibles.

When the rear of the car had fallen over, the girl rolled out onto the ground, wide-eyed and confused, arms and legs still tied behind her back, duct tape covering her mouth.

“WHAT THE FUCK!” Larry screamed, falling to the ground. Mickey spun around, pulling the handgun from his waistband. Before he could even pick a target, a trio of huge beetles were on top of the defenseless girl, ripping her to pieces right in front of their eyes.

Larry was covered in her blood and body parts as the beetles savagely tore her limb from limb.

As the beetles turned their attention toward Larry screaming like a school girl on the sidewalk, Mickey dropped the thousands of dollars he was trying to stuff in his pockets, grabbed his friend by the back of his bloody shirt and dragged him into the gym, slamming and locking the door behind them. They'd hugged the walls and stayed quiet, letting Ricky and Jackson's arguing take the attention off the fact that they were the only complete strangers in the building.

“We gotta get out of here, Mick.” With the fabric covering the gaping hole in his face, Larry's voice sounded like he was pinching his nose when he talked. “These things are eating people, right? We're fucking downtown. There's like fifty thousand people here. We gotta make a break for it. Get up north to the country.”

“Those fucking things are everywhere,” Mickey said. “We won't make it a block...”

“So what—” Larry started, interrupting Mickey's thought.

“...without a distraction,” Mickey finished.

Larry smiled, causing a trickle of blood to run out of his wound.

“We wait 'til everyone lays down to sleep tonight,” Mickey said under his breath, leaning in to his friend, making sure none of the other survivors milling around the blasted out guts of the giant beetle could hear him. “Then we start slashing tendons, right down at the ankle. Get them screaming and hollering. They'll be sitting ducks. They'll have the bugs' attention and we'll make our exit in the dead of night.”

“Fuck yeah,” Larry said, giggling.

Chapter 12

Sue Ellen watched the bugs tear the rainbow haired woman's stomach out. Saw her shoot the Asian kid. Watched the cute black guy raid her guns and ammo before wasting the beetles attacking the people he was with.

She hung back and waited until the bugs were dead and the people had retreated back into the body of the giant one before she made her presence known.

Careful not to step in the veritable swimming pool of bug guts, she made her way into the opening in the giant beetle's stomach.

“Hello?”

Everyone in the belly of the bug froze. Sue Ellen stepped inside, coyly covering her tits with her hands. “Um, can I hide in here with you guys?”

“Holy fuck,” a gym rat named Roger said. Roger had huge biceps that were blown up way out of proportion next to the rest of his physique, due to his near obsessive barbell curling. He dropped the rifle he'd been cleaning.

Sue Ellen smiled at him.

The cute black guy walked up to her. “Uh, hi there. I'm Jackson.”

“Sue Ellen,” she said in the most innocent voice she could muster. She'd gotten good at playing demure at the strip club. The old pedo perverts loved it. Their wallets practically fell out of the pockets when she acted coy.

She held her hand out to shake his hand, exposing her left breast. She'd been sure to tweak her nipples before she stepped inside so they'd be nice and erect when she flashed them.

“Oh, oops!” she said, pretending to have forgotten she was naked.

“Where did you come from, Sue Ellen?”

Turning her back to the group of men who now had all of their eyes locked on her, she bent forward a little bit to accentuate her naked ass and pointed out the hole in the beetle's side. “There. I think you guys blew up my apartment.”

“Oh shit,” Jackson said. “You were in there when the beetle attacked?”

“Yeah, I was... taking a shower when it busted through my living room wall. That's why I'm a little... under-dressed.”

Jackson was silent as his eyes made their way over her taught stomach and legs, resting for a long moment on her shaved neither region. She tried to suppress a smile.

“What's with the headdress?” a survivor named Timothy asked. He stood shirtless, flexing his sizable pectoral muscles. “You religious or something?”

Sue Ellen tried to act impressed with his physique, but the truth was, she hated muscle guys. She'd dated one when she was fifteen. All he did was lift weights, look at himself in the mirror and blow protein shake farts every day. All the steroids he was on killed his sex drive, making him have to hold his dick like a wet noodle when he tried to fuck her.

No thanks.

“Oh, this?” she said, moving her left arm over both her nipples so she could reach up and touch her head without showing off too much skin. She wanted them to want her bad enough to taste it before she gave it to them. “I hurt my head when my building fell. Cut it open pretty bad. I just used my dress to tie it off 'til I can get to a hospital.”

Timothy reached for her head. “I'm a nurse. I can take a look at it for you.”

Sue Ellen jumped back. “No, no. It's fine. I-I'm a nurse, too. I don't have anything to replace the dress with. It'll be fine until I get to the hospital.”

“You sure? I could—”

“Leave the poor woman alone, Tim,” Jackson said, laughing. “Jesus Christ, you guys are like a pack of hungry wolves in here. Get Sue Ellen something to wear if you want to make yourself useful. The rest of you, keep counting. I need that inventory count. We're gonna need every last bullet next time those fuckers come for us. Tell me what we've got left.”

The black guy smiled and shook his head. “You'd think we'd been in the middle of a war for months instead of hours the way these animals are looking at you.”

“I don't really mind. It's flattering,” Sue Ellen said, casting her gaze at the ground, then back up to meet the big man's brown eyes. She was a pro and she was spitting top level game. The world was ending all around her, and she'd be damned if she was going to sit out there and wait to get eaten by giant bugs. Better to have a bunch of big, strong guys willing to die to keep her safe.

“Say, you didn't happen to see a skinny blonde kid out there when you walked up, did you? Was supposed to be scouting us some better shelter. Damn kid's been gone for hours.”

“Hmmm, nope,” Sue Ellen said, bouncing her shoulders as she remembered the look on the blonde kid's face when he saw the beetle growing from the top of her head.

Changing the subject, she said, “Oh, thank you... Jackson was it? I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't let me come in here with you big strong boys.”

Jackson sneered. “You wanna thank me, lady, grab a shotgun, and don't miss the next time those things try to come in here and eat us.”

Sue Ellen let her hands drop. “I was thinking of something a little less... violent.” She sneered right back at the big chocolate hunk.

Jackson's eyebrows furrowed.

Sue Ellen stepped forward and put her hand on the front of his jeans, making sure her point was made as clearly as possible. “I'm just so grateful that you hunky men let me come in here and get safe.”

“Uh,” Jackson stammered, looking around to see if anyone else was watching.

Sue Ellen laughed. “Let 'em watch.” She knelt down and unzipped his fly.

Jackson closed his eyes. “Crazy ass bitch gonna suck my dick right here,” he mumbled.

“I know that chick!” Larry said in a harsh whisper from the other side of the dead bug's hollowed out innards. “She dances at Night Sweats. Calls herself Lilith or something.”

“I know who she is,” Mickey said, smiling. “Cunt set me up and had me rolled at a motel last year. Lost nine hundred bucks and a sack of coke that night.”

“You thinking what I'm thinking, Mick?” Larry said, giggling.

“No need to wait 'til tonight. We've got our distraction.”

“All I could find was this jacket, but it's probably too big for— Uh...” Timothy dropped the jacket.

Sue Ellen raised her eyebrows and glanced at the big bodybuilder from the corner of her eye. She didn't stop what she was doing.

“That's fine,” she mumbled, still moving her mouth back and forth, making small gagging noises as Jackson's cock hit the back of her throat.

“Should... I...” Timothy said, getting visibly excited in the pants region.

Sue Ellen motioned for him to bring the jacket over to her.

He bent down, grabbed it off the blast-hardened inner floor of the titanic beetle and hurried over to where she knelt, servicing Jackson, who still had his eyes closed and his hand on the back of her head, careful not to disturb the fabric tightly wrapped around it, slowly guiding his sizable length in and out of her mouth.

When Timothy got close enough, she grabbed the jacket out of his hand and tossed it on the ground. She scooted it under her knees as padding to cover the rough beetle-shell floor, then she reached out and yanked his gym shorts down, exposing his erection.

Without breaking her rhythm, she took Jackson out of her mouth and replaced him with Timothy, remarking as she did that his cock wasn't limp and rubbery like the other muscle head's dick she'd sucked. His was actually thicker than Jackson's, albeit considerably shorter. It fit root to tip in her mouth without gagging her, a fact that left her slightly disappointed.

“What the fuck is going on over here?”

Another pair of survivors—two skinny college kids from the coffee shop—walked up, holding their cache of weapons and ammo.

“What's it look like?” Sue Ellen said, popping Timothy's dick out of her mouth. She continued to stroke both men, expertly turning her wrists, adding extra friction with each tug. “I'm sucking these fella's dicks. Wanna join?”

Billy, the one with glasses and acne scars, practically choked on his own tongue expressing his approval, while his friend Herman just shook his head and walked toward the naked woman, unbuckling his belt after he discarded the weapons onto the ground. “What a fuckin' slut.”

This finally brought Jackson back to his senses. “Wait, wait,” he said, pulling his cock out of Sue Ellen's hand. “We can't get distracted like this. Those things could attack again at any time.”

Sue Ellen snorted. “C'mon, guy. Don't be a buzzkill. I'll suck everybody's dick real quick, then you can play Rambo all you want, k? K.”

She took Jackson's dick back into her mouth before he had a chance to answer. Now Billy and Herman were standing with their erections pointed in her face, waiting their turn.

She licked both her hands and proceeded to jack them off with the same rhythm that she used to suck on Jackson.

Feeling left out, Timothy, pawed at her head, trying to get her to move back to his dick. His movement caused the fabric on her head to shift.

Panic shot through her. “Whoops!” she said trying to appear calm. She grabbed at her head,

tucking the loose bit back into place. "Careful, we don't want me bleeding all over your cocks, do we?"

The weird contingent of men laughed nervously, as though they might disturb the delicate balance that saw them all getting their dicks sucked by this strange woman if they made too much noise.

Sue Ellen moved on to Billy's cock, which, unfortunately, was not worth description. What did warrant note, however, was just how quickly he managed to ejaculate into Sue Ellen's mouth.

She'd barely managed to scoot his little pecker between her lips before she felt the telltale warm, salty, full feeling cross her tongue.

The kid had busted his nut in two seconds.

Keeping her face straight, even though she wanted to burst out laughing at his misfortune, Sue Ellen swallowed his load and continued to move in a clockwise fashion, coming face to face with Herman's dick.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, leaning in to take a closer look.

Herman was a bit of a masochist. He had three diagonal piercings on the underside of his shaft (often called a Jacob's Ladder in fetish communities). In addition to this, he had a horseshoe-shaped ring that entered directly underneath the head of his penis and exited through the pee-hole. This piercing was called the Prince Albert.

Coupled with his entirely shaved pubic region, Herman's dick was by far the weirdest cock she'd ever seen in person.

She took hold of it by the base and looked it up and down, brow furrowed, lips pursed, studying it as if she was a clinic doctor and Herman had come in complaining of a burning sensation when he peed.

Wasting no more time, Sue Ellen popped the odd dick in her mouth and swirled her tongue around the alien hardware. After a moment, she decided she enjoyed the sensation. It was as though her tongue had its own personal jungle gym. As she got to work sucking his dick, she silently hoped Herman wouldn't cum as fast as his friend.

And that's when it happened.

"Are we invited to the dick sucking party?" Larry asked in his nasally, no-nose voice.

Herman came all over Sue Ellen's face as she looked over to see who was speaking, managing to get a sizable glob of splooge in her eye in the process.

Squinting, Sue Ellen tried to look at the newcomers to her cock-smoking circle, but all she saw was a glazed smear of shapes. "Well," she said, still jacking and sucking the dicks pointed in her direction, "I've never sucked this many dicks at the same time before, but I don't want anybody to feel left out." That was a lie, of course. She'd moonlighted many times as a party favor at bachelor parties. Her record of dicks sucked and fucked in one night was fifteen. There were, what, less than ten guys here? No problem. She'd already taken two loads and hadn't even broken a sweat yet.

She figured as long as she milked these guys' dicks every few days, they'd keep her safe from the bugs until she could either find a bigger, more organized group, or wait for the army to show up. The army always showed up when crazy shit like this happened, didn't they? Unless the giant bug invasion wasn't localized to Hopp's Hollow. What if this was happening all over the planet?

She could think about all of that later. Right now she had a bunch of dicks to suck.

One of the new guys stepped up and dropped his pants. The heat from all of the cocks hovering in front of her face actually was starting to make Sue Ellen sweat now. Wiping the splooge from her eye, she squinted up at the new guy. He had bandages wrapped around his face. Where his nose should have been was stained a dark red, almost black, like the fabric hadn't been changed for a long time.

He was already hard, beating his dick off like all the other cocks around him had him excited, but the silly grin on his face gave away what he was really thinking. Sue Ellen had seen that grin; that sharpness to the eyes; that way he stared at her down there working all those dicks.

He was a sadist. He got off on watching women prostrate in front of men. The hitting type. She'd dated a lot of dudes like him. Been punched in the face by a lot of dudes like him.

“Something funny, darling?” she said, taking his hardness into her mouth.

“Just you sucking all these dicks with that ridiculous getup on your head, sweetheart.”

Sue Ellen grinned around his dick, taking it all the way to the root until the nose-less man broke eye contact so he could close his eyes and moan.

“No dumber than you look with no nose, babe,” she said finally, after she extracted his member from the depths of her throat.

The nose-less man chuckled, then looked past Sue Ellen and nodded.

Before she was able to turn around to see what he was looking at, she felt a hot sting across the back of one of her legs, then the other in quick succession.

Everything else happened quickly.

Sue Ellen let out a yelp and rolled over, grabbing her legs. Noseless man's friend was standing up, wiping a small blade on his pant leg. The stain was red.

Sue Ellen looked at her hands, they were covered in blood.

“Now!” the knife-wielder said, and he and the noseless man bolted for the gaping hole in the side of the dead giant.

“God dammit!” Jackson screamed, pulling up his pants. “Don't just fucking stand there, you idiots, get them!”

The other survivors were still in a hard dick stupor and had trouble reconciling with the fact that they weren't going to be finished off by the girl on the ground rolling around screaming, covered in her own blood.

Finally, Timothy, Billy and Harold got their pants up, but before they could turn to go after the two criminals, Sue Ellen's head wrapping fell off.

Chapter 13

“What the fuck is that?!” Timothy said, staggering back.

With the cloth cleared from her head, the mandibles and mouth parts of the beetle were able to move freely.

“Stop staring at me and fucking help!” Sue Ellen screamed, trying in vain to stem the blood pouring out from just above her useless feet.

Mickey had slashed her Achilles tendons all the way through. She could no longer so much as wiggle her toes.

Billy turned around and grabbed a rifle from the ground. He pointed it at the beetle sticking out of Sue Ellen's head.

“Wait!” Jackson said, looking back and forth between his men and the writhing girl on the ground. He had a horrified look on his face, as if he couldn't quite come to terms with the fact that the woman who was so recently sucking his dick was actually some kind of human/beetle hybrid.

“What do you mean, *wait*?” Timothy said. He looked at Billy and motioned toward Sue Ellen. “Blow this fucking thing away, man!”

“I'm not a thing!” Sue Ellen said through grunts and screams. “I didn't put the fucking bug in my head!”

Harold grabbed the sides of his head. “Is that what they do to people!” He looked back and forth at Billy and Jackson, eyes wide with terror. “Is that gonna fucking happen to me?”

“Stop it! Shut up! Let me think,” Jackson said, pacing back and forth, eyes darting from Sue Ellen's wounds to the beetle in her head. She was losing a lot of blood. Her entire naked body was now covered in blood as she flopped around in the growing pool of her own fluid all around her.

“Fuck it,” Jackson said, finally. “Tim, hold her down.”

“WHAT!?” Timothy yelped, terrified.

“You heard me, damn it!” Jackson boomed, scooping up the discarded fabric that had fallen off of Sue Ellen's head.

Timothy winced and looked away as he grabbed her shoulders and pinned her against the ground, beetle head snapping at him the entire time.

“What the fuck are you doing to me?!” Sue Ellen screamed, kicking her useless feet in Jackson's direction.

“Hold still. Fuck! I'm saving your life!”

He grabbed one of her flailing legs with one hand and held the fabric up to his mouth with the other. Using his teeth, he ripped a small piece off and wrapped her bleeding wound tightly. Then did the same with the other leg.

“Th-thank you!” Sue Ellen said, trying to catch her breath.

“Don't say another fucking word to me.” Jackson said, coldly. “Flip her over.”

Timothy did as he was told, avoiding the sharp mandibles snapping open and closed in front of his face.

Jackson grabbed one of Sue Ellen's arms and roughly yanked it behind her back.

She let out a fresh cry as he did the same with her other arm, tying her hands together at the wrists.

“Why? Why are you doing—”

Jackson used the remaining fabric from her head wrap as a gag around her mouth.

Dragging her immobile body over to the far wall, Jackson left her there without speaking or making further eye contact.

“What are you motherfuckers staring at?” he snapped as he walked back toward the other survivors. “I told you to go after Mickey and Lar—”

Just then, two dog-sized beetles dove through the hole in the side of the dead titan.

Chapter 14

The first beetle landed on Harold's back, snapping off his head at the neck before he knew it was there.

His body hit the ground with a thud, spraying blood in a huge arc that landed directly on top of Sue Ellen's already blood-soaked naked body.

Billy screamed and pulled the trigger of his rifle reflexively, without aiming. He shot himself in the foot, causing him to flinch backward, sending an arc of bullets ripping across the floor away from the attacking beetles, and directly toward the other survivors.

Jackson dove for cover behind a large crate full of salvaged supplies. Timothy wasn't so lucky. The bullets hit him in the right leg and traveled up to his stomach before Billy was able to let off the trigger. Both men were soon on the ground howling in pain.

This only served to attract more beetles. They began to flood through the wide opening, and within moments there were a dozen bugs of various sizes feasting on Billy, Timothy and Harold's bodies. The former two stayed living for most of the impromptu meal, as the beetles had a tendency to eat their prey from the bottom up—Timothy especially, since his flesh was covered in thick, corded muscles. The beetles had a hard time chewing through his steroid-enhanced tissue. Minus a leg and most of his right arm, he managed to crawl over to Billy's automatic rifle and empty the remainder of the magazine into Billy and the insects turning him inside out with their mouths, managing to put him out of his misery, if only a few seconds before he would have died unassisted anyway.

The amount of bugs flowing into their makeshift shelter, however, proved to be far more than half a magazine of a single rifle could account for.

Timothy was overwhelmed by beetles. In a matter of seconds, they were fighting over his torn out eyeballs, tongue and nasal cartilage.

Jackson came out from behind his cover once he heard the other two men stop screaming. He was only armed with a semiautomatic pistol. He fired several rounds into the oncoming beetles he'd attracted with his movement as he shuffled across the interior of the dead giant over to where Sue Ellen lay prone and totally defenseless on the floor. The bugs were maybe twenty yards away and approaching fast as he pulled the gag out of Sue Ellen's mouth.

"Untie me, motherfucker!" she screamed, struggling against her binding.

"No time for that, babe," Jackson said, a look of sorrow on his handsome face. "I don't know what you are, but... You suck really good dick for a bug girl."

"Thanks, I guess," Sue Ellen managed, feeling a sense of pride even in the dire circumstances.

"Best I can offer is a quick death," Jackson said, pointing at the gun in his hand. "One bullet for you, then one for me. Whadda you say?"

Sue Ellen frowned. Was this really the end? It felt like just hours ago she was dirty texting her boyfriend, pretending to be sucking a stranger's dick. Had her life really changed this drastically in less than a day? She'd never pondered her own death before. Even as friends around her died of drug overdoses and violence at the hands of pimps and dealers, she'd always imagined herself rising above her ghetto lifestyle, making something of herself. Being in control of her life.

Now? Now she had a bug in her head and a cute black guy pointing a gun in her face. *Fuck it*, she thought. *At least I partied my face off and fucked a lot. And I'll die hot.*

Jackson pressed a button on the side of the gun and dropped the clip into his hand. "Fuck."

"What?" Sue Ellen asked, tensing up. She wasn't ready to die after all. She broke out in a cold sweat and started to tremble.

"Miscalculated my shots. One bullet. Sorry, Toots."

With that, Jackson popped the clip back in the gun and pointed the barrel at his own temple. He pulled the trigger and fell limp to the floor.

Sue Ellen screamed as chunks of skull and brain matter splattered her in the face.

The beetles were almost on her now. She was completely alone. There was no one left to save her. She was fucked. Food for the savage bugs click-clacking their way toward her with jaws snapping open and shut in anticipation of devouring her soft flesh.

She scooted on her naked rear up against the wall cavity of the dead giant and started to cry.

"Sue Ellen, you have nothing to fear from the beetles."

It was the British voice in her head again. The bug was talking.

She smacked her head backward against the inner wall of the titan's stomach, achieving nothing but a wet thump.

"BUGS DON'T TALK!" she whined through her sobs. Chancing a look through squinty, tear-soaked eyes, she saw that the bugs were practically on top of her, climbing on top of one another, saliva dripping from their jaws.

"LISTEN TO ME, MY QUEEN, AND STOP TRYING TO HURT ME!"

Queen? Why would the bug call her queen? "What, bug? What's so important that your stupid bug voice is gonna be the last thing I hear before I'm eaten alive by your big friends?"

"That's just it, my liege. YOU command the beetle army! They pillage recklessly because they have no orders to follow! They await your command! You needn't meet your demise at the hands of the very servants who've burrowed up from the depths of a trillion year slumber only to serve YOU!"

Sue Ellen stared forward, dumbfounded by the words of the beetle in her brain. The first of the beetles charging at her, a pony-sized monster with two-foot mandibles bared down on her, almost within striking distance.

"TELL THEM TO STAND DOWN, MY QUEEN!"

Just as the huge bug made move to attack, Sue Ellen yelled out, “STOOOOOOP!”

The pony-sized beetle skidded to a halt, having to redirect its onslaught at the final moment, crashing instead against the wall right next to Sue Ellen's head as the rest of the contingent of insects similarly ended their forward momentum.

Suddenly, Sue Ellen sat in silence with half a hundred beetles standing perfectly still, their beady, glistening eyes awaiting their next order.

Sue Ellen barked out a short laugh. “WHAAAT? Whaat, bitch? WHAT!”

She bounced up and down as much as her bindings would allow. She couldn't believe it.

Queen of the motherfucking beetle army. She *knew* she wasn't meant to die today. Knew she was made for something far more important than getting fucked in the ass for a hundred bucks in the back of a strip club (not that she minded the fucking the least little bit).

“They await your command, my liege,” the beetle inside her head said, voice beaming with pride.

“Ok,” Sue Ellen said, grinning. “GET THIS FUCKING BUG OUT OF MY HEAD!”

The beetle army shuffled around, confused. The pony-sized insect next to her snorted, not understanding the order.

“YOU HEARD ME! RIP IT OUTTTT OF MY HEEEEAAD!”

The pony-sized beetle clamped its mandibles around the British accented bug in Sue Ellen's head.

“My queen! If he removes me, you shall die! I am fused to your brain matter! You'll be killed instantly!”

“STOOOP!” Sue Ellen whined, disappointed. “Don't rip the bug out of my head.”

The pony-sized bug loosed its grip and stepped away.

Sue Ellen sighed, not really knowing what to do now that she had an entire army of monsters at her disposal.

“You could start with having them remove your bindings, my queen.”

“Hey, that's a good idea! Cut off these stupid rags!” Sue Ellen commanded.

The pony-sized beetle reached behind her and carefully sawed through the fabric, freeing her hands, then her legs.

“Cool!” Sue Ellen said, rubbing her wrists. “Alright. What the fuck am I gonna do with all of you...” She tried to stand and fell over, wincing in pain, only then remembering that those slimeballs had slashed the backs of her legs.

“Owwwww!” she yelled. “Pick me up. Pick me up, fucker!”

The pony-sized beetle tilted its head, allowing Sue Ellen to crawl up onto its back.

She knew exactly what she wanted to do now. She wanted to hunt down those fucking dick beaters who did this to her and watch her bug army slowly eat them alive.

Sue Ellen smiled.

It was good to be the queen.

Chapter 15

6 months later

Ginny climbed over the last rock and stood up, trying to catch her breath. She wiped the sweat out of her eyes. "It's a river!" she exclaimed, jumping up and down. "We made it!"

Ginny and her fellow survivors had been traveling mostly on foot, but occasionally, when the roads were clear enough, by vehicle.

"Holy shit!" her husband Steve said, joining her atop the bluff. "The mighty Mississippi."

It had taken them six months of hiding, stealing, and scurrying like rats almost exclusively at night to get to Hopp's Hollow from Detroit, Michigan.

The only thing that stood between them and glorious fresh water was one sixty-yard clearing with a cave looming above it, then they were home free to bathe, refill their containers, and maybe camp for a week before moving on.

Ginny had been at work when it happened. She was a checkout clerk at an organic food market. One of the car-sized beetles had smashed up through the aisle between the gluten-free pasta and the non-GMO fruit sections, impaling a mother of four on one of its scythe-like mandibles before pulverizing her onto the non-dairy milk cooler.

That's all Ginny needed to see. She dove over her checkout counter and beat her feet out the automatic doors as her long-haired manager, Mario, yelled into the overhead PA for everyone to keep calm. Mario's shriek as the bug monster impaled him through the asshole was the last thing Ginny heard before the doors shut behind her.

She had to skid to a halt and reverse directions several times as the parking lot of the organic food market exploded with giant bugs crawling out of the ground, attacking anyone and anything

near them. They snatched fleeing customers, demolished cars and scurried into the market, smashing through the sliding glass doors and windows, following the shrieks and screams of those trapped inside.

Ginny jumped into her Prius as fast as she could, sliding the key into the ignition while darting her head around in all directions, making sure her car wasn't the next meal for one of those crazy carnivorous insect monsters.

When the lane was clear, she threw it in reverse and peeled out of her parking spot, hitting the car directly behind her, bouncing her head off the seat cushion.

Dazed but conscious, she slammed the gas pedal and drove out of the parking lot into a street just as chaotic as the scene she'd just left behind.

Dialing from her bluetooth controls on her steering wheel, she rang her husband, Steve. He worked from home as an internet life coach and charity event coordinator.

"Something's happened!" Ginny yelled when he picked up. "Get the van ready, we're getting the fuck out of the city!"

She hung up before he could answer so she could concentrate on navigating the insanity in front of her. She was confident she didn't have to tell Steve anything further. They'd been preparing for a day like this since they'd started dating three years before. In fact, it was their mutual love of disaster preparedness that had drawn them together romantically in the first place.

Ginny and Steve were preppers.

More than once she had to run over mailboxes and drive her little Prius through yards in order to avoid traffic pile ups due to the giant bugs erupting up from beneath the ground, but soon enough she was fishtailing her tiny electric hybrid car down her upper-middle-class residential street in Royal Oak, Michigan.

As she came to a screeching, tire-smoking halt in front of her modest two-story house, Steve was already taking a load of water and canned goods out to their pop-top Astro Van parked in the drive.

Her neighborhood had thus far been unaffected by the giant beetle invasion, so when she lunged out of the car and screamed, "That's enough! We have to go NOW!" it caused her elderly neighbor, Sam, who had been watering the small garden landscaping in front of his house, to jerk up and stare.

Ginny ignored him and ran into the house, passing Steve on the way. She didn't so much as glance at him. She didn't have to; they'd rehearsed this event every week for three years. It was muscle memory at this point.

She grabbed the cash and gold they had hidden in a small safe behind a fake wall in the closet of the front room and ran back to the van.

Within four minutes of her arrival, she and Steve were on the road. Steve drove while Ginny acted as navigator, directing them across their predetermined bug-out route. While her husband drove, he babbled into a camcorder he had mounted to the dash of the van. Pulling it off its stand, he pointed it in Ginny's face. "Tell everyone what happened, Gin!"

"Is now really an appropriate time to be doing this?" she asked, still frazzled from her ordeal at the organic food market.

"Yes! Our YouTube is going to BLOW UP when they see your firsthand account of the apocalypse!"

Ginny frowned into the camera. "Steve, I don't think there will even *be* a YouTube after this."

The truth was, Steve barely made any money at all. His life coaching business was a failure, and thus far none of the charity events he'd coordinated had made him any money. His new scheme was making video blogs on their prepper lifestyle for YouTube. He'd been at it for months now, claiming that their video channel would soon be bringing in thousands of dollars in ad revenue a

month once he built up a large enough subscriber base.

“Nonsense, honey. The internet is practically a basic human necessity now. Nothing's gonna bring it down!”

Ginny sighed. At that moment, she was glad she'd let his younger brother Ross fuck her in the ass in the bathroom of the rehearsal dinner at her wedding.

She regretted marrying Steve more than anything. All her life she'd wanted to marry a prepper. A big, strong, confident man who'd be able to build and fix anything with his bare hands. Steve had turned out to be just another internet know-it-all. He didn't have a shred of common sense. All he knew how to do was search the internet and follow the instructions of much smarter, more capable people.

She'd spent the last month looking up divorce lawyers and printing out paperwork to start the filing. But right now, the only thing that stood between her and the jaws of a giant beetle horde was her stupid husband Steve and his stupid camera.

So she sucked it up and recounted her ordeal in as much detail as she could, but it didn't take long before Steve saw the destruction for himself as they drove past the outskirts of the city. He saw the giant beetles running across the roads, saw car and house fires and piles and piles of gory body parts left behind by the bloodthirsty creatures.

They were relatively safe inside their customized camper van, complete with a battery bank, power inverter, solar panels on the roof, a small gas-powered generator attached to the back of the chassis, and over-sized tires for off-road emergency driving. This didn't stop the prepper couple from remaining overly cautious, however. One wrong turn and they'd end up nose-first in one of the giant bug holes littered all across the landscape.

The van ended up lasting them nearly a month, allowing them to pick up several survivors as they wound their way south through isolated back roads. Stopping at campgrounds during the day, driving at night, sometimes only traveling twenty miles or less in a single night.

It was when they finally hit the suburbs of Chicago off I-94 that everything went to shit.

Against her better judgment, Ginny had agreed to pick up a cruddy looking white guy with dreadlocks and a beard who'd been living in one of the campgrounds they'd stopped at just before crossing the Illinois border.

His name was Sven (or at least that's what he told them when they'd agreed to take him as far as the next campground). They'd already picked up two other survivors who'd been hitchhiking on the side of the road. Those two, Nikki and Robert, had been nothing but helpful since Ginny and Steve had rescued them, offering to cook meals with the van's portable single burner stove and propane tank. Nikki had even offered to wash all of their clothes in a lake they'd camped next to one night.

Nikki was short and plump with plain (but not altogether unpleasant) features. Robert looked like the male version of Nikki, just slightly taller. Ginny had silently wondered how two random, normal looking folks had managed to survive the insect apocalypse.

She never got the chance to ask.

Now, just southeast of Chicago at the juncture of I-94 and I-57, the van felt cramped and the mood seemed strained with the addition of Sven, due in no small part to the way he smelled.

But that's not the only thing that bothered Ginny about Sven. He never offered to help with the van upkeep nor the chores. He just wandered around while the others scavenged for supplies at night, and Ginny always had the feeling that he was sizing her up. Leering at her. Undressing her with his eyes...

Truth be told, she'd only agreed to take him on because they'd spotted a series of bug holes north of the campground he was sleeping in when they'd pulled up. Where there were bug holes, there were always bugs, and she didn't want the guilt of knowing they'd left a survivor behind to be eaten by those bloodthirsty monsters.

One day, after over a month of travel, Steve stopped the van at a rest area that had been more or less ravaged by bugs, but seemed deserted when they'd pulled up.

He left the others at the van and walked over to water dumping station to demonstrate how to empty their portable toilet for his camera. He did this even though they'd lost connection to the internet by the end of their first week on the road. "It'll come back online, I promise!" he kept saying. "And when it does, ooh baby are we gonna have the BEST videos of the whole apocalypse!"

Ginny was sitting in the passenger side captain's chair in the cab of the van, turned toward the windshield to give Nikki and Robert a little privacy as they prepared a small lunch in the rear of the van.

When she opened her eyes, Sven was standing outside the passenger door. The sound of liquid hitting concrete had caught her attention. He was outside her door pissing, looking directly at her.

Her eyes casually crawled down his filthy body, resting on his cock which was partially obscured by a thick black bush of pubic hair. But that couldn't mask the sheer volume of cock that protruded from the rat's nest of crotch hair.

Ginny sat up in her chair to get a closer look. Sven turned his hips, making sure she caught the whole thing in her line of sight as he finished urinating.

He probably smells like the death wing of a nursing home, she thought. Curiously, this did not prevent her nipples from growing hard underneath her small gray tank top.

How long had it been since Steve had fucked her? Certainly not once since the bugs arrived. Sven grinned and slowly stroked his massive white cock, not taking his eyes off of Ginny's face and for the first time since they'd picked him up, Ginny didn't mind his crude staring.

At the next rest stop, several days later, Ginny and Steve sat alone for the first time since Ginny could remember. Nikki and Robert were off using the shower facilities (which remarkably still worked, even missing two walls) while Sven was foraging for candy bars and sodas from the demolished vending machines.

Ginny sat in the passenger seat in silence, eyes covered by sunglasses while Steve sat crosslegged on the floor of the van dumping footage from his camera onto his laptop.

"Wait, what?" Steve said.

Ginny smirked. She'd wondered how long it would take him to find it.

Steve looked at the thumbnail video file, confused. It was an ass. He hadn't videotaped anyone's ass in the last few days. In fact, he hadn't video taped anyone's ass ever. Scratching his beard, he clicked the file open and sat back.

It opened with Ginny's face. "Shhhh!" she said, holding her finger up to her mouth, grinning mischievously. She pointed to her right and the camera panned over to the driver's side captain's chair where Steve lay passed out, mouth open, slightly drooling and snoring softly.

The camera pulled back and re-centered on Ginny, who kneeled between the two chairs. She was naked.

The camera panned to the back of the van, showing Nikki and Robert asleep on the full sized bed in the very back of the van past the sink and counter area.

Sven wasn't back there. He wasn't back there because he was the cameraman.

"Honey, what the fuck is this?" Steve asked, his voice strained.

The camera pointed back and Ginny, but tilted down to show Sven's huge hairy boner bobbing up and down right in front of his wife's face.

She leaned forward and took it in her mouth, causing the cameraman to moan softly. "Mmmm, yeah bitch. I've been wanting to get between those lips since I first laid eyes on your sexy ass."

"What about my ass?" Ginny said, pulling his cock out of her mouth, turning around, pointing her naked rear at the camera.

Sven moaned again as he leaned forward and stuck his thick cock inside Steve's wife's wet pussy.

"What the fuck, Gin!" Steve said, throwing his hands into the air.

The insult didn't stop there, as Sven fucked Ginny hard from behind, he reached out and popped his thumb inside her asshole, causing her to cry out. The cheating couple froze as the camera panned back to Steve asleep in his chair. He stirred, but didn't wake. Ginny laughed softly and, as the camera panned back to her ass, she leaned against Sven's thumb pushing it further into her anus.

Steve slammed the laptop shut, wide-eyed. His mouth was doing a weird twitching thing. Ginny just smiled at him. "Don't stop there, you're gonna miss the big sloppy nut he shoots all over my face at the end."

Steve flipped the laptop and camera off his lap and jumped out of the van, fists clenched, breathing heavy, looking straight ahead in the direction of Sven and the wrecked vending machines fifty yards up the sidewalk.

Ginny laughed from inside the van. "What are you gonna do, tough guy?"

"WHY!" Steve said, punching the side of the van. "Why the fuck would you do that to me? To yourself? To us? That guy... That guy's a scumbag, Gin. You said so yourself! Three days ago we were talking about kicking him out of the van because you were afraid he was going to make off with our supplies in the middle of the night!"

Ginny flung open the door and hopped out. She was nearly a foot shorter than her husband, but that didn't stop her from getting up in his face. Standing on tiptoes she spat, "Because you haven't fucked me since the fucking world ended!"

"This is about sex?" Steve said, chuckling in disbelief. "You fucked a dirty hippy stranger ON CAMERA for me to find because I've been a little too fucking preoccupied saving your fucking life from giant man-eating fucking beetles to give you a proper lay?!"

"NO!" Ginny yelled, balling her fists to match her husband's intensity. "It's because you're a fucking loser, Steve! It's because I thought I was marrying a big, strong survivor-man. Someone who would keep me safe when it really counted. Someone I could rely on when the world went to shit. But you can't even hold a fucking job!"

Steve closed his mouth. His features softened.

"I have money," he said, defensively, but with much less intensity.

"You have a fucking trust fund, Steve! You haven't worked a fucking honest day since I met you! You just go from one fucking scheme to another. You just sit on the fucking Internet all day and night watching videos of how OTHER PEOPLE survive!"

"I've fucking kept you alive this long!" Steve countered.

"With that fucking camera stuck in your face like this is all a game? What the fuck are you gonna do when we actually run into a swarm of those bugs, Steve?! We've been LUCKY so far! There's no YouTube video for how to survive a giant beetle attack!"

"There a problem?"

Sven walked up with an arm full of candy bars.

"Nope," Ginny said with a hateful grin on her face. "He's a fucking pussy. He's not gonna do shit!" she said, pointing at Steve.

By this time, Nikki and Robert had rejoined the group, awkwardly standing off to the side with their towels in hand.

“Motherfucker!” Steve screamed, running at Sven. He pulled back and uncorked a wide right hook, catching the dreadlocked man by surprise, cleanly across the chin.

Sven fell backward onto the concrete. Candy bars went flying. He blinked his eyes and shook his head, recovering from the powerful blow. “This 'cause I fucked your wife?”

“I’ll kill you, motherfucker!” Steve said, charging forward again.

But before he could reach his downed opponent, the ground around Sven started to crack.

Ginny reached out and grabbed her husband's shoulder, keeping him from getting any closer.

Sven tried to scramble out of the crumbling area, but the ground around him gave way, dropping several feet.

Two dog-sized beetles got hold of him by an arm and a leg. He screamed as his limbs were severed, spraying blood all over the gray concrete rubble around him.

Steve dashed away as Nikki screamed, “Oh my god, oh my god!”

“Where the fuck are you going?!” Ginny screamed. She was sure he was jumping into the van to drive away and leave her and the rest of the group to the bugs, but he jumped out with a pair of brand new shotguns. He threw one to his wife.

“W-where did you get these?”

“Got 'em a few months ago. For us. For protection.” He pumped a round into the chamber. “Fully loaded, armor piercing slugs. Just point and shoot. How's that for a trust fund baby who sits on the Internet all day?”

Ginny was speechless, but she didn't have time to answer, even if she'd wanted to. Three more beetles scurried up out of the bug hole that Sven had fallen into.

The dirty hippy's still-living torso was yanked out of the pit by a beetle busy munching on his left arm. It hung tenuously connected to the rest of his body by several exposed tendons. He moaned in agony as his legless body bounced along with the beetle advancing toward the rest of the van dwellers.

Steve let off a round into the face of the closest beetle, blowing its mandibles and one whole side of its head away with the blast. “Nikki, Robert, get in the van and shut the doors! We'll be right behind you!”

The terrified couple did as they were told, dropping their towels and dirty clothes as they beat feet for the van.

Ginny pulled the trigger, blasting a bug's legs out from under it, crippling and incapacitating it. The force of the kickback almost knocked her off her feet. Her shoulder was already feeling sore after just the one shot, but she set her feet and aimed again.

She was a little woman, but she'd grown up shooting guns. A regular ol' shotgun wasn't going to get the better of her.

Steve shot a third beetle in its side as it tried to get around to their right and flank them. White, nasty bug guts spilled out onto the parking lot as the beetle twitched. The few spindly legs it had left shuddered and then froze in its death spasm.

That left only the beetle carrying a still-conscious Sven along with it. His dirty hair dragged along the ground, and blood oozed from his nose and mouth. He wouldn't live much longer—he was bleeding out fast.

Ginny took aim and fired, blowing up his head like a ripe watermelon.

The shot was enough to stop the bug, too. While the slug didn't kill it, it hit it close enough to its head to impair its motor function. Still trailing Sven's now headless corpse, the beetle jerked and spasmed around in a small circle, dripping its milky white internal fluid all over the ground as it did so.

“I'm sorry I fucked that guy,” Ginny said, turning to her husband. Her shoulder throbbed, but

she didn't care. "I shouldn't be such a cunt to you."

Steve just nodded, turning back toward the van...

...As it sped away, down the exit ramp, and back onto the highway.

Nikki and Robert had left them behind.

"Son of a fucking bitch!" Steve screamed, pointing his gun at the van. But it was much too far away to hit with a bullet; and even if it had been closer, there was no sense in risking their only mode of transportation by disabling it.

"We're fucked!" Ginny said, dropping down to the ground in frustration.

"Not necessarily," Steve said, walking over to a small black pickup truck that had been abandoned in the parking lot along with a smattering of other vehicles.

He tried the door, but it was locked. Using the butt of his shotgun, he smashed the driver's side window out and opened the door. He tossed the gun into the truck bed and turned around to face his wife, smiling. "Think I can hotwire this piece of shit without a YouTube tutorial to show me how?"

And that, more or less, is how Ginny and Steve made it down to Hopp's Hollow, Illinois. They followed the highway south, grabbing vehicles and supplies when they could, but they mostly relied on their survival training, eating vegetation and animal scraps left behind by the smaller beetles as they went.

When they finally got to Hopp's several months later, they were with four other survivors.

"C'mon!" Ginny said, excited, starving, exhausted, and more than ready to spend some time in the water. She cleared the remaining rocks and started out across the clearing.

That's when a figure stepped out of the shadows of the cave.

"Who dares trespass through *my* lands?"

Ginny stumbled to a halt. Steve and the other survivors froze behind her. They all looked up to see who was speaking.

She was naked except for a pair of small beetles covering her nipples and another attached to her shaved pubic area. She wore golden bracelets across her upper arms, fitted with sleek blue transparent fabric that ended on small golden rings on her pinky fingers.

She looked like royalty. She was gorgeous, except for one thing: There was a huge beetle growing out of the top of her head. Next to her, two pony-sized beetles joined her at the mouth of the cave. Strapped to crosses built onto the beetles' backs were two skeletal corpses missing most of their arms and legs. One of the bodies had filthy cloth wrapped around the place his nose would have been.

"None may pass through the Queen's lands without paying tribute! Have you brought me my tribute, peasants?!"

Sue Ellen was still alive.

Chapter 16

Sue Ellen stared down at the frightened humans. She smiled. She'd done this many times before over the last six months. With no power, no TV, and no one to fuck, things got pretty boring as the Queen of the Beetles. That's why she made up this elaborate schtick about tributes. Nobody knew what the fuck she was talking about when they tried to pass over the bluffs from the north toward the river.

She had beetle lookouts at a dozen cave mouths that would alert her as soon as they saw people trying to pass through the area.

After she'd left the giant beetle's husk behind, she and her beetle horde had spent days tracking Larry and Mickey. She finally found them hiding out in the ruins of an old mall on the north side of Hopp's Hollow.

Sue Ellen rode atop her pony-sized beetle as she entered the front of the dilapidated mall. It had already been abandoned for nearly five years before the beetles came up from underground. Vandals had smashed out the sliding glass doors and vegetation had sprouted up through the neglected parking lot and sidewalks—and that was all before the beetles had gotten hold of the place.

Now it looked as though bombs had been dropped. Huge holes yawned from the ruined floors and sunlight broke through large gaps in the roof above the crumbled catwalks of the second floor area.

“Find them!” Sue Ellen screamed. She was curled up on the back of the big bug, holding the horn protruding from its wide head to keep her balance.

Tracking the two criminals to the mall had been easy. They didn't know they were being followed by a giant horde of beetles under the command of the slutty girl they'd maimed and left for

dead, so they weren't doing anything to cover their trail.

Sue Ellen's beetles had no trouble following the mess of scavenged food and small fires they'd built at night where they'd slept.

Now, inside the mall, it was only a matter of time before her minions sniffed out the men who'd left her crippled.

The horde spread out through what was left of the top and bottom levels, searching through the rubble of the stores.

That's when Sue Ellen had spotted the costume in a trendy clothing store. They were having some kind of princess costume promotion. Guiding her beetle mount toward the mannequin wearing the sheer blue dress, Sue Ellen reached out and plucked all of the pieces from the plastic figure.

While the dress itself was several sizes too big, she found that the gold-plated arm bands were adjustable in size. She briefly considered taking the dress with her to re-size at a more convenient time, but decided that she kind of liked being naked all the time now. It felt empowering, being the Queen of the Beetles and completely nude. Like a twisted, apocalyptic version of being the head stripper at the club.

"They've found them, my queen," the beetle in her head told her as two dog-sized beetles excitedly ran into the clothing store clicking and popping their mandibles and mouth parts.

Slipping on the arm bands and rings, Sue Ellen discarded the dress. "Take me to them."

"Tr-tribute?" Ginny asked, looking up at the beetle woman. "I don't... I don't know what that means. Like, a gift?"

Sue Ellen smiled mischievously and crossed her arms over her naked breasts. The little beetles covering her nipples jittered and fussed, re-positioning themselves.

"Gifts, food, big strong men..." She motioned toward Steve and another survivor, Paul. Paul was a burly, bearded man with thinning red hair cut short in a tight military cut.

Paul and his girlfriend Mel had run into Steve and Ginny in Springfield Illinois, nearly shooting them when the latter pair had stumbled upon their makeshift camp before either couple realized what they'd done.

Paul and Mel had one other person with them: Paul's teenage son, Christian. Together, the five of them had picked their way down Highway 55 toward St. Louis. Toward the river.

They'd gotten a lucky break twenty miles south when they'd managed to start a wrecked Ford Focus and get it out onto the roadway. Down this far south, there were a lot of pileups and giant bug holes in the road. Miles upon miles of highway were impassible, and the small country towns adjacent to the roadway were nearly all gutted from beetle attacks and survivors looting the wreckage for supplies.

But near a demolished Flying J gas station, the highway inexplicably opened up for more than thirty miles. There were cars wrecked and burned along the way, and some massive bug holes, but Steve had managed to navigate the highway for half a day without seeing a single bug. It had only taken them another week and a half on foot to make it to Hopp's Hollow.

"Men? W-what do you mean, *men*?" Ginny asked, looking at Steve and Paul nervously. She kept glancing up at the huge bug protruding from the top of the beetle woman's head.

"Leave the men. You women and the child may pass. Refuse, and you all die." The two beetles mounted with the skeletons raised their heads and slammed their mandibles together, making loud, menacing snapping sounds.

Mel grabbed Paul by the hand. "No," she said softly. Paul and Mel hadn't been a couple when the beetles rose, but they'd been together every second since. Mel had treated Paul's son like her own for the last six months. The three of them huddled together, exchanging anxious glances.

Sue Ellen petted the heads of the beetles next to her. "These are the remains of the last two people to cross me," she said, pointing at the pair of skeletons. "Let's just say they didn't die of natural causes."

In truth, Mickey and Larry hadn't been dead for very long. Sue Ellen's beetles had found them huddling inside a Sports Authority store back in the stock room behind a pathetic little wall of shoe boxes they'd built up as their shelter.

The pair screamed as Sue Ellen's beetles smashed through their shoe fort and dragged them out into the lobby of the store where Sue Ellen was seated on top of the horned bug.

"You fucks," she said, rubbing the makeshift bandages tightly wrapped around her ruined ankles.

Her beetles dropped the two men on the ground in front of their queen and maneuvered their mandibles around the backs of the criminals' necks, forcing them into kneeling positions.

"What the fuck are we gonna do with you?"

Mickey grabbed the mandibles clamped tightly around his neck, trying in vain to wrench them away. "Fuck you, whore!" he spat. "You can fucking kill me but you can't not be a dirty slut. I hope you choke on beetle dick!"

Sue Ellen slid off the back of the horned beetle and crawled up to Mickey. Leaning back on her knees, she was face to face with him.

"Kill you? Are you fucking kidding me?" She looked over at Larry, laughing. "Is he fucking with me?"

Larry trembled in fear, breaking eye contact with the bemused woman.

"You fucking crippled me and left me for dead, motherfucker. You're not getting off that easy. Kill you? Motherfucker, I'm going to make you beg me to kill you."

Mickey finally broke eye contact. He looked at Larry who was quietly pissing himself.

"You think he's gonna help you?" Sue Ellen asked, grabbing Mickey by the face, forcing him to look at her again. "I'm gonna kill him first and make you fucking watch."

Larry began to sob.

"Not so cocky now, huh?" Sue Ellen said, crawling over to the noseless man. "You two fucked with the wrong ghetto bitch."

"Wait," Sue Ellen said, pushing the bandages on Larry's face aside. "I fucking know you twats!"

Larry looked down at the floor, still sobbing quietly.

"You two faggots go to Night Sweats!" Sue Ellen laughed and crawled back over to Mickey, giving him a good look. "Holy. Fucking. Shit. I fucking stole your coke, didn't I?"

"Fuck off and die, skank," Mickey said, trying his best to maintain his dignity.

"What a small fucking world! God damn! Wooo boy, we got FUCKED UP on that coke, too. My boyfriend snorted that shit right off my asshole and I sucked it off his cock."

Mickey just frowned, not saying a word.

"Speaking of sucking dick..." She crossed her arms and looked at the pair. "Since you boys liked watching me suck cock back in the big dead bug, I think it's only fair you return the favor."

"W-what?" Larry said, snot and tears dripping down his face as he struggled against the sharp mandibles of the beetle holding him in place.

"Hmmm," she said, tapping her lips. "Who's the bitch and who's the butch?"

Mickey began to struggle again, understanding what was about to happen. He fought so hard his neck started bleeding from the serrated edges of the mandibles holding him in place.

"Bring him over here," Sue Ellen said, grinning as she crawled back to Larry.

The beetle did as instructed, yanking Mickey up with much protest, then depositing him on the ground in front of Sue Ellen and Larry, the latter of which continued to weep openly.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I—"

Sue Ellen smacked the noseless man. "If you apologize one more time, I... Well, I'm probably not going to do anything worse to you than I'm already planning on doing," she said, barking out a laugh. "But shut the fuck up, just the same."

She turned to Mickey. "Ok. Suck his dick."

"You'll have to fucking kill me before—"

"Bite off his hand," Sue Ellen said to the beetle holding Mickey in place.

The huge bug let go of his neck and took his right hand into its mandibles.

"Wait!" Mickey said, eyes wide. He was sweating profusely and smelled like the inside of a porta potty.

"You gonna suck his cock for me?" Sue Ellen asked, bemused smile on her face.

Mickey looked at his hand, then at Larry. He shook his head. "I-I can't fucking—"

"Take it off," Sue Ellen said, waving her hand, looking away so she didn't have to see what came next.

Just like that, the beetle closed its jaws and Mickey's hand popped off like it belonged to a child's doll.

He shrieked and grabbed his newly shorn stump. Blood gushed out onto his pants. He leaped to his feet and ran around in circles.

"That's not going to fix anything," Sue Ellen said. She sat back, arms stretched out, tits pointing in the air and laughed. She couldn't remember the last time she'd had this much fun.

"Sit down and quit screaming or you'll bleed out."

Mickey collapsed to his knees. His eyes were still wide with horror and shock. The beetle approached him again. He flinched away, cradling his bleeding arm like a newborn baby.

"Hold still so it can cauterize the wound."

She tapped the beetle jutting out from her head. "He told me they can do that—he told me they can do LOTS of cool things."

Mickey reluctantly stuck his arm out. He was shaking all over, babbling and whispering incoherently as the beetle took his gory stump into its mouth.

Mickey shrieked again and collapsed. The beetle spat his arm out and stepped away from the injured man.

"I didn't say it wouldn't hurt like a motherfucker," Sue Ellen said. "But look. No blood."

Mickey raised his sweat-soaked head and looked at his stump which was now caked over with a gooey black substance. The wound no longer bled.

"Some kind of stomach gunk made to aid the digestion of all the dirt and concrete the creepy fuckers eat when they burrow. Apparently makes a good... what did you call it?" She looked upward toward the beetle in her head. "Coagulant. That's right."

Sue Ellen looked around at the beetles surrounding her. "In fact. Why don't you bug-fucks give me some of that shit?"

She motioned for her beetles to step forward. They did as commanded, puking up their black gunk all over Sue Ellen's ruined legs.

Molding the stinking goo around her calves and feet, she constructed a pair of weird, makeshift casts, complete with six-inch pointed heels jutting off the backs.

Wincing, she stood on shaky legs, more than once nearly collapsing. Using the horn of the pony-sized beetle she'd rode in on, she took a few small, exploratory steps and found that the hardened stomach bile reinforced her damaged Achilles tendons enough to support her weight. In moments she was strutting around confidently, laughing.

"Now," Sue Ellen said, running her hands through Mickey's sweat-soaked hair. "Are you

going to suck this poor man's cock, or do we have to do the same thing with your jackoff hand? Wait, were you right-handed? Was that your jackoff hand? Oh fuck..." she said with mock concern.

Mickey crawled toward Larry slowly. When he got to the other man, he sat up on his knees. All the fight was gone from his face. His eyes were glazed over. He was broken. And it had only taken one hand.

After the show he'd just put on when she captured him, Sue Ellen was surprised he gave up so easily. All bark and no bite, apparently.

With his remaining hand, Mickey reached out and shakily unzipped Larry's piss-soaked fly. Without needing further encouragement, he pulled the filthy jeans off his friend.

Larry, it seemed, was both averse to wearing underwear and to any kind of pubic grooming.

His little cock head just barely stuck out from the center of a thick mound of coarse brown pubic hair. Said hair (unfortunately for Mickey) was still dripping with Larry's fear-piss.

Closing his eyes, Mickey leaned forward and took the tiny member between his lips. With his nose buried in his friend's pubic hair, he gagged.

"This isn't nearly as hot as I thought it would be," Sue Ellen said, frowning. She propped her elbow in one hand and rested her chin in the other in mock boredom.

But then something happened.

Larry began to moan softly. Soon Mickey's mouth filled with hard cock.

"Wow," Sue Ellen said, raising her eyebrows. "Grower not a shower, huh Lar?"

Mickey now bobbed back and forth, his nose no longer able to reach Larry's pubic hair. Larry had grown from an inch to at least five respectable (albeit on the thinner side) inches once he was in his injured friend's mouth.

"Something you guys need to tell me?" Sue Ellen said as Larry pumped his hips back and forth, face fucking Mickey.

The latter looked up, horrified as he was mouth-raped with vigor.

"We got ourselves a closet case here, folks," Sue Ellen said to the contingent of beetles crowded around the bizarre scene. Aiding in the face-rape, Sue Ellen grabbed Mickey's hair again and pushed his head forward, forcing him to deep throat his friend's little dick.

Mickey abruptly pulled away and puked on the floor. Larry's cock spasmed in the open air, the final remnants of jizm leaking out of the tip of his thin cock. He'd blown his load right down his friend's throat.

"How kinky," Sue Ellen said, smiling. "Now bite it off."

"Whaaa—"

The beetle holding Larry's neck tightened his grip as he started to protest.

Mickey looked up at Sue Ellen with hatred in his eyes. She was sure he was about to lunge at her and commit suicide by beetle when, instead, he turned to face Larry.

Darting forward, vile anger in his eyes, he took the piss-soaked man's hard dick in his mouth again, bit down, and yanked.

Larry mewled like a dying cat as he tried to back his hips away. The cock didn't come off with the first bite. Mickey had to grind his teeth and pull back and forth, tearing the individual fibers free as blood spurted out around his face with more pressure than Larry's cum had jettisoned into his mouth.

And that had just been their first day with Sue Ellen.

Many more like it would follow during the intervening months between the beetle uprising and the day that Ginny, Steve and their fellow survivors stumbled upon Sue Ellen's cavalcade of horrors.

It wasn't until an armless, legless, castrated and blinded Larry bit off and then swallowed his own tongue several weeks before Ginny and Steve's arrival that Sue Ellen had even considered killing the pair. After Larry choked to death on his own tongue, torturing Mickey wasn't nearly as fun. She finally had him slowly burned alive over the course of an afternoon and then had both bodies picked clean of meat and bone before mounting them up on the pair of beetles that the demented queen stood between just now.

Chapter 17

Ginny took several cautious steps back, rejoining the others at the edge of the clearing. “What do you want to do?” she asked Steve without taking her eyes off of the clearly insane woman up in the cave.

“Haven't decided yet,” Steve said, shifting his pack from one shoulder to the other.

Ginny knew exactly what was in the pack. What was in all of their packs. The question was, would it be enough to stop the bug woman if she attacked?

“How is she controlling them?” Paul asked, hand on his own backpack. “I haven't seen any kind of intelligence at all out of these bugs. They attack and eat. That's it. She's got the fucking things tamed!”

“I say we burn them all and that crazy bitch along with them,” Ginny said in a hushed tone, smiling up at the Beetle Queen so as not to draw suspicion.

When Ginny and Steve had stumbled into Paul and Mel's small encampment, the red-headed man had pulled his pistol, leaping off his makeshift seat made of battered milk crates. “What the fuck do you want?” he yelled in a hushed tone, sticking his gun in Steve's face.

Steve threw his hands into the air. “Whoa!” he yelled.

Paul grabbed him by the back of his head and pulled him over by the SUV parked under a camouflaged canopy. “Shut your mouth! You want to draw them out?”

Paul had built up bug netting around his SUV with small entrances at the front and rear of his makeshift enclosure. Steve and Ginny had been hunkered down, making their way through woods adjacent to Highway 55 somewhere around Springfield, Illinois.

Trees were good at keeping the larger bugs at bay, while the smaller beetles able to maneuver in the thick underbrush were easier to dispatch silently with sharp objects (or avoid

altogether if the couple was quiet enough). Paul, apparently, had the same idea.

The first night in Paul and Mel's camp had been tense, but when Steve and Ginny saw that they had Christian with them, they relaxed. A family—even a family as seemingly well-armed as Paul's—was less likely to be a pack of crazed murderers or rapists.

Steve and Ginny had thankfully avoided any of those on their nocturnal trek through the wilderness.

It was after Paul learned that Steve and Ginny were preppers and very knowledgeable about survival that he warmed up to them and considered them part of his family.

They shared their survival stories. Over a small cooking fire, sharing modest cups of beans that Steve had scavenged from a ruined grocery, Paul and Mel explained that they'd met the day the beetles attacked while Paul and Christian were trying to get out of town. Paul's old truck had run out of gas while waiting in the enormous line of panicked citizens desperate to get out of town, as though the next town over or the next wouldn't be the same sort of flaming nightmare of death and bugs that his own was.

Paul had stood in the bed of the truck, waving his spare gas can in the air, shouting, pleading for anyone to let him siphon off even a little bit of gas.

Mel had seen Christian sitting in the front seat. His long red hair covering his face couldn't conceal how frightened he was as his dad stood behind him screaming.

Mel stopped her car, in spite of the honking and yelling from the cars behind her.

Paul jumped out of the back of the truck. “Thank you! Thank you! God, thank you!” He grabbed a length of hose from his bed and approached her SUV. “I won't take much, I promise. Just enough to get us down the road to the next gas station.”

That station was currently burning to the ground. The smoke was clearly visible against the horizon.

“You're not gonna get anywhere with half a gallon from my tank. That your son?”

Paul looked back over his shoulder. “Christian. He's only fourteen. Please, lady. You gotta give us something!”

Mel set her mouth and looked back and forth between the bulky man and his son.

“Get in.”

“What?”

The horn honking grew deafening behind her. “Get your son and get in before these guys get out of their cars and lynch us both!”

Paul, Mel and Christian had been together ever since.

The little group finished their meal and put out the fire as Ginny and Steve recounted their tale of survival (leaving out the bit about Ginny and Sven fucking next to Steve while he slept, of course).

That's when Paul had showed them the weapons.

“Fuck me running,” Ginny said, standing outside of the small trailer attached to Paul and Mel's SUV.

“Mel here worked as an on-site nurse for the military base here in Springfield,” Paul said, patting the small, brown-haired woman on her shoulder. “Her access codes still worked after the bugs smashed through there and ate all the soldiers.

That situation had perpetuated itself. The more soldiers fired their weapons at the beetles, the more beetles were attracted to the base. Before long, before the end of the first week of the invasion, the base had fallen. Any surviving military personnel had fled the area. Once the people were gone, the bugs had lost interest.

And that's when Paul and Mel had made their move.

Paul was ex-military. Retired Marine. After Mel had told him where she'd worked, he got the idea to revisit the base and see if they could find anything in there to defend themselves with.

They weren't prepared for what they found.

“What are you gonna do with all of this?” Steve asked, astonished.

Paul laughed. “I have no fucking idea, bud!”

Inside the trailer were rows and rows of grenades, automatic rifles, land mines. More hand guns than all of the group could hold in both hands at once. And the ammo—the entire floor of the trailer was covered in magazine after magazine of bullets.

Paul and Mel had the arsenal of a small army behind their modest little SUV.

“We grabbed the netting and canopy at the same time,” Mel said, closing up the trailer. “We haven't seen many bugs around, so we've just been slowly moving south with the same idea as you: If we can make it to the river somewhere near St. Louis and set up a more permanent encampment, maybe we can survive this madness after all.”

“I'm with Ginny,” Paul said through clenched teeth. “With the amount of C4 and land mines we've got in these packs, we can blow that fucking cave and the freaky beetle bitch to kingdom come.”

“We can lay down suppressing fire while you and Paul run the explosives up,” Mel said.

Christian nodded.

It seemed everyone was in consensus except for Steve.

“No,” Steve said. “I'll do it.”

Chapter 18

The plan was simple: Steve would surrender himself to the Beetle Queen so that the others would be granted safe passage to the river. Steve would carry one pack with all of the C4 and mines while the others would take the packs with all of the guns and ammo. They would then charge back up to the cave after they heard the initial blast, guns blazing, and eliminate any bugs trying to escape the destruction.

Except that's not what happened at all.

Steve kissed Ginny deeply and then pulled back, looking at her beautiful blue eyes. He pushed a curly lock of hair out of her face. He'd completely forgiven her for the Sven incident. He understood why she'd acted out. He hadn't been a good partner to her. His obsession with the idea of survival and of other people's perception of him as an expert prepper had strained his marriage. But these few months out in it—out here fending for their lives every day and night—had brought the couple closer together than Steve had ever thought possible. They moved and reacted like a single unit with two bodies. Even their sex transcended any physical coupling Steve had ever experienced back in normal life (and it didn't hurt that the Sven tape had shown him Ginny's kinky side, a fact that Steve had made much use of in the sweaty thick of night inside their cramped tents and out in the dense, humid woods of southern Illinois).

But now, Ginny's eyes showed worry. She was playing strong, but Steve could tell, deep down, that she was scared that their plan wouldn't work. That he would be hurt, or worse.

He was scared, too. Terrified, in fact. But he couldn't bare the thought of losing Ginny or Christian to the insane beetle woman in the cave. He'd rather die if it meant that those two had a fighting chance. Mel and Paul would take great care of them. He knew this was the right choice.

He kept a brave face and hugged his group before sending them off and making his way up the shallow side of the cliff toward the cave. Reaching the top, he turned around and watched his friends pick their way across the remaining rocks past the clearing toward the river.

That was the last time he would ever see them alive.

“I hope you don't find the accommodations too barbaric,” Sue Ellen said as she lead Steve down the long corridor just inside the cave mouth.

That was an understatement. The walls were lined with bizarre drawings in what looked like some kind of dark red rust color. Images of crudely drawn women with huge boobs and men with foot-long cocks all fucking in weird positions. The corridor was lit with torches stuck to the wall with some kind of black tarry substance. This gave the bizarre sexual pictographs an even more alarming aspect because the flames made the figures look like they were jerking back and forth in wild sexual motion.

Steve felt like he was in the basement of some mentally disturbed teenage metal head.

“I don't get a lot of visitors, so things can get very boring here with just the beetles to keep me company.”

Steve glanced nervously behind him at the two beetles carrying the skeletal remains on their backs. He took a deep breath and adjusted the pack on his back, only able to take comfort in the fact that at any given moment he could blow the whole disturbing cave to Hell.

As they got closer to a well-lit opening ahead, the weird beetle woman became more chatty, skipping along and waving her arms side to side, almost childlike.

“It's a shame my babies pulverized most of the city before I realized they were under my control. I would've loved to set up shop in one of those fancy mansions in the gated communities around here, but the beetles pretty much compromised the structural integrity of all the buildings around here with their tunnels and whatnot.”

Sue Ellen smiled back at Steve.

“Structural integrity. I don't even know what the fuck that means. But,” Sue Ellen tapped the beetle sticking out of her head, “ol' Sammy here is smart as fuck. He tells me things.” She paused at this and looked at Steve again, holding her gaze for an uncomfortable amount of time.

“I gave him that name. I gave them all names. But Sammy's my favorite. He saved my life, you know?”

Steve just nodded his head, unsure how the crazy woman expected him to react.

“Of course you don't know, silly! That's why I'm telling ya! My own brood, my precious babies,” she said, reaching out to caress the smooth, shiny back of a large beetle plodding along next to her. “They almost devoured their own mother before Sammy told me that I controlled their every thought. Their every desire.”

Sue Ellen stopped and turned toward Steve. “Did you know they'll die for me?”

“No,” Steve managed. His heart was racing. He was second-guessing his decision to go on this mission alone the deeper they got into the cave system. He had no idea it was so vast. They'd walked fifty or sixty yards down this haunting, twisting corridor. It was like a haunted house with no end. Even if he set the C4 charges for ten minutes he wasn't sure he could get out without trapping himself inside. He'd have to find another way out; surely there was a more shallow corridor somewhere in the dark and claustrophobic cave.

“Sure they will. Watch!” she said, pointing at the beetle off to her right. The other three beetles accompanying the two of them—the one Sue Ellen had caressed and the two with the skeletons on their backs—darted forward and attacked the forth bug, tearing it to pieces in seconds. The victim hadn't even so much as flinched in protest. It stood and died as it was commanded.

“See? Neat, huh? They do lots of other things for me as well...”

Steve began to sweat. Then he heard a distant thumping as the weird caravan continued forward. Soon he felt the thumping in the bottoms of his feet. A few yards later and he began to hear a voice along with the steady thumping.

Music, he realized. There was music playing up ahead. Somehow, this notion filled Steve with dread. The torches on the walls became fewer, and eventually ended altogether as they approached the wide opening up ahead. The entryway was obscured, but the light coming from inside lit the corridor sufficiently enough to see where they were going. The rudimentary artwork on the walls became even more bizarre at this point.

The large breasted women in these paintings had beetles coming out of their heads, and they were violently decapitating and castrating the big dicked men.

The more of these drawings, Steve saw, the more he realized that the women in the paintings were all actually one woman. Sue Ellen was painting herself. Giving herself humongous boobs. Painting herself raping, killing, even eating the men in the pictures.

Steve's instinct at that point was to turn around and run. To set the charges as he bolted. To drop the pack and sprint as fast as he could back to the normal world (or at least what was left of it). Back to Ginny. Back to a world that made sense, even if it had been ravaged by giant insects. Anything was better than this.

But he never got the chance.

Sue Ellen abruptly stopped and spun around, twirling her hands in the air like a ballerina.

"I always wanted to do that, you know? Dance professionally. My dad was too busy trying to fuck me to enter me into any kind of after school programs and shit. So I became a stripper, and he OD'd on cheap smack."

She smiled again. That smile made Steve's bones feel iced over. This woman was completely insane. His hands trembled. He wanted to bolt. His legs twitched in anticipation. But now, with the beetle woman and her bugs' attention on him, he wouldn't make it three feet before they were on him. He'd seen how quickly they'd launched themselves at the other beetle. Had she done that on purpose to show him he couldn't run away and live?

He had to calm down and play it cool. Hold tight until the timing was perfect. He'd come too far to lose his shit now.

"Arms up," Sue Ellen said. Her eyes glinted with the faint dancing flames of the torches on the walls many yards behind them now.

"What?" Steve said, feeling completely naked in that moment, as though all of his plans were exposed and laid out in front of him.

"Arms up, buckaroo! We gotta check you for weapons and shit before we let you into the club."

The club? What kind of madness was this? Sweat streamed down Steve's face. His mouth was dry. He did as he was instructed, not at all prepared to be searched. What would she do to him once she found the bombs?

Sue Ellen's eyes went wide and she laughed so loudly it hurt Steve's ears in the confined space of the cave.

"Just fucking with you, Steve-O!" Then her smile dropped. "Do it."

Before he could react, the two beetles housing the skeletons reached up and snapped their jaws shut around Steve's wrists.

At first he only felt a pinch. Then he saw the blood gush.

He fell to the ground, not making a sound. He was instantly in shock, his mind reeling, begging to make sense of the pools of blood gushing from his arms, to somehow roll back time to just ten seconds before, to stop what had happened.

To stop the bugs from biting off both of his hands.

Chapter 19

“Did you really fucking think I'd let you in here strapped to the tits? Do you think I'm that fucking stupid?!” Sue Ellen loomed above Steve as he cradled his handless stumps under his armpits, a purely instinctual reaction. His mind was blank, completely shut down. He stared up at her, barely comprehending what she was saying.

“Well, I *am* pretty fucking stupid, but Sammy's not,” she said, looking up at the bug in her head. “He told me what you people were up to down there. Didn't you know we had bugs in the ground right under your feet listening to every word you were saying?”

She laughed again. There was cruelty in her eyes. In her smile. In that laugh. Sadism the likes of which Steve had never seen in a person before.

“C'mon, get him up before he bleeds out. We've got so much fun stuff to show him!”

The beetles clamped their mandibles down on his arms and forced his stumps out from his armpits. As one held an arm still, the other beetle puked the black gunk he'd seen on the walls all over his wounds, sealing them off.

Finally, the third beetle used its head to push Steve's limp body onto its back, carrying it forward toward the curtain ahead that hung between the end of the corridor and the wide opening beyond.

A curtain, Steve realized as they got closer, made entirely of human bones.

“Ok, so I lied,” Sue Ellen said once they were inside the huge room.

The ceiling was tall. Only the tips of stalactites poked through the darkness like the fangs of some unseen beast. The corridor leading to the expansive room must have lead downward into the very depths underneath Hopp's Hollow.

The cave room was not only tall, but wide and long, too. An entire two story house could have fit inside just this one chamber.

But it wasn't the room itself that caused Steve's spine to turn cold as ice. Rather, it's what was inside.

Sue Ellen sauntered over to a chair made of a hodgepodge of human bones and the mandibles and exoskeletal armor of dead beetles.

The seat and back was made of the smooth black abdomens of bugs, while the legs of the hideous thing were made of actual human legs. Human arms and a pair of skeletal hands turned upward holding human skulls made up the arms of the chair.

Attached to back of the chair, splayed out in threatening fashion, were mandibles; dozens of them jutting up and out in all directions, creating a truly menacing throne for a truly menacing queen.

“Yeah. I lied to you. I've actually had lots and lots of visitors,” she said, collapsing into her chair, as though the very act of walking out of her cave and speaking to Steve and his friends had exhausted her.

She motioned at the corpses surrounding her. Dozens? Hundreds?

The chamber was full of plush couches, chairs, and wooden tables situated around poles. Stripper poles.

Sue Ellen had turned the cave into a sadistic parody of the Night Sweats strip club. Seated in all the fuzzy chairs and on the couches were people. Dead people in various stages of decomposition. All of them maimed, obviously brutally killed and then staged to look like patrons of this macabre and nightmarish club.

There was even a bar set up in one corner—with a freshly killed bartender, who's slit throat was bleeding fresh blood into a pitcher resting in front of him—and a DJ booth where the music was emanating from, only Sue Ellen's DJ was headless. His decapitated dome, complete with trendy flat-billed hat, rested on the turntable in front of his body, slowly spinning with the record.

There was a large gas generator off to another side of the room, powering the music system as well as the blacklights giving the entire chamber an ethereal glow.

But the worst part of the awful crime scene was the strippers. They weren't dead—not yet, anyway.

Dancing on each of the poles were terrified, clearly starved naked girls. Their legs were chained to the base of the poles, but that's not what kept them dancing in spite of the horrors in front of them. No, the real threat was the score of beetles roaming the room, snapping their slimy jaws at the women anytime they stopped gyrating to the pulsing club music blaring over the stacks of speakers pointed at the center of the room.

And Sue Ellen's throne oversaw all of it from the strip club's northernmost point.

The beetle carrying Steve dumped him unceremoniously at the foot of the throne, discarding the bag of explosives nearby.

He lay there on his back, staring up at the spiked ceiling, trying to will one of the stalactites to unseat itself and impale him. To put him out of his misery. His psychic powers seemed to be lacking, as none of the fang-like objects obeyed his command.

“Yeah, a lot of people come through Hopp's for some reason.” Sue Ellen seemed to be talking to the room as much as to Steve. He didn't care either way. It was only a matter of minutes before she'd get tired of him and end his life. She'd made her point. She was terrorizing him to show others not to trespass through her territory. He just hoped it would be quick and mostly painless.

He couldn't have been more wrong.

“I figured I'd better put together a little something to entertain all my guests, you know what I'm saying?” Sue Ellen uncrossed her legs, giving him a long view of her shaved pussy before recrossing them. “Do you like it? Never really knew anything besides the strip club life, and since that place was smashed along with the rest of the city, I figured, WHY NOT!”

The Beetle Queen laughed again. She couldn't seem to get enough of hearing her own voice. “I try to keep them alive! I really do! Nobody ever wants to play with me, though. They say I'm too rough!” She laughed again.

Steve swallowed hard.

“But most of them aren't as cute as you. What was your name again? Oh yeah! Steve-O!”

She hopped off her grotesque throne and walked around Steve with her arms crossed, tapping a finger on her chin.

“What do you think, Sammy?” she said to the bug sticking out of her brain. “No, we can't just kill him. Yes, he knows too much. Yes, if he escaped he'd be able to lead people back to our lair.”

She giggled. “Lair. Like I'm a fuckin' super villain, right?”

She was finally addressing Steve directly. He didn't respond.

She kicked him hard in one of his hand-stumps. “RIGHT?”

“Right!” Steve blurted out in a yelp. He rolled onto his side, cradling the wounded limb. Dull pain radiated up his whole arm.

“Mmmmm,” Sue Ellen said, her eyes narrowing to slits. “You know, Steve-O. It's been a little minute since I got a proper nut.”

Steve cocked his head to the side, looking at his captor's face. She couldn't be serious. But her mouth hung open and her lips pouted out.

She was clearly horny.

“My babies fuck me anytime I want, but...” she sighed, turning one of the little beetle's covering her nipple, causing its legs to scrape against the sensitive tissue, “it's just not the same as a real cock.”

She frowned and let go of the little bug. She leaped up into the air, eyes wide. “I have a great idea!”

Steve's stomach turned. Whatever she had planned, it was sure to be awful. He did his best to steady his nerves, knowing that whatever she did next was likely to be the last thing he'd have to endure before he was mercifully released to his death.

A squat, fat beetle as wide as a dinner table waddled over to Steve and nudged him with its sharp mandibles.

What the hell was she expecting out of him? She'd just chopped off his hands and dragged him to her murder chamber, and now she expected him to fuck her on the back of a giant bug? He'd always considered himself a reliable cocksman, but this was ridiculous.

The beetle nudged him harder, drawing blood on his shoulder. He cried out, but climbed to his feet, head still swimming from blood loss and shock.

He collapsed onto the beetle.

“On your back,” Sue Ellen purred. Just the very act of commanding Steve to do anything she said was clearly turning her on. She practically drooled as he obeyed her order and lay down on his back.

“Now, off with the clothes—oh,” she smirked and rolled her eyes, mocking embarrassment. “No hands. Right.”

A pair of smaller bugs climbed up on top of the fat one and proceeded to cut Steve's clothes away.

Sue Ellen picked the small beetles off her nipples and discarded them, she was now fully nude aside from her arm bands and the black tarry bio-slime that covered her legs from just below her knees down to her feet.

The battered women all around the room had stopped dancing. They all stood at their poles quietly watching, knowing what was about to happen.

The small beetles puked out more black gunk, pinning Steve's limbs to the back of the fat bug. Naked, restrained, Steve's manhood hung limp.

Sue Ellen frowned. “Can't do much with that, now can we?” She climbed on top of the captive man, seductively writhing across his bare skin as she did so.

Her thick nipples caressed his upper thighs as she planted little kisses on his stomach.

He opened his eyes, only to be met with jaws of the beetle sticking out of her head. Sammy, she'd called it. Its mandibles pricked across Steve's chin, causing him to cry out in protest.

She lifted her head. "Sorry," she giggled. "Didn't mean to poke you. Sometimes I forget there's a bug sticking out of my head."

She leaped up and planted her bare crotch against his still flaccid member.

She slowly gyrated back and forth. "I don't know if we're gonna get anything out of your little guy, Steve-O."

This didn't seem to affect the bug woman's own arousal one bit. She continued to take in deep breaths as she rubbed herself all over him. She dug her nails into his chest, seemingly already on the edge of orgasm just from humping his limp dick.

"You know who fucked me real good?" she asked, eyes closed, still grinding back and forth on the captive man.

She continued without waiting for an answer. "Well, I never actually got a chance to fuck him, but oh my did he have a beautiful cock." Her gyrations increased. She began to moan.

Steve felt somehow even less aroused with the naked woman getting herself off on top of him. There was something robotic about what she was saying. Like she'd said it many times before.

"His name was Jackson, and oh baby did he gave the biggest, blackest cock I ever sucked."

Sue Ellen stopped moving and opened her eyes. She smiled huge. "You wanna see it?!"

Steve's breathing quickened. This wasn't good.

"Poor Jackson didn't make it," Sue Ellen said, dramatically pouting her bottom lip. "But!" she said, smiling huge, motioning for her beetles. "I was able to save the best parts of him."

Suddenly a small beetle crawled up onto Steve's chest. He looked on in horror as he understood what the crazy Beetle Queen was talking about.

There, on the back of the bug, were two things, both equally awful. First was a dark colored mask. As Sue Ellen picked it up, its features became clear.

"Isn't he just the cutest!"

She had somehow skinned this Jackson person's face off his body and fashioned it into a mask.

"I hope you don't take this as an insult, Steve-O, but you're just not as pretty as my Jackson." She reached out and pulled the mask over his head. It fit snugly around his face, like a gimp's mask. It smelled like roadkill. Bile rose up in Steve's throat as he took in musky, stank breaths.

He bucked and screamed, but the lips of the mask were sewn shut, so his cries were muffled. He thrashed back and forth trying to buck the other object off his chest.

Sue Ellen snatched it up as it rolled off to one side. "Now, now! We can't lose this. It's my favorite part!"

What was it? Jackson's big black cock, as Sue Ellen had described it, similarly preserved and stretched out over a nearly foot-long dildo, complete with big black balls.

Sue Ellen turned it around and showed Steve the base of the thing. It was hollow.

"No offense, but," Sue Ellen raised her eyebrows and pointed down at Steve's cock. She made a mock grossed-out face and shook her head. "You ain't no Jackson downstairs either."

Steve bucked his hips and rocked them back and forth, but he wasn't able to move very much at all with Sue Ellen's weight on top of him.

The beetle sitting on his chest puked some more of that black gunk inside the macabre dildo.

Sue Ellen reached between his legs and slipped the cadaver cock over his own, fusing his manhood to that of the dead man's.

The insane woman didn't hesitate. She slipped the huge dead dick in between her thighs and squeaked out in mock discomfort. "Jackson," she said in an overly dramatic face. "You're so BIG. I'm not sure my little tiny pussy's gonna be able to take it all."

With that, she sat fully on the artificial penis, easily sliding it all the way in to the fake plastic balls.

She grunted and grinded against it, pausing to moan Jackson's name and caress his dismembered face pulled tightly over Steve's.

The captive man was quickly losing his hold on reality. His thoughts swam, trying to make any kind of sense of the hellish torture he was being forced to endure. Some little corner of his brain desperately thought of a means—any means—of escape. To put an end to his suffering.

And then he remembered.

Ginny.

Of course. The trauma of losing his hands had somehow pushed his wife completely out of his mind. He'd only been able to focus on the events in his immediate present.

Ginny and Paul and the others would have expected see an explosion by now. When they hadn't, they would come for him!

Of course they would! Any moment now they would come crashing through those skeletal curtains and spray a holy hellfire down on this crazy bitch and all of her minions!

Steve's mind came back into focus. He opened his eyes. The woman on top of him was pinching her own nipples, convulsing from a strong orgasm she'd given herself bucking on top of Jackson's corpse cock.

I have to keep her busy, Steve thought. *If she's too busy cumming, she won't know what's coming when my friends bust in here and annihilate this torture chamber.*

“You like that don't you?” he grunted, bucking his hips against Sue Ellen's own strokes.

She paused, gasping at the force of Steve's upward thrust. It seemed she wasn't used to her victims fucking back.

“Yes, I love it!” she said, opening her eyes, looking at Steve, astonished.

“Say my name, slut!” he yelled through the mask. He sounded ridiculous. He felt completely insane, but she was buying it. He had her focus. Any moment now this would all be over. Paul would find the pack of explosives and set the charges. Ginny would shoot this mad beetle-headed bitch right in her bug brain and pull him to safety.

“Jackson! Jackson!” Sue Ellen screamed.

“Take it! Take it you fucking cunt!” Steve was practically lifting himself off the back of the fat beetle now.

Sue Ellen took every brutal thrust, cumming again and again. It was clear she'd been getting herself off for a long time without the help of a willing partner. Steve began to take some kind of twisted pleasure in brutalizing the beetle woman's pussy. Had his own member not been fused forever to Jackson's death boner, he was almost sure he'd have a rock hard boner of his own by now.

And that's when it happened.

A group of beetles scuttled in from the torch-lit corridor beyond the grim strip club themed cave chamber.

They began to chatter to the bug in Sue Ellen's head. It chattered back.

Ginny, Steve thought. *She's here, and they're trying to warn their queen!* He began to hammer away with Jackson's dick anew, hoping and praying he could keep the cruel woman preoccupied until their arrival.

“Shut up! Shut up! I'm trying to fuck!” she said, clearly speaking psychically to the bug inside of her head. Sammy was telling her about the intruders.

“Can't you cum harder for me, slut? Can't you cum harder for Jackson?” he screamed, desperate to drown out the words of the brain beetle.

He'd done it. He'd succeeded. *Here they come!* He thought, smiling madly inside Jackson's dead face.

But it wasn't Ginny. Not exactly.

Through the bone curtain came a swarm of beetles, but not the kind that Sue Ellen controlled. Not the kind of black beetles with long mandibles and horns jutting out of their heads that Steve had seen for the past six months surviving in the wild.

These beetles were green. Their carapaces shimmered a beautiful emerald color. Their mandibles were much smaller in size than those of the beetles under Sue Ellen's control, but their exoskeletons looked thicker, and some of them flew. Scarab beetles, Steve realized, still thrusting up between Sue Ellen's legs.

Several of Sue Ellen's beetles lunged to attack the intruding bugs as they flooded into the tall chamber, but the thicker, heartier bugs overpowered them, smashing and crushing them with ease.

Finally, Sue Ellen noticed the commotion and jumped up off of Jackson's necro-cock.

Then *he* appeared.

Riding on the back of a scarab beetle hovering just off the ground like it was a surfboard, the Beetle King made his entrance.

He was a tall, tan, handsome kid, no more than twenty five years old. He had just a bit of sandy scruff on his face, chiseled abs that could only belong to an athlete and long, straw-blond hair. Like Sue Ellen, he was completely naked. Also, there was a scarab beetle growing out of the top of his head.

“Whoa, hey lady!” he said in a distinct southern California accent. “I brought you a present.”

When the scarab landed near where where Steve was strapped to the fat beetle, he opened a thick sack he'd picked up from the back of his surfboard beetle. He emptied the contents onto the ground.

They came bouncing to a stop right at the base of the fat beetle: The severed heads of Ginny, Paul, Mel and Christian.

Chapter 20

Steve wailed and thrashed on top of the beetle. Sue Ellen rolled her eyes. “Don't mind him. He's over dramatic.” She waved a dismissive hand and the fat beetle scuttled away, taking Steve's howling, convulsing body with it.

“Like, that dude seems like a buzzkill, lady. What's his problem?” the hunky beetle-headed man said, brushing thin blonde hair out of his face.

“Who gives a fuck?” Sue Ellen said, unable to contain her excitement. She shoved her hand out. “I'm Sue Ellen. What's your name?”

“Me?” the hunk said, taking her hand daintily into his. His palms were smooth, his nails immaculately trimmed. It was clear he was a rich kid who'd never done a hard day's work in his life. “I'm Rob.”

“Rob!” Sue Ellen gushed, looking the surfer boy up and down. “I didn't think there was anyone else like me in the whole world!” She stuck her tits out and pouted her lips, trying to look as sexy as she could for her new visitor.

“Oh yeah, yeah,” Rob said, taking a seat in one of the plush purple chairs in front of the nearest stripper pole. “There were six beetles like Bruno.”

“Bruno?” Sue Ellen asked, shooting a dirty look toward the captive stripper shaking her ass in front of Rob, making the frightened girl cower on the far side of the circular table away from the beetle-headed man.

“That's what I call the little dude in my head!” he said excitedly, pointing up at the green shimmering beetle protruding from his blonde hair.

“Oh!” Sue Ellen said, planting herself on the ground in front of Rob, putting her eye level with his thick, tanned cock. “I call mine Sammy!”

“Whoa, that's totally cool. Anyway, so yeah. Six magic beetles. This weird Egyptian dude in robes came out to the beach with little Bruno in a box talking about ruling the world or some shit. I was out on the Ivory Coast hitting some total rad-tacular waves and didn't have any other plans for

the day, so I said fuck it, why not?"

Sue Ellen nodded, but she was only half listening. She was staring at Rob's neatly trimmed blonde public hair, wondering whether or not she'd be able to deep throat his whole cock in one go.

"The Egyptian dude did this whole ritual and told me to go back to surfing. That the six kings and queens would converge when the stars were right and clear off the Earth or some other mystic type shit. I'm not really into Astronomy or whatever, you know. Unless it's in a fortune cookie. Whoa!"

Sue Ellen couldn't take it anymore. She leaned forward and took his big dick into her mouth, swallowing it whole like an anaconda striking out and snatching a rodent.

Rob leaned back and sighed. "That feels pretty good. So yeah, I hit a few more waves, but before I knew it, the rad green beetle dudes were coming up outta the sand eating all the other peeps on the beach, and Bruno here grew out of my head."

Sue Ellen grabbed Rob's cock with both hands and started twisting and pumping his shaft, relishing a real life hard cock in her mouth for the first time in months. She loved sucking Jackson's dead dick, but it was starting to smell funky. Her eyes rolled into the back of her head as she drooled all over Rob's member, only barely paying attention to what he was saying.

"Say, you're pretty good at that, Sue!" Rob said, smiling dumbly. "What was I talking about? Oh, yeah. Bruno told me that the ritual had been interrupted and the beetle hoard had burrowed up from the depths prematurely or some shit. Said it was time to take over the world now. Oh, I think I'm gonna cum, babe!" He stood up on shaky legs, thrusting faster and faster into Sue Ellen's mouth.

The Beetle Queen grabbed his bubble-butts and held on as he rocked his hips, burying her nose into those trimmed pubes until he'd ejaculated every last drop of his seed down her slutty throat.

Losing his balance, Rob collapsed back onto the plush chair. "Dang! I haven't had a blowie like that since the world ended!"

Sue Ellen climbed up in his lap and buried her face against his muscly chest. "Sorry. I couldn't help myself. When I see a pretty dick, I have to suck it."

"That's pretty cool," he said, seemingly unfazed.

"What are you doing here?" Sue Ellen asked, looking up into his dreamy eyes.

"Oh, yeah, wow. So once Bruno popped up in my head, he told me we had to come find the other kings and queens and whatnot. Said we had to finish the ritual."

Sue Ellen slapped the beetle in her head. "Why doesn't Sammy ever tell me these things?"

I do! Sammy said inside her head. *You tell me to shut up about boring beetle things every time I bring it up!*

"Oh," Sue Ellen said, frowning. "So what do we do now that you're here? How do we finish the ritual?"

"Well, Bruno says he wants to talk to your guy, Sammy."

"Ok. How do they—"

Without warning Rob's eyes sunk back in his head and his teeth pulled away from his lips.

Sue Ellen yelped and jumped off his lap. The shimmering green beetle in his head pulled itself up and out of the Beetle King's head, taking Rob's skull and skinless face with it.

Rob's body slumped over, his empty face sack fell over onto his chest with a wet splat. It looked like a potato skin.

Sue Ellen's stomach turned over at the sight of the beetle with Rob's skinless human head sticking out of its abdomen. The eyes of the head were rolled back and the toothy, lipless grin hung slack. Its tongue lulled out the side.

Sue Ellen put a hand up to her mouth, the hefty seminal load threatened to expel itself from her stomach with the same force with which Rob's cock had shot it in there.

"What the fuuuu—"

And then the same thing happened to her.

Chapter 21

Sue Ellen felt her vision go black and then suddenly she could see out of Sammy's eyes as he pulled the rest of the way out of her face-skin.

As he scampered down her body, Sue Ellen saw herself through the beetle's eyes. *Is my butt really that fat?* she thought.

“Men seem to enjoy it, my liege,” Sammy said. His voice was much louder in her head now. *His head*, she realized. *I'm in his head now. What the fuck!*

The two beetles converged on the floor between the limp bodies of their hosts and chattered together in their beetle language for what seemed like a long time.

Sue Ellen was bored by the time they ended their conversation. She hated being a passenger inside Sammy's beetle body. There was nothing sexy about being a bug. She couldn't wait to be a sexy girl again.

Sammy scuttled back up her body and backed her skinless face back into her skin sack, connecting her severed neck to her spinal cord again.

Her vision came rushing back. She flailed around, shaking her head back and forth. “DON'T EVER FUCKING DO THAT AGAIN! GROSSSSSSSS!” She gagged and ran in place, reorienting herself back in her body.

I'm sorry, my queen, Sammy said in her head. *It was necessary to discuss these complex and highly sensitive matters without having to translate our thoughts into English.*

“Whatever!” Sue Ellen said, still disgusted. It was only then that she realized Rob was no longer in his plush chair. She looked around the room and spotted him and his green beetle entourage exiting through her bone curtain. Rob threw up the hang ten sign with his hand as he left. “Eat ya later, babe!”

“Bye!” she yelled after him, waving frantically, crushed that the hunky man was already leaving.

What the hell did 'eat ya later' mean? What a weird thing to say to your new girlfriend.

Sue Ellen had already decided they were a couple. They were, after all, the only two people on earth with beetles in their brains.

There are actually four other— Sammy started.

“Shut up, you!” she said, smacking her head. “I’m still pissed at you for pulling that gross stuff with my head. Yuck!”

Sue Ellen sat down in the chair Rob had been sitting in. She frowned, shoulders slumped, arms crossed in front of her naked tits.

“Why’d he leave so soon?” she said aloud, pouting.

He’s got a lot of work to do to prepare for the consumption ritual, my liege, Sammy said inside her brain.

“Consumption what? What’s that?”

Bruno and I were able to come to a very amicable agreement. You see, my queen, as I’ve been trying to tell you for months, when you accidentally killed the cult member tasked with anointing you with your great beetle powers, you interrupted the course of the ancient prophecy which calls for six members of the royal beetle-human bloodline to meet when the stars align to complete the consumption ritual and unite beetle-kind.

“Stop babbling and tell me what the fuck that means!”

Well, Sammy said. It’s quite simple. King Rob and his beetle army have agreed to eat us.

“WHAAAAAAT?!”

Chapter 22

“No fucking way, Sammy, you fucking asshole!”

Sue Ellen stormed around her morbid strip club throne room. “No fucking way I'm getting eaten by that douche bag!”

Her mental love affair with Rob had ended as soon as it became clear that he and his bugs intended to eat her and all of her beetle underlings.

I don't understand why you're upset, my queen! This is simply the way of the beetle! After Rob has consumed all 5 other members of the bloodline and their beetle armies, he will rule this planet in glorious perpetuity, forever and always. It is the way.

“It's not my fucking way!” Sue Ellen said, kicking an unlucky beetle who'd accidentally scurried into her path. It splattered against a far wall.

“Why the fuck can't I eat his stupid ass?!”

That possibility was on the table, my queen. Bruno simply presented a more likely scenario for victory should Rob choose to pursue a contest of physicality. You saw how easily his Scarab beetles were able to defeat your royal guards when they arrived.

“Wait, wait,” Sue Ellen said, shaking her head, trying desperately to absorb all of the information her beetle was spewing at her all at once.

She hadn't paid this much attention since grade school.

“What did you mean, contest of physicality?”

Oh, as is customary when two royal bodies cannot agree on who is to be consumed, the two sides go to battle. It's very barbaric and wastes far too many resources. Should the winning side lose too many soldiers, it weakens them against the next royal body should they have to go to battle again. Do you understand?

“Yes! Fucking perfectly!” Sue Ellen screamed, jumping up into the seat of her throne.

“Man up, motherfuckers!” she screamed at her entire beetle hoard.

“Momma's going to motherfucking WAR!”

Chapter 23

Sue Ellen, this is highly inadvisable, Sammy said, panic in his voice. We can't win a war with Rob and his Scarab beetles! This is suicide!

“Fuck him, and fuck you too, Sammy!” Sue Ellen said. She'd fashioned battle gear from the corpses of several dead beetles.

A second beetle head now rested on her forehead, its large mandibles jutting up, forming a second, wider V above her head, giving the impression of a battle helmet. Similar beetle parts were used on her shoulders, elbows, waist and knees, but she left her breasts exposed. She loved her tits too much to cover them up.

Using a crimson fabric, she'd made a long flowing cape attached to the shoulder armor. In her hand, she carried a blade made of two long mandibles, each pointing outward opposite one another, giving both sides of her weapon sharp edges and pointy tips.

She was ready for war.

In front of her, every single beetle she controlled stood, nervously twitching and chattering and snapping their jaws in adoration of their queen.

“How many fierce motherfuckers do we have here, Sammy?” Sue Ellen asked, clanking her sword against the beetle in her head.

Just under one hundred thousand, my liege, but—

“No butts! The only butt I want to see is motherfucking Rob's butt so I can shove my blade up his cocksucking ass!”

Sue Ellen, the odds of us winning a battle with—

“Fuck the odds!” Sue Ellen said. “Let's go kill those green bastards!”

She led the charge through a narrow passage in the rear of the club. The passage opened onto a cliff that lead all the way to the top of the bluffs which hung above the river.

Once Sue Ellen and her army got to the top, she looked out and froze.

The river was completely obscured. In its place stood hundreds of thousands of scarab

beetles. Their numbers swallowed up the whole countryside.

“What the fuck?” Sue Ellen said, her mouth hanging open in awe at the numbers of Rob's forces.

I told you, my queen, Sammy said in a sad voice. *We simply have no hope of—*

“CHARGE!” Sue Ellen screamed, pointing her sword at the enemy force.

What happened next happened in three stages.

First, Sue Ellen's black beetle force dove off the cliff, fearlessly engaging Rob's green scarab army at the shore of the river. Rob himself hovered above the action, three hundred yards away at the center of the river bed, eye level with Sue Ellen, standing between two surfboard-sized scarab beetles, one foot balancing on each.

Initially, Sue Ellen's forces proved to be a match for the heartier scarab beetles, meeting them blow for blow, bite for bite, managing to push Rob's first wave of attackers back into the water where the black beetles, with much larger mandibles, were able to hold them under water and drown them.

“See!” Sue Ellen screamed, hopping up and down, thrusting her battle sword in the air. “I fucking told you, Sammy! Nobody's eating the Queen of the motherfucking Beetles!”

If I may, my liege: The humans may have been no match for our forces, but they were made of puny flesh, mostly liquid, and possessed no natural weapons of their own. Your soldiers' mandibles were designed mostly for holding and carrying, not—

“Are you kidding me?!” Sue Ellen screamed, looking up at the beetle in her head. “We're kicking the shit out of him! HEY! FUCK YOU, FAG!” She grabbed her crotch and made lewd gestures across the water at Rob, who still hovered above the action, seemingly unfazed by how events thus far had unfolded.

He shrugged his shoulders as if he wasn't particularly interested one way or the other in how the battle before them unfolded.

Sue Ellen's forces continued to pour into the water, snapping and crushing the scarab army, slowly turning the churning waves from green to black as more black beetles spilled into it.

“I'M GONNA EAT YOUR FUCKING HEAD!” she yelled, and added as an afterthought, “And I don't mean suck your dick again!” Then quietly, “Even though that was fun as fuck.”

Suddenly a wave of scarab beetles the size of buses streamed out from a series of caves at the base of the bluff, directly behind Sue Ellen's bug soldiers.

“Where the fuck did they come from?!” she screamed, jumping up and down, throwing a tantrum as the flanking army of green insects mowed through her rear forces, biting and smashing them to gooey bits before they even knew the opposition force was behind them.

Rob must have planted a contingent force when he first arrived in Hopp's Hollow! Sammy said excitedly. *A brilliant strategy!*

“Whose fucking side are you on?” Sue Ellen whined.

Why, yours of course, my queen.

“Then fucking act like it! How do we stop them from eating all of my beetles!”

Well, we could surrender now and—

“NO! Fuck that! What else?”

Sammy sputtered, *There are the heavy titan beetles we've yet to bring into play, but I must warn you—*

“Do it, now! Unleash the titans!”

Two beetles even larger than the gargantuan beast that had terrorized Sue Ellen in her apartment complex on the day the monsters burrowed up from the depths smashed through the

center of the bluffs, sending rock and dust flying. The titans leaped out over the rear flanking scarab force, landing directly on top of them.

The huge beasts whipped their twenty foot long mandibles back and forth through the water, making short work of the enemy forces gathered there.

But they didn't stop charging forward. Soon they were on top of Sue Ellen's severely damaged rear contingent, smashing and ripping through her own battle bugs.

"What the fuck is happening?!" Sue Ellen screamed, watching her heretofore organized soldiers scatter, trying to escape the behemoths demolishing everything in their path.

The Berzerkers, my queen! Sammy said, exasperated. *I tried to warn you! They're mindless! Like machines! They do not follow orders. They live only to kill!*

"Well get them the fuck off of my battlefield!" Sue Ellen screamed, swinging her sword at the air in frustration.

That's when the second part of the battle happened.

Rob's scarab forces were on the run, falling back to the opposite side of the river. The Beetle King was losing the high ground. Losing the strategic advantage in spite of Sue Ellen's blunder with the Berzerkers.

She was losing soldiers to their indiscriminate attacks, but his flanking force had been completely obliterated.

He gave up the middle of the river, surfing his twin beetles back behind his own forces at the opposite shore. And then he gave the order.

The order to fly.

Chapter 24

Rob's main scarab beetle force spread their wings and rose into the air high above the river. The front line of flying bugs bent their legs under their bodies and shot downward at high speeds.

They crashed into what was left of Sue Ellen's front line after the Berzerker giants had scattered the majority of her black beetles to the right and left of the battlefield.

Huge plumes of water and bug guts exploded as the kamikaze scarabs targeted individual enemy bugs, sacrificing themselves to further deplete Sue Ellen's dwindling forces. "That's not fucking fair!" Sue Ellen screamed. "Why don't we have wings?!"

Actually, my queen, the evolution of the many complex species of beetles is fascinating. It turns out—

"SAMMY, WE'RE GONNA FUCKIN DIE IF YOU DON'T DO SOMETHING!"

Y-yes, Sammy stammered. Yes, of course.

The black beetle army regained its composure and regrouped behind the rampaging Berzerkers, forcing the giants forward across the river toward Rob's forces.

As the scarab bombers dived down to attack, the Berzerkers rose up, causing the bombers to explode prematurely against the much thicker hides of the giants, rendering their attacks weak and useless.

Rob was now just wasting valuable soldiers.

"THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!" Sue Ellen cackled as more scarabs exploded in vain against her strongest fighters.

Rob pulled his kamikaze soldiers back. But he did not retreat further, nor surrender in the face of Sue Ellen's advancing army. Instead, he flew a small group of wide scarabs with strangely glowing abdomens out over the black beetle army. These new scarabs flew high enough above the black army that the Berzerkers couldn't reach them even pushing up on their hind legs.

When the glow-bugs were directly above the Berzerkers, they dipped their abdomens. The strange glow exited their abdomens, dripping out like a tear drop. The shimmering yellow liquid

globs landed on the Berzerkers.

And exploded.

The sound of the exploding giants sent Sue Ellen to her stomach in fright.

“Holy fucking shit! What's happening?” she screamed, holding her ears as the bombing continued.

I'm afraid to say it, my queen, Sammy said in a morose voice. But we're losing this war.

“FALL BACK!” Sue Ellen screamed, leaping up to her feet. “Get your ugly asses back here RIGHT NOW!”

But it was too late. More and more glow-bugs soared above her forces, dropping yellow death all across the battlefield. Her ground-locked forces simply had no defense against the air strikes.

What was left of her army—mostly maimed and dying beetles inundated with wounds from either the now-dead Berzerkers or the glow bombs—scrambled back up the cliffside to the bluffs above where Sue Ellen stood.

And that's when the third part of the battle happened.

Rob advanced forward across the river. He was flying directly toward Sue Ellen.

He was coming to eat her.

Chapter 25

“You fuckers better not let me die, or I'll fucking kill you!” Sue Ellen screamed at her injured soldiers. Bug guts splattered all across the ground as her beetles limped up onto the bluff. The air around her smelled like rotting cheese. The sound of the moaning of the dying and injured filled the air.

“You pussies better man up, 'cause here he comes!” Sue Ellen yelled, trying to sound assertive, but the fear in her voice was more than apparent.

Rob flew slowly across the river. He only had a few scarab beetles with him, obviously sensing that he had the battle won.

“Whoa, like, that sucked, babe!” Rob said as he landed on the bluff.

Sue Ellen's injured beetles surrounded her in a semicircle arc, mandibles bared.

“There's no need for all this,” the Beetle King said, stopping short of the defensive line. “Just, like, let me eat you and stuff.”

“Fuck off!” Sue Ellen whined. She sat with her back to the action, arms crossed, head down. She was pouting like her parents had just grounded her for the weekend.

Rob shrugged. “Have it your way.”

Two of his scarabs rushed forward and made short work of the first line of wounded black beetles without taking any damage. The injured soldiers were just too hurt and exhausted to put up any fight.

The final two lines of defense fell back. The first row climbed up on top of the rear row, creating a living wall between Rob's scarabs and their Beetle Queen.

Sue Ellen, my liege. Now would be the time to make a dignified surrender, Sammy said. You put up an amazing fight, really. We lasted much longer in battle than we had any right to. Very brave stuff, my queen. But—

“THIS IS YOUR FAULT!” Sue Ellen screamed, punching Sammy in his beetle face.

My queen, I—

“FIX IT! FIX IT! FIX IT!” she screamed, throwing herself on the ground, kicking and screaming as Rob and his scarabs smashed through the living wall, eliminating the final obstacle between them and their prize.

“You wanna, like, do it before I eat you, babe?” Rob asked.

Sue Ellen wiped her tears and sat up. The Beetle King had a raging victory boner as he strolled toward her.

“SAMMY!” Sue Ellen screamed in desperation.

There is... one very last thing...

“DO IT! DO IT! DO IT!” Sue Ellen said, scrambling to her feet. She dashed off in a sprint across the bluff toward the woods and demolished mansions that lay beyond the cliff edge.

A pair of glow-bug scarabs dropped down in front of her, hovering at eye level, cutting off her escape route.

“SAMMY YOU MOTHERFUCKER!”

I really MUST warn you this time, my—

Sue Ellen reached up grabbed Sammy's eyeballs, trying her best to rip them out of his head.

OK! OK! he screamed.

Sue Ellen released his eyes.

It's done.

Chapter 26

Rob smiled, closing the final distance between himself and Sue Ellen. His hand slowly worked his victory boner.

In spite of her impending doom, Sue Ellen couldn't help but get a little wet at the sight of it. She wondered, as Rob's big dick bumped into her battle armor-plated stomach, if she'd be able to fit the whole thing in her butt as easily as she'd fit it in her mouth.

And then it happened.

A low rumbling, seemingly coming from everywhere at once, caused Rob to pause. His thick cock still throbbed against Sue Ellen's stomach as he looked around, trying to pinpoint the source of the sound.

It grew louder by the second, and soon the sound was accompanied by a steady shaking of the ground.

“Is it an earthquake?” Rob asked, turning to face the river (or, more appropriately, what was left of the river).

The water was bubbling up from the center, pushing away, flooding the shore and the roadway on both sides.

Something huge was pushing its way out—or two somethings, to be exact. A pair of black beetles the size of skyscrapers pushed their massive heads up out of the bedrock under the river, displacing all of the water. Their mandibles stretched up into the clouds.

Leviathans, Sammy whispered, in awe.

Then the mandibles opened, and huge glowing blue plumes ejected from their mouths up into the sky.

Rob, Sue Ellen and all of the beetles watched in awe as the beautiful glowing plumes soared high into the air.

And then exploded.

The blast knocked everyone to the ground. Before Sue Ellen could come to her senses, more

explosions rocked the landscape.

She scrambled to her feet, racing toward the pile of dead black beetles, throwing herself under them for shelter as blue plasma bombs crashed all around her, blowing up everything she could see. Everything she could hear.

Literally everything in a fifty mile radius was reduced to smoldering rubble and ash.

Chapter 27

Much later, after the thunderous explosions had ceased and the sounds of dying beetles all around her had been silenced, Sue Ellen chanced a peak out from under her dead-bug shelter.

The stink hit her first—far worse than the rotten milk smell of her injured beetles. She retched, putting her hand over her face and nose. The smell was some awful combination of burned flesh and sterilizing fluid. Like a bleached burn victim.

She crawled the rest of the way out from under her dead beetles and gasped.

The nuclear option, Sammy said quietly.

Pieces of black and green bugs were everywhere. The very air felt singed. A haze hung in the air, warping Sue Ellen's vision. Like the world was cooling down after five minutes inside a frying pan.

She walked out to the edge of the cliff in silence. The river was gone; it was just a blasted out hole. Even the humongous beetles who'd launched the nukes were gone. Vaporized.

Sue Ellen heard a rustling behind her. She turned to see a pile of green scarab beetles begin to twitch and move.

Rob pulled himself free of the corpses. He was bruised and battered, but seemed to be in no worse condition than Sue Ellen. He joined her at the cliff's edge.

“Guess we don't have any armies left to fight the other kings and queens,” Sue Ellen said, uncharacteristically calm as she surveyed the total destruction.

“Oh, yeah, I forgot to tell you,” Rob said. “I already ate all of them.”

“What?” Sue Ellen turned to face the beetle king.

“All except one. We couldn't find the beetle from Russia. Bruno says it probably didn't take to a human host. He said the cult had to try ten different dudes before they found me. I guess it's really rare for a human to be physically and psychically compatible with the special beetles. Yeah, it's just you and me, babe. The only people left on—”

While Rob was talking, Sue Ellen had quietly walked over and picked up her mandible

sword.

“DIE YOU MOTHERFUCKER!”

She leaped forward with all her strength and swung her sword at Rob's head.

He turned at the last second, hearing her scream. He only had time to throw his hands up in defense, but it wasn't enough. Sue Ellen's sword went through his fingers like they were made of play dough and embedded itself in the side of his neck, cleaving down into his chest, causing his head to tilt awkwardly to the left as blood gushed out in huge spurts.

Rob gurgled and spit up blood as his fingers fell to the ground. He hopped around in a ridiculous death dance before blood loss forced him to his knees.

Sue Ellen had to put a foot against his face to pull her sword free, causing an even more violent plume of gore to exit the fatal wound.

Rob's eyes flicked up to the Beetle Queen, his fingerless hands pawing uselessly at the gaping hole in his neck.

Then Bruno pulled free from Rob's dying body, its little legs flailing madly as Rob's face skin fell forward onto the still bubbling wound.

“No you fucking don't!” Sue Ellen screamed, dropping her sword. She grabbed the beetle with both hands and yanked it the rest of the way out of Rob's corpse. His skinless face went slack as his consciousness slipped into the beetle body.

The bug squeaked and snapped its jaws, but Sue Ellen held the dinner plate-sized insect out from her body.

Grinning, she walked over to a big rock jutting out of the bluff. She dropped to her knees and bashed Bruno off the sharpest point over and over again until his tough exoskeleton cracked open like an egg, spilling his white guts all over the rock.

Dropping the smashed bug on the ground, Sue Ellen crouched over it and tore into the broken parts, shoveling handfuls of slimy guts into her mouth. The noxious gunk made her gag, but she forced herself to swallow the entire vile contents of the dying beetle before standing up and stomping Rob's lifeless, skinless face into an unrecognizable pulp.

Then she walked over to the edge of the cliff, raised her gory hands into the air and screamed “I'M THE MOTHERFUCKING QUEEN OF THE WORLD!”

Chapter 28

Three Days Later

“I HATE THIS FUCKING WORLD!” Sue Ellen said, dragging herself forward on exhausted legs. “Where the fuck is everyone?!”

We killed them all, my queen, Sammy said, just as tired as his human host.

“Everyone?!” she whined.

We've covered roughly twenty miles, my liege. There is nothing left living. No beetles. No humans. That's usually what happens when you drop a nuke on your own head. The brain beetle couldn't hold back the sarcasm in his voice with that last comment.

“Don't fucking blame this on me!” Sue Ellen said, pausing to lean on the twisted wreckage of a car. Even its paint had been completely blasted away.

“You're the one who suggested the nukes!”

I was only doing what I had to do to save your life, my queen!

“Some fuckin' life!” she said, motioning to the decimated landscape. “I'm just gonna throw myself off a fucking building. How does that sound to you, Sammy??”

The brain bug signed. *No, no, my queen. We must forge ahead. We are tired. We are hungry. But fighting amongst ourselves will not help our situation. There must be survivors. There must be civilization somewhere ahead.*

“I can't fucking go any further!” Sue Ellen whined, collapsing on the ground dramatically.

Sammy was quiet for a long time. Then he said, *May I make a suggestion, my liege?*

“What?” she said, the misery in her voice palpable.

You're not going to like it.

“I don't fucking like anything at the moment, Sammy, so just fuckin' lay it on me!”

We should abandon the human body.

“No. no, no, no!” she whined.

Hear me out.

“I TOLD YOU NEVER AGAIN! EW! NO!”

Sue Ellen, we will not survive another day in this harsh environment—not in your body. But in my body...

Sue Ellen started to cry.

Beetles were made to survive these elements, my queen. We can live for weeks with little food or water. Our bodies are hearty. We can survive this!

“Survive as a beetle forever! I'd rather be dead forever!”

No! My queen, listen! Sammy was talking fast. We exit your human body and travel as a beetle until we find civilization again. Then we will put ourselves inside a new human host!

Sue Ellen sniffed away her tears and sat up. **“Y-You can do that?”**

Absolutely! It's a simple matter of disconnecting the cerebral cortex at the point where the spinal cord meets the—

“Ok! Ok! Just do it. But only if you promise we'll get a new body!”

Without question, my liege.

“One with big tits and a nicer ass?”

Anything you wish.

Sue Ellen huffed. **“Alright, fine. Just do—”**

Sammy pulled himself out of Sue Ellen's head before she could finish her thought.

Once again her eyesight dimmed and then returned as that of the beetle. She was now trapped inside his head as he scuttled away from her useless body.

Chapter 29

Three Days Earlier

The explosions overhead woke Steve from his stupor. Rocks and stalactites fell all around him. It was difficult to see through Jackson's eyeholes but it seemed as though the entire cave was collapsing in on itself.

That's when he realized he was no longer stuck to the back of the beetle (or, more appropriately, the beetle's back was no longer attached to its body).

Steve sat up and looked around. He'd been taken to some back area of Sue Ellen's morbid strip club cave. A stalactite had crushed his captor's head, somehow avoiding Steve himself altogether.

He climbed up off the dead creature.

Jackson's dead dick bobbed in front of him as he felt along the walls with his hand-stumps in the pitch black dark toward the dim light ahead.

Mandy woke in a daze. She'd been hit in the head with one of those falling rocks. She was bleeding pretty bad. She groaned and used her stripper pole for balance as she stood up. She looked around. The entire club was destroyed. Dead bugs and strippers lay all around her.

"Hello?"

There was no movement. Nothing in the strip club cave lived except for her.

She was the only survivor. She began to panic, yanking on her chain. She had to get free. She'd starve if she remained stuck on her dancing platform.

She shook the pole with all her strength, trying to wrench it free. That's when she heard movement from the back of the cave.

A figure stumbled out of the back. He had no hands and his face was covered in a mask.

“Help! Help me PLEASE!” Mandy cried. It was that guy that Sue Ellen had been fucking before the chaos started. What had she called him? Steve-O?

He looked in her direction, paused, and then staggered over.

“Thank god, thank god! Please get me off here! Everyone else is dead! Oh my god, I can't believe you're still alive!”

Steve-O didn't say anything as he approached her. He knelt down in front of some dead beetles.

Mandy couldn't tell what he was doing. His back was to her.

“Um, hello? I'm right here,” she said.

Steve-O flinched, like he'd only just then realized Mandy was there.

He turned around. Mandy wished he'd take that awful mask off. He looked really scary with another man's dead face covering his own.

“Where is she?” he said, finally.

His voice sounded weird. Shaky.

“W-who?” Mandy said, confused.

“SUE ELLEN! WHERE THE FUCK DID SHE GO?”

Mandy jumped. The creepy dude was scaring her now.

“Sh-she went up there,” Mandy said, pointing to the cave ceiling. “To the bluffs, outside. Are... Are you going to save me?”

Steve-O raised his hands in front of him. The stumps were bleeding. He'd somehow managed to jam the heads of dead beetles into his wounds. Their mandibles snapped open and shut like giant pairs of scissors.

“Oh, no. No, no, no,” he said, cackling.

Crazy, Mandy thought. He's crazy.

That was the last thought she'd ever have as Steve-O rushed forward in that moment, mandible-hands extended, and chopped off her head.

Chapter 30

Steve mumbled to himself as he took the dead stripper's head and turned it around in his new hands. Small giggles broke the endless stream of nonsensical babbling coming out of his mouth.

Finally, he situated the decapitated head in the right direction and shoved the neck stump violently against Jackson's death boner. He had to work it like a melon impaled on a sword, but he was eventually able to get the head of Jackson's cock through the mouth of the head. He slid it down until it nestled against the black plastic dildo balls fused to his own.

Twitching, Steve sifted through the rubble, searching.

No, no, not Steve, he thought, knocking over chairs, moving dead stripper bodies and kicking dead beetles out of his way.

There! He found it.

Ginny's head. He picked it up and looked it in the eyes. Her left eye was partially closed, her right was gazing off to the side. Dry blood was stuck to her nose. He kissed the head. It tasted sour. Like spoiled meat.

Turning it around in his beetle hands, he slid it down Jackson's dick until it rested against the dead stripper's head.

That still left a little room at the tip for Sue Ellen's head when he found her.

"She's going to suck my dick," he mumbled. "Suck Jackson's dick. Suck my dick. Suck Jackson's dick."

He laughed loudly. He knew who he was now. He wasn't Steve. Steve was dead. Steve was weak.

"Jack-Steve," he said, pleased with himself. "One, two, Jack-Steve is coming for you!" he sang as he ran out of the cave, following the path of destruction.

Following Sue Ellen.

Jack-Steve made it to the top of the bluff just as Sue Ellen was eating Rob the Beetle King's head. He half considered killing her right then, but decided to wait to see what she had planned next.

He followed her through the wasteland. Watched her beetle head discard her human body and scamper away, defenseless, and still he did not strike.

He was waiting for the perfect time.

Once the beetle head was out of sight, Jack-Steve slowly made his way to where she'd left her body. It stank like raw sewage. It had only been abandoned for a few minutes, but it was already starting to go bad in the heat and irradiated air.

Jack-Steve stared at Sue Ellen's naked, headless body for a long time. His babbling became a soft murmur as he got an idea. He didn't need to chase closely after the wretched woman's brain-bug. He could catch up to her soon enough. For now...

Jack-Steve took hold of his precious Ginny's dead head and yanked it off Jackson's cadaver-cock with a sickening wet THUNK sound. Kneeling down, he stuffed the decapitated head of his wife into Sue Ellen's rotting face-sac.

It wasn't a perfect fit, but it was enough to do the job. Sue Ellen's thin face skin conformed to that of Ginny's features and allowed the dead woman's hair to flow freely from the top of the skin-sac, giving the vague impression that his wife's head was attached to the Beetle Queen's body.

Jack-Steve grunted and laughed as he pulled the beetle armor off of the limp body.

"I love you, baby. I'm gonna fuck you right one last time," Jack-Steve said to the head attached to the corpse of Sue Ellen. He giggled as he looked down at the cadaver-cock attached to his abdomen. "Well, Jackson's gonna fuck you. And I'm gonna watch!"

With that, Jack-Steve thrust his dead-dick into Sue Ellen's vagina. He started off slowly, lovingly, as he pushed the hair out of his wife's crooked eye, kissing her on her stinking lips. Then, as he sped up, he started to cry.

With his beetle-head hands, he gently kneaded the tits on the corpse slowly rocking back and forth underneath him.

"Do you like that, Ginny? You always liked it when I played with your tits!"

The nipples started to bleed from the serrated edges of his mandible-hands.

"Come back to me, baby! Come back to me please! Steve needs you! I can't do this out here all alone!"

Jack-Steve fucked the corpse with more and more intensity. He fucked like he was Doctor Frankenstein and his corpse-cock was a bolt of lightning. He fucked the corpse so hard, fluid began to spew from every orifice.

"COME BACK!"

Jack-Steve willed his wife back to life as he pulverized Sue Ellen's body under him.

He bounced up and down so hard on the headless corpse that he could hear the bones of her hips breaking under his pounding weight.

His sobbing turned to shrieking laughter as, out there in the wasteland all alone, he fuck-smashed Sue Ellen's dead body into a red, squishy pulp.

"I'M COMING FOR YOU, SUE ELLEN. YOU FUCKING BITCH! GET IT? CUMMING FOR YOU?! HAHAAHAHAHA!"

Chapter 31

Rejoice, my queen! We're saved!

Sammy scuttled over the ruins of an overpass somewhere in what was left of Southern Illinois.

There, behind a crushed 7-11, were several dozen dog-sized black beetles. Sammy joined them, doing a small dance, excitedly chirping with the small group of survivors.

They said they were separated from the main battle force when the Berzerkers were rampaging through our ranks, my liege! They've been wandering the wasteland ever since! Do you know what this means?!

“It means it's time for them to find me a fucking body!” Sue Ellen screamed inside Sammy's mind. “Tell them I'm their queen! Tell them they have to do what I say!”

In due time, my liege. There's no need to rush things. For now, let us simply celebrate the fact that—

And that's when Jack-Steve charged from the ruins of the overpass, snatching Sammy-Sue up in one of his mandible claws.

“YOU FUCKING BITCH!” Jack-Steve screamed. “I'LL FUCK YOU! I'LL FUCK YOU 'TIL YOU LOVE ME!”

He turned the flailing beetle around and jammed Sue Ellen's skinless, lifeless face down onto Jackson's corpse cock. He slammed her slack, lipless face against the cadaver dick over and over again, laughing maniacally as he did so.

The other beetles—still exhausted from their fight against Rob and the Scarab beetles—cowered away from the bizarre scene.

Sue Ellen's face smashed up against Ginny's impaled head as Jack-Steve thrust his hips faster and faster.

Sammy managed to get his mandibles turned around and dug a deep gouge into Jack-Steve's naked left flank.

He screeched in pain and dropped the beetle-head, allowing Sammy to scuttle back toward the small group of beetles cowering behind the bombed-out convenience store.

“Get me the fuck away from that psycho!” Sue Ellen screamed into Sammy's head. “You'd better fucking kill him before he kills me! He's fucking pissed!”

Sue Ellen had never felt regret for any of the stupid decisions she'd made in her life, and as of late, that was really saying something. She'd always managed to find a way to blame anyone and everyone else around her for all of her colossal fuck ups. But just then, as Jack-Steve ran at her full speed, dead dick bobbing, beetle-head pincers snapping, she *almost* regretted what she'd done to him back in her stripper cave.

My queen, we are defenseless in this form. I am too small to fight such a crazed foe!

“Gimme the fucking steering!” Sue Ellen said.

What?

“You heard me, Sammy! Let me control the goddamn body! I've got a plan!”

Jack-Steve chased the little beetle head as it ran around to the back of the 7-11.

Before he could round the corner, he heard the unmistakable sound of beetles screeching, followed by crunching and splattering sounds.

When he finally came around to the back of the store, he saw what all the commotion had been.

Sue Ellen stood taller than Jack-Steve by another three feet. She had smashed her beetle head into the face of a pony-sized beetle, cramming her beetle half down its throat. Now her skinless human head stuck up, upside down, out of its mouth.

The body stood upright on its two rearmost sets of legs, towering above Jack-Steve. Two other beetles had been impaled by the forelimbs of the first beetle, creating a set of huge arms.

“Wanna fuck me now, cocksucker?” Sue Ellen's skinless head shrieked as she ran toward Jack-Steve, beetle arms out, ready to attack.

Jack-Steve did the same, sprinting forward as he hollered at the top of his lungs.

As the two bizarre, mangled people came closer together, Jack-Steve dropped into a sliding position, skidding through the loose rocks of the 7-11 parking lot.

Sue Ellen's big, lumbering bug body couldn't maneuver out of the way in time, allowing Jack-Steve to glide right between her rear legs, snapping one side of them clean off with his mandible-hands as he passed underneath her.

Sue Ellen listed and then crashed to ground, all her beetle legs flailing as Jack-Steve stood and walked over to her prone body.

“Fucking save me, Sammy!” Sue Ellen screeched.

Jack-Steve reached up and pulled the Jackson mask off his face. He looked awful. His real face was covered in radiation rashes. Sores pocking his once-handsome face oozed freely in the open air.

He easily tore Sue Ellen's makeshift beetle-arms away and snapped off their heads while they feebly protested.

I-I am at a loss, my queen, Sammy said. His body was buried inside the mouth of the beetle body. He couldn't even see. *We have very few options to—*

“Fuck you, you fucking faggot bug! I said fucking save my fucking life before I fucking kill you myself!”

Jack-Steve mounted the defenseless beetle. Even as he grinned maniacally, his teeth fell out of his mouth. The insane man wasn't long for this world.

Sue Ellen! Sammy said, his voice angry and forceful for the first time since it had appeared inside the beetle queen's head. *I have done EVERYTHING in my power to keep you alive! After all of your stupid decisions, who was it that bailed you out and kept you breathing?! ME! ME! That's who! You have berated me and humiliated me and threatened to kill me over and over again. And have you thanked me even ONCE? NO! NO you have NOT! Oh, great beetle gods below, how I wish I'd been eaten by a COMPETENT human!"*

As Sammy raged inside Sue Ellen's head, Jack-Steve was doing a lot of raging of his own. He grabbed hold of his cadaver dick (which now, after the absolute demolishing he'd given Sue Ellen's real body, barely hung on to his abdomen by a few stringy threads of beetle-gunk).

Using it as much as a weapon as he did a dick, he thrust it into the rear parts of Sue Ellen's beetle body. He didn't bother trying to find an actual orifice. He simply jabbed and jammed it against the bug's exoskeleton until it broke through.

Gallons of white, stinking bug guts gushed out onto the parking lot as Jack-Steve impaled the squirming beetle body.

This deterred Sammy's rant not in the least.

Had I been eaten by an even HALFWAY intelligent human being, I'd be ruling this whole fucking planet right now instead of being raped to death by a fucking insane person who YOU made that way, you selfish, narcissistic, self-centered little fucking TWAT WAFFLE! I hope he fucking keeps you alive just a little longer so I can enjoy your screams along with him, you arrogant, half-wit cunt fart!

"I'm gonna fucking cum!" Jack-Steve screamed, laughing in Sue Ellen's horrified face. She was so overwhelmed by the verbal lashing Sammy was giving her inside her head, she could barely even concentrate on the fact that Jack-Steve was literally fucking her to death.

The crazed man pulled out of the bottom of the beetle—which was now little more than a huge, gory hole—and aimed his dead dick at Sue Ellen's upside-down, skinless face. She closed her eyes, knowing that he was only seconds away from impaling her onto its length.

Jack-Steve screamed again, shoving the cadaver-dong into Sue Ellen's liplless mouth. "I'm gonna fucking—"

VWOOOOMPHEEEEEEE!

A huge blast of flame enveloped the insane man, his dead dick, and the human-head beetle he was kill-fucking.

Chapter 32

With all the insanity going on, neither Sammy, Jack-Steve, nor Sue Ellen had heard the clomping mechanical stomps of the mech team as they worked their way across the wasteland, burning the few remaining beetles they encountered.

They were the cleanup crew. They were the cavalry for team humans.

Nixx, the gruff, black-bearded mech operator pressed a series of buttons and grabbed a control stick, causing the huge, barrel-sized arms of his two-story tall mech to swivel and point down at the scattering beetles below. He pressed the button on top of the control stick and let out a series of .50 caliber machine gun bursts, annihilating the small pack of bugs trying to flee.

“Got fuckin' bug guts on my windshield!” Nixx said, leaning his head to the side as he maneuvered his turrets toward another pair of scurrying beetles.

“Whoa, dad!” Nixx's excited son, Noxx, said.

Noxx was sitting in the back of the mech's cockpit, watching the carnage below from a small ancillary window. “That bug had a human head on it! And... she had no skin on her face!”

Nixx reached back and slapped his son hard across the mouth. He chomped down on the end of his unlit cigar and pointed a short, chubby finger in the child's face.

“Those fucking insects killed and fucked your mother. In that order. Do you understand me?”

Noxx rubbed the spot on his face where his father had hit him without responding.

“I said do you fucking understand me, boy?!”

“Yes,” he said, turning away from his father. Nixx thought he was so cool just because he had been chosen by the president to pilot one of the secret experimental robots after the world had ended. So he'd been Special Ops in the Army. So what? He was still an asshole.

Noxx turned his back on the mech's cockpit, trying to get as far away as physically possible from his dad. He didn't even want to go on patrols. His father made him. He didn't hate the giant bugs. He actually thought they were really cool. Before the world ended, bugs were his favorite

thing to study in school. His dad said it was good to learn the mechs now so that he could be part of the new human fighting force alliance when he grew up.

Jokes on him, Noxx thought, pulling his secret friend out of his pocket, making sure his father couldn't see it.

He wasn't going to be a mech pilot. He wasn't going to fight for humanity.

He opened his palm and smiled at his little friend, who spoke to him with a thick Russian accent. The beetle said its name was Rusev, and that it was the last living royal bug on the planet.

With the help of his little beetle buddy, Noxx was going to be the King of the World.

About the Author



Photo by Alexandria Kiefer

Kevin Strange is a two time nominee of the Wonderland Book Award for excellence in bizarro fiction, and recipient of the 2014 editors choice award in the Lewis and Clark college literary magazine *The Peppermint Rooster Review*. He is the author of 17 books and the writer/director of 7 films. He loves schlocky B-movies, cult fiction and Iron Maiden records.

