

Becky is Better

By

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This reading material is of a mature nature. Reader discretion is advised.

Unrated Version: This is the version minus the training wheels. As a rule, there is no capitalization of words which have additional meanings specific to this book. You'll just have to put your thinking caps on and figure it out. Or you could just use the enclosed glossary.

Examples of words including all of their implied tenses which have additional meanings specific to this book are: army, associate, believer, book, collateral, change, chosen, church, crank, crimson, dead, death, devices, die, earth, embrace, family, first, glasses, grimm, hard, heads, hogs, hunger, infernal, kill, kiss, law, lurid, made, mafia, marine, military, mistress, mob, moll, moon, optical, pretend, pretense, prime, race, racial, rapture, readers, reaper, redemptive, reform, reformist, research, rook, saint, sanctified, sanctify, save, scan, secondary, scum, suit, tank, temptation, thug, thirst, thirsty, took, trooper, visor, way, whispers, zealot. Then, again, I also lie. Capish?

The Foreword

“If there is intelligent life in the universe, other than ourselves, then we must be prepared to greet it, appropriately; whether peacefully or not. To do otherwise is to court certain disaster—our own history of what happens militarily when a more technologically advanced civilization deals with a less technologically advanced civilization has shown us that, repeatedly. We have a responsibility to not only our fellow Americans, but our fellow human beings worldwide as well, to do whatever is required of us to insure the continuation of our species at any cost.”—**President Barack Obama, an excerpt from his redacted “extraterrestrial event” speech in December 2009 before the Joint Chiefs of Staff.**

Episode #001

It's funny how we as a species are so good at deluding ourselves into believing the most unbelievable things. Most of the general public, as well as many in the world's governments, believe that the weapon systems used in The War were actually developed during the war. So resolute is their belief that any debate, intelligent or otherwise, on the subject is completely out of the question. Too many are more than willing to challenge the notion that the terrible WMDs we as human beings used to make extinct another sentient race were originally designed to be used against our fellow human beings—the most genocidal WMDs used during The War were the two-legged monstrosities that we created, namely our Sci-Fi soldiers and their CAs (civilian advisors).

Becky ducks into Advanced Particle Physics, one of Professor Cate Blanchett's graduate studies classes, and tries to make her way to a back row seat as unobtrusive as possible. She fails miserably. The class bell had just rung, and Becky is late.

Professor Blanchett is a stickler for promptness. It's one of the many things that the leading feminist and outspoken lesbian is a stickler about.

Becky is a tall, leggy blonde—her long, silky tresses draping her shoulders and breasts. She's a big girl. In contemporary parlance.

Becky isn't built like a Kate Upton or a Gina Carano. Overall, she possesses the curvy figure of a Victoria's Secret model—albeit with June Wilkinson proportions, unabated.

In other words, a throwback. Stacked and statuesque, with very blue eyes and a very nice rack—the epitome of the 1950s bleach-blonde sex goddess.

A natural blonde with hair that's bleached the bright, fake looking, acid-dipped, electric blonde color of raw wheat. “China” doll bangs. Teased severe hair framing hard features. A very hard, very pretty face. The hard, pretty face of a 1950s starlet; therefore attractive, but harsh and severe nonetheless.

Very heavy, very becoming makeup, that isn't makeup—Cleopatra, or any Ancient Egyptian of either gender for that matter, would be envious. Dark, cosmetically-perfect eyebrows. Long black eyelashes. Eyelid pigmentation that strongly “suggests” eye shadow and eyeliner. No unsightly body hair whatsoever—only slightly mane, muff, eyelashes, and eyebrows. A flawless complexion. Fair skin.

Perkiness juxtaposing a mouth that's large, curved, and ugly, with downturned corners; an unbecoming mouth which bespeaks of loathing and disdain even when that's not its wearer's intent.

That pencil skirt wiggle when she walks, even though she's wearing figure-robbing uniform pants and clunky work boots. An upright posture, stiff-backed, when she's sitting down, standing up, or moving about.

You'd think that she was Vampira of *Plan Nine from Outer Space* fame in the guise of a flaxen-haired Las Vegas showgirl, a stripper, or a high class call girl—anything but a graduate student in physics—a rocket scientist in training.

Dressed in her campus security uniform, she didn't have a chance to change into her civvies before class. Last year the university sourced security to Allied Barton Security Services.

So with this being the professor's birthday, and with Becky looking the way she does, and with the professor being a known lesbian, forgive the good professor for mistaking Becky for what she most looks like—a gag gift—a stripper for the professor's fiftieth.

"Ms. Ms. Would you mind coming down here?" Professor Blanchett asks Becky, pointing at the blonde bombshell so there's no confusion about who she's addressing.

Becky comes down front and center, as she's been asked to do.

"It's Miss, not Ms. And. I'm really sorry about being late. My shift—"

"Enough with the airhead prattle, Miss Perky. By the way, I hate perky in my classroom—most especially perky blondes." Professor Blanchett then addresses the seated students. "So, the next time you students hire a stripper for me, make sure that she's not perky, let alone perky and blonde." Turning her attention back to Becky, and while pointing at the girl's twins, Professor Blanchett delivers a parting shot, with the intent of subsequently ushering Becky out the door. "Are those real?"

The question sparks a spattering of unsolicited laughter from the peanut gallery that is Becky's fellow students.

"The name is Becky Better, not Miss Perky. And I'm not a stripper. I'm one of your graduate students in physics starting this semester. I'm attending on the GI bill. And, yes, they are real. Not that it's any of your bee's wax."

Professor Blanchett loops through her student roster and confirms what Becky has just told her—comparing the virtual display materialized before her with Becky.

"So, if you're not a stripper dressed like a security guard. Why in heaven's name are you wearing that uniform?"

"Because I am a security guard, at least I am on campus. Heard of SOCEP?"

"No."

This time the professor joins in with the other students in the class to share a chuckle at Becky's expense. Becky doesn't seem to mind, and she actually doesn't.

"It stands for the Student On-Campus Employment Program. The Career Center and Human Resources joined forces in the development of the new SOCEP. SOCEP is a student employment program with an objective to increase on-campus student employment for those students not necessarily eligible for work-study."

"So, you—were a soldier during the war?"

Another round of laughs at Becky's expense, the teacher and the students. And, again, it's water off a duck's back. Becky just stands there and smiles back; perky as always.

"I was a CA during The War."

"You don't have a gun."

"I don't need one. Besides, although armed guards get paid fifty cents an hour more, they have to buy their own sidearm, holster, and bullets. The company does pay for your carry license, though."

"Enough!!! Just go back to your desk and make like wet paint—sit quietly."

Becky does as she's told. She ends up falling asleep during the course out of sheer boredom, while the other students are paying close attention to the lecture and taking copious notes. As a punishment for Becky's apparent disinterest, Professor Blanchett keeps Becky after session and gives her a pop quiz with twenty-percent of the student's grade for the class being weighted on the quiz's outcome. Much to Professor Blanchett's chagrin and surprise, Becky aces the test. In fact, she gets a perfect score.

"How in the hell?!!!"

"The questions seemed almost too easy—the answers were kind of, well, intuitive. I hope the material gets more difficult else this will seem like an intro class to me. No biggie. And, I'm very sorry about sleeping in your class. It was disrespectful of me. It won't happen again. I could claim it was from pulling double shifts Saturday and Sunday—I'll have to do that every other weekend. But, truth be told, I was bored. I hope I didn't snore."

"Nope. You were quiet as a church mouse."

Becky extends her hand in friendship, and smiles even more broadly which is quite the sight to behold. As aforementioned. She has a too-large Julia Roberts size mouth—a mouth made for fucking.

"Look. I know you don't like me. Think I'm a joke. But. You're still one of my heroes, anyways. And, easily one of the leading scientific minds of this or any other century."

The normally quick-witted, sharp-tongued Professor Blanchett is caught completely off guard and left speechless a first, by Becky's candor. Nonetheless, she has enough presence of mind to shake the girl's hand. It's done more out of reflex than reason, though.

"I'm the one who owes you an apology. I get so full of myself at times that I come off cruel and mean-spirited."

"No apology necessary. I don't mind being the bunt of jokes—it comes with the territory. Beauty and brains is so rare a combination, these days that I'm used to people prejudging me. And, for the record, you have a well-deserved reputation for being cruel and mean-spirited. Your barbs don't bother me a bit."

Becky's admission gets the desired result. A smile born of hard earned respect, not unfounded derision, paints the physicist's face.

"Are you gay?"

"I'm flexible."

"So you're bi."

"No. Like I said, I'm flexible."

"Too bad you're my student and I do have a live-in."

"Hasn't stopped you before, in the past."

Professor Blanchett raises an eyebrow. *So, you have done your homework, haven't you?* She thinks to herself, all the while maintaining an expression that hides her musings. But, Becky can guess as much.

Nor does it skip Becky's notice that Professor Blanchett wisely decided not to pursue the subject with her of what being "flexible in your sexual proclivities" really means. It obviously doesn't mean being bi.

Nor does Becky confront Professor Blanchett about her contradictory behavior about perky women, especially perky blondes. They're not okay in her class, but they're okay in her bed?

Professor Blanchett is a tall, slender woman with a penchant for wearing very heavy, very unbecoming makeup—including the wearing of bright red lipstick. Sigmund Freud and his ilk would have a field day with that. As expected, she dresses like a man. A men's suit and women's wingtip shoes. Two-toned oxfords. No socks. Braless. Small, perky breasts. Short cropped grey hair. A nice butch haircut. Severe. Hard features. A small, tight mouth. A penchant for wearing old-fashioned nose pinchers for eye glasses. Masculine mannerisms, etc.

"Likely the students will think that you fucked your way to an 'A' on the quiz."

Becky's initial response is merely the shrug her shoulders, as if she could care less. And, in point of fact, she doesn't care. And when she does voice a reply, it's a complete non sequitur.

"See you tomorrow."

Becky leaves; books in hand. Although there's no doubt in Professor Blanchett's mind that Becky doesn't need them. *Eight will get you ten that she doesn't need to crack a book all semester, in anyone's class*: Professor Blanchett thinks.

Becky looks back, smiles, and waves goodbye, as if she read the professor's telling thoughts about her.

Episode #002

“Barbie Doll. Rules of Engagement are for soldiers. They most definitely don’t apply to flesh-n-blood gizmos like you.”—Anonymous

The Hole is just what you’d think—a dyke dive bar. Many of the patrons prowling its dimly-lit environs, on the make to lay some pipe, don’t even remotely look female. Although some can pass for straight—maybe a few of them are straight, out on a thrill ride sightsee no touchy, no feelie or just looking for some “bearded” kicks on the other side of the tracks. And, then there’s the expected sprinkling of lezbo girl toys who crave to get laid by anyone with a pulse, as long as the pipefitter is well-hung, has a big set of balls hanging between their legs, and doesn’t have a “Y” chromosome.

This is Professor Blanchett’s favorite watering hole. She doesn’t miss a Saturday night, normally leaving here plastered with some random tail in tow, intent on a quickie oftentimes begotten in the alley behind The Hole while standing up before returning home to her significant other for another session of “you munch my rung, and I’ll munch yours.” Being faithful to a lover has never been one of Cate’s strong suits; not that she’s ever put in any real effort into doing it being faithful, that is.

Tonight, no one caught her fancy. Not to be outdone and left empty handed by the luck of the draw. She settles for masturbating in the alley behind The Hole—her favorite haunt—that cheapie make-out spot. As usual she’s not the only one back here. Like minds think alike, indeed.

They must have been standing there for quite some time, but she was too self-absorbed to notice. A half-dozen guys from the university’s football team, out looking to crack some heads—just blowing off steam. Harmless school boy stuff, only these boys are over 6-foot tall and tip the scales north of three hundred pounds. All the wannabe men (the bulldykes) back off and give them their space, except for one poor deluded fool, and she gets a quick lesson in manners that she won’t soon forget.

“Hell butch, yea you!!!” One of the men screams at Cate. His name is Adam Foster, and he’s the star quarterback. He’s also a mean drunk, and right now he’s very drunk.

“Can’t you see I’m busy?” Cate retorts—eyes bloodshot—speech slurred—as she retrieves her hand from her glistening crotch and licks the nectar off of her fingers. Her unzipped trousers are down around her thighs. Wrong time. Wrong question. Wrong attitude. Wrong umbries. Then she does the unpardonable: she spits on them.

They put the boots to her, figuratively and literally. She gets the beatdown of all beatdowns—kicked, punched, kneed, elbowed, you name, she gets it. Out for fun, not, blood, though, and in spite of themselves being inebriated, they don’t beat her to death. She does get beat to within of her life, though. Mercifully, for her, some ways into the assault, she blacks out.

Episode #003

“Want to be treated like a man? Well, that’s exactly what you got. Keep your comments innocuous and you might spare yourself another knuckle sandwich.”—Phil Robertson

For pure visual effects: Becky Better. But, be that as it may, she’s quite the utilitarian blonde, as well. In movie terms, call her a cross between Rose McGowan and Megan Fox.

“Okay. Okay. I’m coming,” Becky admonishes as she rushes out of her bedroom wearing only her skivvies in response to the frantic knocking on the front door of her shared condo. What greets her when she opens the door is the sight of two women: a demolished Cate Blanchett hanging on for dear life to her “significant other” actress Annette Bening the free-spirited mother of playwright Kristen Imogene Wiig.

Annette does a quick introduction and a plea for help.

Also awoken by the commotion, “Rowdy” Ronda Rousey, Becky’s roommate and BFF. Ronda stumbles out of the other bedroom. That trademark, a perpetual scowl, paints her face—the scowl of a spoiled, petulant twelve-year-old girl worn by a fully-grown woman who is neither spoiled nor petulant. The “Rowdy One” sleeps au naturel, and unapologetically so.

Ronda Jean Rousey is an American mixed martial artist and judoka. She is the first and current UFC Women’s Bantamweight Champion, as well as the last Strikeforce Women’s Bantamweight Champion. She has defeated all of her opponents by armbar in the first round. Rousey became the first American woman to earn an Olympic medal in Judo at the Summer Olympics in Beijing.

Rough, tough, no-nonsense, and highly competitive, Ronda’s competitive moniker of “The Rowdy One” fits her to a tee. She was originally opposed to using the nickname “Rowdy” that her friends gave her, feeling it would be disrespectful to pro wrestler “Rowdy” Roddy Piper. After meeting him through Gene LeBell who helped train both, Piper personally gave his approval.

“Ronda, go back to bed.” Knowing how mercurial her best friend can be, Becky is asking, not telling.

But, what Ronda is focusing on is that fact that Cate and Annette are staring at her. Ronda mistakes it for attraction, a completely unfounded assumption based upon knowing that both women are lesbian—their reputations precede them—and that she is naked.

Cate and Annette consider sleeping in the nude to be uncouth. They are appalled, not attracted—which explains their reaction to the sight of Ronda.

“Hey, what are you two staring at me for?! I don’t do chicks! You—”

In a further effort to defuse the situation, Becky does the opposite of what you’d think that she should do. She instructs Cate and Annette to ignore Ronda’s rant, and in fact proceeds herself to act like her roommate is invisible. Then again, Becky and Ronda have been BFFs since they first met back in kindergarten. So she knows what buttons to push in Ronda’s case.

Per Becky’s directions, Annette gets Cate over to the sofa. Cate passes out for the umpteenth time as Ronda storms over—hell bent for conflict. Becky closes the front door and secures the deadbolt.

“Least you forget, which by your actions you seem to have chosen to. Let me be the one to refresh your memory and dispel this self-imposed amnesia. Isn’t this the uppity bitch that put you down in class, and then tried to put the make on you after the fact?!”

Ronda will not be denied. So, Becky switches tactics, and goes to Plan B. She conversationally interposes herself between Ronda and the newcomers.

“In a word, yes.”

Ronda again redirects her “Incredible Hulk” rage at Cate and Annette.

“You two got a lot of nerve coming to her for help!”

“Ronda, Cate is unconscious and thus is unaware of your, cautionary. As for Annette, she had no part in what happened to me on Friday.”

“Like that’s supposed to make a fucking difference to me!”

“Ronda, go back to bed.” Again, a command proposed as a request.

“Say. Please.”

“Ronda. PLEASE, go back to bed.”

Ronda goes back in her bedroom and slams the door shut. It’s a good thing that the condos are sound-proofed; else everybody in the adjourning complex would be up and awake from the goings on. Interesting selective acoustic design: you can hear someone knocking on your front door, but you can’t hear someone being shot to death in any of the condos adjacent to yours.

“And I thought Neanderthals were extinct,” Annette quips, gamely.

Becky raises an eyebrow disapprovingly: a sign of emotion from the big blonde.

“I’m flexible. That doesn’t mean that I tolerate disrespect toward my friends, especially my best one. Ronda is very passionate. She wears her feelings on her sleeve—always has, always will. She is forthright, loyal, and direct. She speaks her mind. You always know where you stand with her. And, her heart is always on the side of the Angels. She is many good things that I cherish. What she is not is either stupid or immature.”

Annette is completely taken back by this unexpected development. The seemingly unfeeling robot girl has a heart after all. So Annette regroups.

“I apologize. I was out of line.”

“Apologize to her, not me.”

Annette turns around and looks in the direction that Becky is directing. There stands Ronda in her bathrobe, floppy bunny slippers, and skivvies.

Becky knows her Ronda all too well. She knew that her girl was listening behind the closed bedroom door to everything that was going on, and that Ronda would reappear when the appropriate moment availed itself.

Ronda walks over. Annette apologizes—whether contrived or not, Annette makes it sound sincere. The two women shake hands. Yes, Ronda is still scowling: that’s a given. But at least the apology cools her down somewhat—maybe a degree or two.

“Now, let’s get down to brass tacks. Do you have power of attorney for her, since obviously she’s in no condition to give her consent?”

“No. But we do have an Illinois marriage license. And I believe that a spouse can.”

“We’re not in Illinois.”

“She has an important faculty meeting in less than an hour, and she can’t be seen like this. Heavy makeup and some pain meds is not going to cut it.”

“She’s got tenure.”

“She’s also got enemies, very powerful ones who will—”

“She’s done this before?”

“Many times. Too many times.”

“Have you made a police report?”

“Yes, but there are no reliable witnesses to identify who did this to her.”

“Who does she think did this to her?”

“She thinks that they were members of the football team. She thinks the ringleader was Adam Foster. And you know how big football is down here.”

“Besides the two black eyes that I can obviously see, what did the emergency room say when they patched her up?”

“Contusions, bruises, a couple of cracked ribs, a possible concussion.”

“I get the idea. Someone did a real number on her.”

“I’ve never seen her beat-up like this. Usually, I’m the one who patches her up, no hospital and absolutely no police. I did a year of nursing school back in the day, and over the years that we’ve lived together as a couple I’ve had a lot of practice dealing with the aftermath of her hooliganism. But this. I had to take her to the hospital, and of course that meant the police getting involved and the assault being reported. There was no sweeping it under the rug, this time.”

“First, we revive her to get her consent, and then we go from there. You and Ronda will be witnesses.”

“What if we can’t revive her in time to get her consent?”

“Then you’re up a creek without a paddle.”

“Understood,” Annette knows better than to push the point. She decides to come clean about the rest of it too, having sized Becky up as nobody’s fool. “It’s not just an important faculty meeting. When the university got wind of what happened to her. Well, what got triggered was a periodic review of tenure before the board of regents—faculty bylaws and school code of conduct polices allow them to be impromptu. Those powerful enemies I spoke about are some,” Annette clears her throat, “most, of the trustees on the board. Cate has been on probation since the last such incident. Even with her being a Nobel laureate, her pioneering work on Einstein-Rosen bridges aka wormholes, and all of her patents in the field of traversing trans-warp corridors, it’s three strikes and you’re out for her if this thing goes against her.”

“I figured as much. It’s good you decided to sing, else I would have decided not to help you get her out of this predicament.”

“You’re going to report this to the SRB, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

“That means that she’ll get put on The List.”

“So will you.”

That’s when advocacy for the cause of Cate and Annette comes totally out of leftfield.

“Irrespective of her consent. If feasible, Cate is a one-percenter who cannot be made better, I think that you should go ahead and fix her. In spite of her being a total douchebag and the absolute certainty that she won’t show you any appreciation for doing it. She is one of your all-time heroes—only God knows why.”

Annette looks at Ronda shocked, her mouth figuratively hitting the floor.

“Like I said, her heart is always in the right place.”

“Thank you, Ronda.” This time, there’s no question of Annette’s sincerity.

“You’re welcome.”

“There will be consequences, of course, besides being Listed. Including—”

“The inability to binge drink for at least a year. She’ll get violently ill and puke her guts out every time she tries during the prescribed period. She’ll still be able to engage in social drinking, though. Her injuries will heal almost immediately, but the process will be extremely painful—exponentially exceeding that of childbirth. There will be traces of your retro-virus left in her system; ultimately, it will come to reside in her spinal column, but no more than that of the herpes virus left over from a cold sore. I will become similarly infected due to repeated exchanges of bodily fluids from having sex with her over the course of time. And, before you ask. both of us are one-percenters, neither of us can be made better, therefore, making her means fixing her, not making her into your kind of ‘better’ human being. Yes, we’ve done our due diligence. We’re both aware of the consequences, for better and for worse.”

“There was no need for me to ask. One of the many perks of my kind, I could tell that. You both will remain mundane from what I’ve done.”

“And for a briefest of moments after you make her, she will know what it’s like to be you. In your terms. She will experience, although fleeting, what it means for those like you to be a ‘better’ human being.”

“And so it begins,” Ronda interjects.

Becky’s eyes become wild, bloodshot, and haunting—windows into the crimson abyss. Her mouth changes—becoming impossibly wide—literally stretching from ear to ear. Her teeth become long, pointed, and crooked—razor teeth with receding gums—the hissing, vile, animalistic Vampires in *30 Days of Night*. Her tongue takes on a will of its own. Becoming forked and inhumanly long, it swarms in and out of her mouth as if it were a venomous snake. Fingers elongate. Fingernails become long and pointed—like daggers. Spindly, long-nailed fingers. In other words, klaw: extra-long fingers with claw-like nails, grasping hands that look like the talons of a predatory beast.

But, because her intent is to “fix” someone, the most profound change is unseen by the human eye—the chemistry of her saliva changes. It becomes a biogenic, transfiguring concoction. The other mutually exclusive outcome of this biochemical, metaphysical cocktail is that of a Vampire “making” a mundane into one of the two better kinds of human beings. Again, the selective nature of making—since merely feeding isn’t enough, else any mundane a Vampire “bites” would get made.

A very small fraction of the human race is receptive to being made: either fixed or made better—1%, to be exact. Although with a mundane population in the billions, that still equates to millions of people.

For roughly half of these one-percenters, getting made means being fixed. As aforementioned. They remain mundane, but their injuries and ailments are healed and their diseases, even terminal ones, are eradicated. Additionally. For some it even proves to be a fountain of youth; they look and feel years younger.

So, for the other half of these one-percenters, getting made means being made “better.” There are two kinds of better. This better deals with the changing of a Homo Sapiens into a Homo Resurrectus aka Undead, Vampyre, Vampire, Nosferatu. Furthermore, this step beyond, is a very deliberate, very problematic process that equates to Russian roulette. First you perish—dying in agony—the most painful of deaths—100% mortality. Then, you resurrect—maybe. If you resurrect, you resurrect as Undead. Else, you’re just dead meat—gone for good. And, there’s no foolproof way to pre-determine which way you’ll end up!

The other better, of course, involves being turned into The Dead. That’s the other WMD that no mundane likes to talk about in “mixed” company.

Truth be told, the intended weapon system was The Dead all along; hence the lopsided statistical breakdown for the end products and the ease with which they The Dead can be created. The Undead were an unforeseen side effect. Then again, only a choice few with the highest security clearance know that truth. Anyone else’s supposed knowledge thereof is complete and utter conjecture on their part.

The Dead were so accurately portrayed in Brad Pitt’s *World War Z*. *World War Z* that British-American apocalyptic thriller film directed by Marc Forster. The screenplay by Matthew Michael Carnahan is based on the novel of the same name by Max Brooks. The film stars Brad Pitt as Gerry Lane, a former United Nations investigator who must travel the world to find a way to stop a zombie-like pandemic.

Unlike the Undead, The Dead can propagate via an “ordinary” bite or a scratch, just like in the movie—also via an exchange of bodily fluids. Undead and one-percenters are immune. Likewise, Undead cannot make The Dead into Undead.

There is rumored to be a Z vaccine, but the world governments will neither confirm nor deny its existence. The CDC and the other world health organizations are also mute on the subject. For now, it remains fodder for talk shows and internet conjecture.

No longer beautiful. Now bizarre, creepy, gargoyle-like in appearance. Becky has transformed into an inhuman monstrosity akin to that bloodsucking fiend as portrayed by Max Schreck in the silent film *Nosferatu*. Becky affixes her hideous maw to Cate’s neck and begins to feed. Her now sunken eyes, talon-like fingernails, and snaggly serrated teeth give her a distinctly feral quality.

Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens. Translated as *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*, or simply *Nosferatu*, is a 1922 German Expressionist horror film, directed by F. W. Murnau, starring Max Schreck as the vampire Count Orlok.

The film, shot in 1921 and released in 1922, was an unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, with names and other details changed because the studio could not obtain the rights to the novel. For instance, "vampire" became "Nosferatu" and "Count Dracula" became "Count Orlok."

Yes. Before *Twilight* and *Let the Right One In*, before *Interview with the Vampire* and *From Dusk Till Dawn*, before even Carl-Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr* and Tod Browning's Bela Lugosi-starring *Dracula*, there was and always will be 1922s *Nosferatu*, the sickly, terrifying progenitor of them all. Their "maker," in vampiric parlance.

What Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* did for science fiction, F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* did for horror, giving the genre its visual DNA, congealing its thematic tropes, and providing a grim tonal template for the future makers of cinematic nightmares. It's a near-miracle, though, that the film even existed long enough to have this kind of influence. Not only is there the sad fact that so many silent classics—including some of Murnau's own—have simply been lost to time. But, with *Nosferatu* being an entirely unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, it also faced legal annihilation immediately after it was made. Stoker's heirs sued over the adaptation. His widow, not unreasonably, brought a lawsuit against the film's producers in Germany for copyright infringement, and the courts ordered that all copies of the film be destroyed.

Thankfully, a few export prints had already escaped the country, ensuring that *Nosferatu* would live forever in infamy—the film came to be regarded as an influential masterpiece of cinema. While it may not be "scary" today, in the usual sense, it still unsettles thanks to its dark, expressionist imagery—much of which is now iconic—and the demonic performance of proto-Method actor Max Schreck, who unnervingly stayed in character during the shoot, causing whispers that he might be an *actual* vampire. The film's publicists ran wild with this, of course, and the rumors ultimately inspired the 2001 movie *Shadow of the Vampire*, with Willem Defoe in the Schreck role. While most films that followed came to portray vampires as elegant, seductive creatures of the night, living in decadent immortality, Schreck's *Nosferatu* is hunched and desiccated and stiff, a walking corpse with wild eyes and spindly, long-nailed fingers. He's the anti-Edward Cullen.

Again, as her kind is portrayed in "Nosferatu" and its direct lineage "30 Days of Night" through Werner Herzog's "Nosferatu: The Vampyre / Phantom Der Nacht," Becky is the complete antithesis of that elegant, seductive creature of the night, living in decadent immortality. And, yet, just like Max Schreck's Count Orlok in "Nosferatu" or Klaus Kinski's *Dracula* character in "Nosferatu: The Vampyre," there is that almost-hypnotic attraction to her—visceral, metaphysical, yes even sexual of sorts. That degenerate, unclean "need" to have her feed upon you and make you hers—a compelling, involuntary urge for enslavement—no less mesmerizing for even the strongest of wills. Deep down, part of Ronda and Annette is envious—wishing that they instead of Cate were the one being fed upon.

From the point of view of Ronda and Annette, it's as if they have been immersed in that highly-stylized Herzog cinematic vision of the Undead, and metaphysically speaking they now exist in a different plane of reality.

Approaching the legendary German classic 1922 film *NOSFERATU* by F.W. Murnau with his own unique sensibilities in *NOSFERATU: THE VAMPIRE*, Werner Herzog establishes a link between himself and the classic days of German cinema, and in the process crafts a lush adaptation as well as a classic in its own right. Stark, symbolic cinematography and intensely stylized performances create what Herzog refers to as a different plane of reality, injecting the age-old tale of Count Dracula with a modern sense of mysticism, desire, and wonder. Frequent Herzog collaborator Klaus Kinski portrays the Dracula character with a silent intensity, tingeing the Vampire's inhuman monstrosity with a deep sense of pathos and longing. Completing a stellar international cast are Bruno Ganz (a regular in the films of Wim Wenders) and French film star Isabelle Adjani, both giving subtle yet compelling performances as the formerly happy couple who fall prey to Dracula's lust for life and love. From the opening image of rows of openmouthed mummies and the repeated motif of a bat in slow-motion flight to beautiful scenic shots of European mountains and beaches, Herzog's *NOSFERATU* is a visually stunning film, presenting visual tableaux taken directly from the original as well as those of Herzog's invention. The extreme stylization of the film recalls Herzog's similarly hypnotic and haunting film *HEART OF GLASS*—creating a wholly original film, that despite its differences maintains a strict and loving faithfulness to the original.

Of course, there are obvious differences between their immersions and the film. For example, Ronda and Annette are not a couple formerly happy or otherwise, nor are they man and wife. Becky as Vampire is not tingeing with either a deep sense of pathos or longing. Nor is she injected with a modern sense or any sense for that matter of mysticism, desire, and wonder. What Becky as Vampire exudes is what she looks like: Becky looks like some vile, animalistic thing who you crave to feed upon you—à la *30 DAYS OF NIGHT*. But, looks can, and in this case are, deceiving. Animalistic implies mindless, bestial. In her case: mindless, no; bestial, yes.

Episode #004

“Despair has its own calms.”—Bram Stoker

The advantage of condos in sister complexes is when they have identical blueprints. For example, you don't have to ask where the bathroom is when you're visiting and time is in short supply.

Becky stops feeding. Tick tock. Tick tock. Tick tock. Three seconds elapse. Cate regains consciousness, shrieking, obviously cramping, and in a lot of pain.

From the perspectives of Ronda and Annette, one minute a rapidly healing and sobering Cate is wrenching on the sofa and the next minute she's in the bathroom with its door now open, she's worshipping the porcelain goddess, and she's stone sober and completely healed of her injuries.

The glamour or whatever that had beguiled Ronda and Annette had gone bye-bye when Becky stopped feeding. So. Their perception had nothing to do with that.

Becky, who again looks mundane, saw Cate wrenching on the sofa—rush across the room to the bathroom door—open the door—go in bathroom and get over to the toilet in time to puke her guts into it—dropping to her knees to kneel before the commode in the process.

In mundane vernacular: between the sofa and the toilet, Cate shifted into overdrive became driven, as if she were Becky's kind of better—she was undriven on the sofa and she is now undriven kneeling before the commode. Overdrive to mundane is undriven for Vampire. Undriven for mundane is underdriven for Vampire. Again, it's a matter of perspective. For mundane to interact with Vampire, to be “aware” of them so to speak, Vampire must underdrive. Vampire, on the other hand, whether they are underdriven or undriven, are always interfaced with the world—thus they can affect it and be affected by it—their effect is incalculable and always game changing.

Furthermore, for the Undead, the world is physical and metaphysical. Palatable in the solely physical ways—what they see, hear, touch, and taste—the same as it is for mundane. Palatable in the solely metaphysical ways—what they see, hear, touch, and taste—the same as it is for supernatural beings.

Bottom line: mundane senses detect part of the world; Vampires sense detect all of it.

Ronda feels a pinprick—the jab of a sharp, pointed fingernail “sticking” her neck. Tick tock. And, then, from Ronda's perspective the world just stops. Annette and Cate are frozen in time. For a brief moment, she thinks that Becky is too, then she sees Becky wink at her and she realizes that's not the case. The front door is no longer locked and it's wide open.

A tall, sober-faced woman dressed in black from head to toe, comes into view. Instinctively, Ronda knows not to move, not to say anything, not to do anything, whatsoever—just make like wet paint drying. The woman is dusky—a dark, smoldering femme fatale—and incredibly beautiful—ravishingly beautiful. A beauty laced with the menace of the ultimate predator. She has ruby-red lips. Long hair that's silky and shiny. Straight, severe hair that is so black it looks dyed—coal-black hair. Her skin is so white—flawless—a flawless, alabaster complexion. She's so graceful that it's as if she's gliding across the floor instead of merely walking on it. What she is not is your ex's skanky, slutty, biatch girlfriend—in other words, she's not that hoe to be taken lightly.

“Oh. How nice. It’s just the way I imagined you would be. No zingy one-liners. No biatch, whatsoever. You do know when to keep it real. I’m a fan, followed you for years. I would hate to think of you disappointing me, and me having to find a new rising star to follow.”

Ronda swallows hard. She doesn’t get scared casually. This creature scares her in spades. She doesn’t need cue cards for her to fill in the blanks. Becky has yet to say anything, to the point of deferring to this “thing,” which speaks volumes to Ronda. This woman must be one of the born-better.

Becky was made. Vampire like her are born mundane and made better. But, there are Vampires who are born Vampire. Although, made and born of this parallel species of the human race are genetically identical, and indistinguishable in abilities, the made defer to the born—they’re supposed to.

“What I have done to you will pass, and nothing will be left in your system traceable that will invalidate you from MMA competition in the Octagon. But, know this, I have marked you, claimed you as mine, detectable only to our kind. Someday I will come for you as your mother claiming you as my daughter. I will make you better. Old, frail, at the end of your mortal coil, your body having finally betrayed you as is the fate of all Food, you will thank me for my magnanimous gift of eternal life.”

Then the Vampire queen turns her attention to Becky. At no time does Becky dare eye contact with the queen.

“We have a problem. We need it solved. One of our kind has been murdered. His name is Count Orlok, Katja’s brother. You remember the countessa, don’t you?”

“Yes, ma’am. I met her at the ball, last year—the one held in Hong Kong. You introduced us.”

The Endless Night Vampire Ball is held at eight locations, annually: London, New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, Hong Kong, Paris, Moscow, and Saint Louis. This year, a ninth location is being added: The Endless Night German Vampire Ball in Berlin. There’s talk that finally the Italian overtures are being heeded and Rome will be added as the tenth location, next year.

“And her brother?”

“I know of him. I never met him formally, ma’am.”

They make eye contact and exchange a knowing wink.

“Good. I need you on it, immediately. Drop everything.” The queen of the damned, Queen Akasha, hands Becky a police department case file and then she takes a parting shot at her intended. “Et tu, Ronda, it’s nice to formally meet you. Be seeing you again in about a hundred years, which will be a mortal lifetime for you and a blink of an eye to me.”

The queen is just gone, the front door slams shut and locks itself. Tick tock. Tick tock. Ronda and the world sync up mundanely again. Neither Cate nor Annette is aware of what just happened, and Ronda knows smartly to keep her trap shut about it in front of them. Later, when she and Becky are alone and can have words, they will have words.

Episode #005

“Funding the initiative could conceivably cost as much as \$1.1 trillion and leave the taxpayers dumbfounded, if they knew. Then. Why HELIX, you ask? Because Nature is about balance, and also, we should be as well. The Undead are many and they kill. The Dead are legion and they annihilate. Yet, the latter defers to the fore. For too long, neither has deferred to us. I think it’s our time. Don’t you agree, senators?”—Professor Thelma Hopkins, formerly with the CDC and WHO, lead researcher and project director of HELIX

7 Maryland Plaza, The Fairmont, on another Earth for another Vampire is adjacent to where that Vampire’s Dwayne lives. On this Earth for this Vampire it’s something altogether.

Becky arrives on the crime scene wearing a badge hanging from a silver chain around her neck. One of the police officers recognizes her as a security guard at the university and jokes about this maybe being a little out of her jurisdiction, and then he notices her badge and immediately cuts off the chitchat.

The badge itself is platinum, and there are runes on it. Other than that it looks like a detective’s badge for the police department, and that is what it is. Additionally, it’s a detective’s badge associated with the police department, worn by designated individuals who represent Council business in police matters. Ergo, it’s not mundane: not an ordinary, run-of-the-mill detective’s badge.

The police department case file that Queen Akasha gave Becky was so redacted that it was almost useless. All it contained were the address of the murders, the fact that Count Orlok was the only Vampire who was killed, and a notation that his slaughtered bodyguards were mundane and that they were also metas—no number given for how many were in the Count’s demised protection detail. Maybe “almost useless” is an understatement.

A tall, leggy blonde with a toothy grin and a too large mouth walks up to Becky and introduces herself. She’s dressed casually in jeans, cowgirl boots, and a western-style blouse. Becky assesses a lot about the other blonde’s feminine quotient from what’s visible. Underwear? A sports bra and matching thong—she’s a runner and likes to do marathons. Her name is Molly Minders, and she’s a detective first-grade with homicide division under Captain Lopez. She’s also responsible for the case file given to Becky being censored to within a gnat’s ass.

Becky is dressed smartly in a black pants suit, matching black flats, and a white silk blouse. And. The rigor of her torpedo bra, her stiff-back posture, and her panty lines say a lot about Becky’s feminine quotient to Molly. And from the way she’s handling herself, Molly can tell that Becky is well-versed in police procedure.

There wasn’t time for Molly to get a complete brief beforehand on the Vampire, but she does know that Becky was a CA during The War.

“Was anything of value taken? If so. Maybe this is a robbery gone fatally bad?”

“All of the Count’s valuables were insured and thus there is a thorough inventory on record by his insurance company. Nothing and I mean absolutely nothing is missing.”

“I noticed some scratches on the front door.”

“Yes. There are similar scratches on the door of the bedroom where Count Orlok’s body was found.”

“Both doors are wood?”

“The front door is simulated wood.”

“Superb sim. It sure had me fooled.”

“The bedroom door is really wood. Now, I’m confused. Are you here for the murders or the furnishings?”

Becky smiles at Molly’s quip. From Becky’s reaction, Molly now knows that Becky is not as stiff as she initially thought the Vampire would be. The last Vampire she had to work with was a real pain—one of those uber serious, end-of-the-world types—the usual guy or gal the Council sends.

“Officially. I’m only here for the one murder, Count Orlok’s. But I am curious about the collateral damage, nonetheless. It might shed some light on the Count’s demise.”

“But you know the scratches do. Shed some light on the Count’s demise, that is.”

“How so?”

“Now who’s being coy?”

“I can’t think what you mean.”

“Bullshit. When I was a patrol officer, my beat was Chinatown. You sure as hell know what those scratches mean.”

“Enlighten me, please.”

“狗杀死龙: roughly translated in English is ‘Dog who kills dragons.’”

“Actually, in Chinese it’s 归正龙狗. Which, roughly translated in English is ‘Dog who slays dragons.’ The dragons in question being Vampires, of course. In Chinese, the dog in question would be called a 龙犬, a dragon dog. In the Hip Hop community they’re known as Krull.”

“That’s was forthcoming.”

“All you had to do was ask.”

“I thought I had, originally.”

“My bad. I must have missed it.”

Their walk-thru of the rooms reveals a gruesome booty. Six bodyguards and Count Orlok have all been dispatched in the very same way: their throats ripped out with a bite that encompassed their entire necks. That distinctive “locking jaw” affectation where the biter clamps down on the intended and executes a “hold and shake” bite style, unhinging the jaw, and ripping the cervical vertebrae forward through the front of the neck decapitating the whomever or whatever with the single, fluid, effortless, violent yank of an equally powerful jaw.

There are spent shell casings everywhere you look. All of the guards got a chance to draw their sidearms and fire them, for all the good that it did them.

“No CCTV outside that we can tell of anyone or anything suspicious before or after the time that the ME says that these people were killed. Surveillance cameras inside the hotel and inside the Count’s apartment are just as useless—they appear to have been selectively looped during the time of the murders, somehow. Forensics tells us what did the killings, but not who directed these things to kill.”

“There was only one dog. So it’s just a thing that was directed.”

“My bad. Slip of the tongue. You’re quite right. Only one dog seems to be indicated.”

“In addition to the Chinese characters, forensics should have also discerned that the bite pattern is Vampiric in nature, but canine based. It’s as if a Vampire who was a dog did the deed. Hence, further support for a dragon dog as the murder weapon. So we seem to know how—the hammer that was likely used based upon the evidence at hand, so to speak. We just don’t know who or why—the identity or the motivation of the person wielding the hammer, so to speak.”

“This technique isn’t exclusive to Krull, dragon dogs, or whatever you choose to call those stupid, ugly-ass dogs.”

“Ugly is a matter of taste. I respectfully disagree with your assessment of their attractiveness. I, myself, think the bully breed is quite cute, cuddly, and loveable. As for them being stupid, they are a most intelligent—”

“Whatever. Don’t care. I couldn’t give a rat’s about your misguided affinity for that pedigree ramble of a dog.”

“As you wish.”

“As I was about to ask. Y’all Vampires are also capable of killing just like this, correct?”

“Yes, this the technique of choice in fights to the death that mundane are rarely privy to—not supposed to witness—usually duels of honor. We also can murder like this for the usual petty dishonorable reasons that all human beings do, not always premeditated—sometimes in a fit of rage or just in the moment, so to speak, or simply out of convenience, or whatever.”

“The bedroom door is Obsidian. The Count must have been very superstitious.”

“Yes, he must have been.”

“So there should be seven bodyguards, not six, then.”

“Yes, there should be.”

It’s the game of cat and mouse that cops play with the guilty. This is what Becky and Molly are playing.

As they walk into the kitchen there lays the eviscerated body of a huge, blue cream and white Pit Bull Terrier. The female bully breed is about four-years-old and 150-lbs—a BGK’s Magnum. The dog is eviscerated. There is still an ornate, bejeweled collar around the animal’s neck. This is more evidence that the killings are not part of a robbery gone fatally bad.

Pooling around and under her corpse. There is a black churning liquid, which looks like extra heavy crude oil. It’s oozing out of her mouth, eye sockets, tear ducts, nostrils, and that gaping abdominal wound. Her name is Deena, and she was the seventh security guard. And from all the evidence collected, she’s the dragon dog who killed Count Orlok and the other six guards.

“And here we have the seventh guard. Geez, what a good guesser you are. It’s as if you were the hand wielding the hammer, so to speak. You walk on a crime scene and do a cold read without a stutter, and nary a slip of any sort. Wow.”

“And the suspected murder weapon, I presume.”

“Yes, she is—another bingo. And, she’s covered in blood, guts, soft tissue bits, whatever, from Count Orlok and his security detail. Of course, we’ve quarantined the dog using a localized force field and the forensics had to be taken by techs in hazmat suits. Too bad none of us have your immunity—you know the inherent protection that Vampire and one-percenters have.”

“The animal’s *fait accompli* appears to be self-inflicted.”

“Bingo, again. Barring that it’s the very best facsimile of doing yourself in that our ME has ever seen—the pit’s fatal wound is self-inflicted. And. Not to be too much of a nerd, but I think it’s *fait de compli*.”

“Nope—geek to your nerd. ‘Fait de compli’ is based on the misspelling of the French phrase ‘fait accompli.’”

“You know on second thought. I think you are right. Yes, you are. My bad, again—that’s two to your one.”

“What?”

“I’m just saying, counting my last ‘my bad’—I’ve got two and you’ve just got the one. Your fubar concerning the Chinese scratching on the doors: that’s your one, your one ‘my bad.’”

This feels so vintage, just like an episode of *Columbo*, with Molly in the Peter Falk role.

“You make me for this?”

“Possibly. Having been a CA during The War, you sure got the skills.”

“And my motive?”

“Like you things need one. Vampires are predatory by nature and serial killers by design.”

“The same could be said of any human being.”

“Naw—not on this cowgirl’s watch. You’re in the running, but the jury is still out.”

“It’s good to know that you’re so open minded.”

“I try to be.”

An experienced homicide detective, Molly is masterfully playing good cop/bad cop, switching between the two as if it’s second nature.

“I didn’t know Count Orlok.”

“You met him.”

“Once, at the ball.”

“That’s all a gal like you needs.”

“And you think that because I’m a Vampire or because I was a CA?”

“Both. Take your pick. Either works for me. The other is just the cherry on the cake. Capish?”

“Capish.”

Shameful or not, the brush that paints CAs so broadly with the stigma of the crazed War vet is real and quite damning. As such, CAs have to undergo regular psych evals. It’s an ongoing process that will likely be done for the rest of their lives.

In Becky’s case, every psych eval also known as a template that she has taken, during and after the war, is identical to her pre-war one, which is totally unheard of.

“You’re good. Really good. And that says a lot, ‘cause I’ve squeezed the best in my time.”

“Am I under arrest?”

“Nope.”

“So the interrogation is over?”

“For now.”

“Excellent.”

“Oh and, I wouldn’t leave town, if I were you.”

“I hadn’t planned to.”

“You know there’s also the other interpretation of the facts.”

“A Vampire killed them all, including the dog, and made it look like the pit bull was somehow coopted into going berserk and explicably turning on her master, and thus the defacements on the two doors are just red herrings.”

“That’s the one. You got it to a tee. Goodness gracious, as aforementioned, you can either read a crime scene cold or you’re as guilty as sin.”

“Or a little bit of both.”

“Naw. I’m going for either or, and like I’ve said, right now I’m leaning toward the latter—maybe.”

“Be seeing you.”

“You will.”

Becky exits the crime scene. Downstairs in the main lobby, she stays onsite long enough to question the charming concierge of this five-star hotel, not minding that Molly is shadowing her. Molly follows her outside in time to see her whisked away in a nondescript black SUV.

Episode #006

“When you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.”—Friedrich Nietzsche

It’s one of those places that reek of plausible deniability. ACUs, BDUs, DCUs, ABUs, MultiCam, etc.—All of the uniformed personnel are wearing MGB uniform equivalents of the U.S. Army’s. Nothing is U.S. Army per se.

Another part of the “fun” of this place is that irrespective of the person’s MOS, with few exceptions, everyone can do everyone else’s job. To use a show business analogy using the *Nero Wolfe* series on TV as exemplar—It is as if they are reparatory actors, meaning an ensemble cast that will take on different roles for each episode in the same way they might for a theater—delighting the sharp-eyed members of the audience who indulge spotting the re-appearing actors.

Needless to say, this practice can throw any intruder for a very unfortunate, potentially deadly, loop. This is one of its intents. The other, and its primary purpose, is redundancy of function. Kill or disable an MP, for example, and a secretary can easily replace them with no loss in the level of policing deterrence.

A United States military occupation code, or a Military Occupational Specialty code (MOS code), is a nine character code used in the United States Army and United States Marines to identify a specific job. In the United States Air Force, a system of Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) is used. In the United States Navy, a system of naval ratings and designators is used along with the Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC) system.

DMOS is an abbreviation for Duty Military Occupational Specialty. Since an individual can obtain multiple job specialties, DMOS is used to identify what their primary job function is at any given time. MOSQ is an abbreviation for Military Occupational Specialty Qualification. An individual is not MOSQ’d until they have completed and passed all required training for that MOS.

A very white non-descript room, two chairs, and a table. Everything is very white and non-descript, and none of it is nascent. Becky sits in one chair. Across from her sits a woman, who is Becky’s new shrink, Doctor Claire Klebb. In uniform, standing beside Doctor Klebb, is Becky’s old CO, Colonel Potter. He runs this place—the old warrior who now spends the end of his career riding a desk—he has lived long enough to become what he hates most: a paper pusher.

Doctor Klebb’s maiden name is Brown, and from her appearance you would surmise that she’s either neuter sexually ambiguous or the sexually repressed dyke half of a lesbian couple. When in fact she has two children and is married to a man. Her husband Larry, a rather ordinary-looking guy, is a CPA. And their sex life is quite healthy and very straight-laced heterosexual.

Like her namesake and lookalike Rosa Klebb, the fictitious KGB colonel in *From Russia with Love*, the 1963 entry in the James Bond spy series, Doctor Brown is neither attractive nor is she very feminine-looking.

Therefore, in appearance, Doctor Klebb represents the anti-feminine: short and squat, with thick legs and very strong calves for a woman. Her obscene bun and strictured uniform, complemented by drab khaki stockings, contribute to create an overall impression of a grotesquely deviant femininity.

“Are you the new psychiatrist?” Becky asks Doctor Klebb, but she’s looking at Colonel Potter.

“Yes, I am. Now, please look at me, not Colonel Potter, when we’re conversing.”

“That’s not protocol to me. My preference is strict, not casual. This means. The daily needs to be established, first—via written orders. That’s to be done for each of my visits before the session formally begins regardless of whether I ‘know’ my handlers or not.”

Colonel Potter smiles at the obvious jab to civilian oversight.

“Okay. Be that way. You are within your rights. Please follow protocol, although you already know the what’s-what from your pre upon your arrival here.”

Becky breaks the seal on the manila envelope in front of her, removes the contents, and carefully scans her SOP. Only after she has finished reading the documents within does she raise her head and make eye contact with Doctor Klebb.

“And as you well know, Doctor Klebb, pre is casual, it is not strict. Protocol established. For the record. Your security clearance is recognized as violet. It is also noted that Colonel Potter’s security clearance is ultra violet. Proxy is need-to-know, and that overrides an individual’s level of access as defined by their security clearance.”

Like any expert interrogator, which after all is what all shrinks are, everything about how Doctor Klebb looks and acts functions to maximize her as a manipulative weapon.

“Is it okay that I call you Becky?”

As Doctor Klebb poses the question, she leans forward suggestively as if she’s trying to seduce Becky with her ample wares—the doctor is well-endowed in the bosom department. Becky pretends to not notice. Two can play this game.

“Yes, of course, that’s my name.”

As aforementioned, everything about Doctor Klebb is a calculated effect. Her model is her identical twin, her sister Professor Bear Brown. An avowed Humanist, Professor Brown is the sexually ambiguous, sexually repressed, more masculine half of a very butch power couple—Bear’s “better” half is billionaire Amy Watts. One has to wonder if the veil between the pseudonym and the truth is ever pierced leaving Doctor Klebb hopelessly awash in Professor Brown.

“You can call me Claire.”

“I’d rather call you Doctor Klebb.”

If you’re familiar with a person’s MO, they can pass volumes to you without saying a word. It’s as if there’s telepathy between you. As such, Colonel Potter doesn’t miss the significance of Becky’s stipulation to Doctor Klebb about how she would prefer to address the shrink. Becky always acquiesces to calling whoever psychiatric is assigned to handle her case by their first name. Not this time though.

SOP. Wheels are set in motion. Colonel Potter steps back, causally. The “interview” room is under electronic surveillance, and the meaning of his reposition is not lost on those watching. Security details—black ops cleaners—are dispatched to Doctor Klebb’s home and office. A VIP and the director of operations herself briskly take up residence in the adjourning observation room. Outside the interrogation room’s now locked door, sentries are posted.

“As you wish.” The brunette wets her lips and then she anxiously begins the interrogation. “Let’s begin with questions about the initiative.”

“There was no MRI.”

“I just want to do the questionnaire.”

Doctor Klebb’s sexual ambiguity or sexual repression is foreshadowed in her butch appearance and behavior. Her garments and accessories are suggestive of both emasculating power and a grotesque parody of lesbianism—that represents the most subversive embodiment of deviant femininity, visible, for instance, in her failed attempt to lure Becky.

“That’s not procedure.”

“But it is protocol, so you have to comply. An MRI is only a perquisite if we were to Tesla, which I have stated we will not.”

“Yes, Doctor Klebb.”

Now it’s Doctor Klebb who smiles, knowing that she has the big blonde by the short hairs.

“What is the initiative?”

“Which one?”

“There’s more than one?”

Becky shrugs her shoulders, as if to say “beats me.” But, she leaves it up to Doctor Klebb to make that assumption.

“Please, you have to be more specific.” A mischievous grin accompanies Becky’s jab.

“Let’s confine our discussion to HELIX.”

“Okay.”

“What was your function on HELIX?”

“I was part of the security detail assigned to Professor Thelma Hopkins.”

“Please, you have to be more specific,” queries Doctor Klebb, returning the girl’s jab in kind.

“I was the professor’s security chief.”

“And what was Professor Hopkins’ position with HELIX?”

“She was the lead researcher and project director.”

“What were the objectives of HELIX?”

“Colonel Potter, you must leave the room. Although you have a higher security clearance than Doctor Klebb. My answer would exceed your need-to-know.”

Colonel Potter feints doing as he’s been told—he never makes his egress, though. The Vampire changes from her mundane form to her Vampiric one. Doctor Klebb never gets a chance to react.

Becky kills this “fake” Doctor Klebb (Doctor Klebb’s twin sister) outright, decapitating the good doctor in the very same fashion that Deena brutally dispatched her master and coworkers. Although in this instance there will be nothing canine about the bite patterns.

Becky removes the subcutaneous implant that she knew she would find behind one of Doctor Klebb’s ears, and smashes the device on the table. Then, the Vampire feeds.

At no time does Colonel Potter interrupt her during the “act.” At no time during which the “act” does anyone else enter the room and interrupt her.

And then there is the matter of the one-way glass. On the other side of that mirror is the aforementioned observation room. There are two observers also previously mentioned, and one security. Both of the observers are female, one is General Carol Banks the visiting VIP—General Banks is a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—and the other woman is Professor Thelma Hopkins director of operations. The security is male, an MP—his name is Hal Jordan, and he stands at attention beside Professor Hopkins as if he was one of those guards outside Buckingham Palace—craved in flesh-n-blood granite. Once upon a time, Becky Better had his job—lead for the professor’s security detail.

“And, Professor Hopkins, we know what holes in our security that she and her cohorts exploited to get this far?”

“Yes. The deficiencies are being addressed as we speak, General Banks.”

General Banks is chomping on a cigar. She never lights them up, she just mauls them. What a waste. They’re Cubans. Rank hath its privileges.

While she doesn’t personally approve of how this matter is being handled—vis-a-vis the Vampire—being a “good” soldier she obediently differs to chain of command. And in this place, Professor Hopkins, a civilian, outranks her.

“We’ll assume for the time being, until counter intel proves otherwise, that Professor Brown coerced her sister into helping her.”

“So the others, Professor Brown’s co-conspirators, are dead, I presume, and can’t tell us either?”

“Yes.”

“Messy.”

“Quite so.”

“Then again I wouldn’t expect them go quietly. Too bad. I would have enjoyed questioning them, personally. I haven’t had a chance to do a good interrogation in a coon’s age.”

General Banks, as an officer of the United States Military who is bound by its oaths and accepted conducts of behavior not to mention her own personal high standards of morality, is referring to that which would be approved of by the U.S. Military, procedures deemed legal by American jurisprudence, and that which is sanctioned by the Geneva Convention.

Professor Hopkins, on the other hand, has no such limitations or inclinations—what she envisioned utilizing on any of the captured was torture, plain and simple, by even the most heinous definitions of it. To curb her dwelling too much on such a missed opportunity, she changes the subject of the conversation in mid-stream.

“The pitfalls of plausible deniability. We have to source to SOG, and as good as they are at covert ops, Special Operations Group is still not us the government.”

“And they sure as hell ain’t spit shine the military either. Contractors always have their limitations. As such, this place will never be as tight as it should be. There’s always porosity when you go out of the box.”

“Like you said, it can’t be helped.”

“Retina scans, voice prints, fingerprints, etc., all tweaked?”

“Yes. Then again they are twins so the fix didn’t take that much. An MRI would have screwed the pooch but with no Tesla, none was needed for the interview to proceed.”

“And if the real Doctor Klebb proves to have been a willing participant?” General Banks asks the obvious, just because she wants to fully gauge the professor’s infamous character. She’s heard the horror stories about this Mengele. And the response she gets doesn’t disappoint—living up to that reputation in spades.

“Then the Vampire can have another hearty meal at a later date.” Upon hearing the sound of her own answer, Professor Hopkins gets goose bumps all over and smiles broadly.

“Outstanding. Now that’s what I like to hear,” jokes General Banks—a joke in bad taste, but a joke, nonetheless. She realizes that Professor Hopkins is deadly serious about the matter, and that the professor takes further delight in the career soldier’s quip. Sometimes it’s good strategy to keep on the devil’s good side, especially when they’re one of your country’s prized devils.

Episode #007

“May you be as good as your mothers think you are!”—Kevin Kutterer

Back in the day. Echoes of that time when all threats to the American way of life, were terrestrial.

It is two years before the formal outbreak of The War. It is almost a year before the Europa massacre, that unprovoked genocide resulting from a then unknown expeditionary force encroaching upon our solar system.

The North Lawn at the White House in Washington, DC, is bordered on the north by Pennsylvania Avenue with a wide view of the mansion, and is screened by dense plantings on the east from East Executive Drive and the Treasury Building, and on the west from West Executive Drive and the Old Executive Office Building. Because it is bordered by Pennsylvania Avenue, the White House’s official street address, the North Lawn is sometimes described as the front lawn.

The awards ceremony is over. The medals have been given out. And the small crowd in attendance has dispersed. The Secret Service detail has fallen back, per the President’s order, but keeps them in sight. There’s just the three of them, The President, The First Lady, and Betty Better. Although she’s a civilian, Becky is decked out in “dress blues,” and for her that means an ASU.

The Army Service Uniform (ASU) is the military uniform worn by United States Army personnel in situations where formal dress is called for. It is worn in most workday situations in which business dress would be called for, while the Army Combat Uniform is used in combat situations. It can be worn at most public and official functions.

As background. The blue ASU was adopted for optional wear, two years ago. It was issued to new soldiers starting in the fall of this year, and will be required army-wide in four years. The ASU replaces two uniforms already in use—the “army green” service uniform and the “army white” service uniform. It is based on the current dress uniform known as the “dress blue” uniform. It has its roots in the “army blue” uniform, which dates back to the Revolutionary War, in which the Continental Army outfitted its soldiers in blue to distinguish them from the red uniform coats of the British Army. It also recalls the Civil War Union Army’s blue uniforms in features such as officers’ shoulder-straps and the general wearing of lighter blue trousers.

“You seemed uncomfortable at the ceremony, Miss Better.”

“Permission to speak freely, Mr. President?”

“Of course.”

“Yes, Mr. President, I was uncomfortable at the ceremony.”

“Because of what you and your team did, the First Lady is here today. On paper, my generals tell me that you people should not have been able to do what you did at Camp Pendleton. Yet, here we are, reality refuting conjecture, hindsight, and theory.”

“The medals you gave us, Mr. President, were greatly appreciated, but we were just doing our job.”

“Nonsense, I won’t hear any more of this. We are in your debt.”

“Yes, Mr. President. Whatever you say.”

“Much better attitude. Now, onto much more important things. There is an initiative that I would like you and your team to be part of. Its objective is the preservation of the American way of life, at all costs, and it will have perpetual funding. You and your people will provide personal security for the initiative’s director.”

There’s a lot of unspoken here. The President isn’t really “asking” Becky for her concurrence with his wishes, he’s telling her. Technically, she’s not in the military and he’s not her commander in chief, and he can’t order her to do anything. But, implicit: it’s in her best interest to accept. It’s never a good idea—i.e., career suicide—for people in her line of work—i.e., contractors who specialize in providing executive protection for the federal government—to say “no” to the President of the United States.

The First Lady motions to the woman who is now standing with the watching Secret Service detail. When the woman reaches the trio, it is the First Lady who introduces Becky to her new protectoree.

“Becky, this is Professor Thelma Hopkins. Professor Hopkins, this is Miss Becky Better.”

“I’m pleased to meet you, Professor Hopkins,” Becky offers as she shakes Professor Hopkins’ hand. It’s her standard salutation for first meeting with someone she’s been assigned to protect.

Implicit in this exchange is that Becky Better is declaring her agreement with protecting Professor Hopkins. The particulars are now discussed at length and in great detail. There will never be a record of this meeting. Nor will anything discussed here, ever be repeated to another living soul. That includes the four participants.

So. In this very public place, in full view of Pennsylvania Avenue, this very secret meeting is held. The best place to hide something is in plain sight.

Episode #008

“All my life, I always wanted to be somebody. Now I see that I should have been more specific”—Ellen S. Brooks

A repeat. Deja vu. A very white non-descript room, two chairs, and a table. Everything is very white and non-descript, and none of it is nascent. Becky sits in one chair. Across from her sits a woman, who is Becky’s new shrink, Doctor Claire Klebb. In uniform, standing beside Doctor Klebb, is Becky’s old CO, Colonel Potter.

Becky is dressed just like she was before—a new outfit identical to its predecessor. In her mundane guise, she looks bright eyed and bushy tailed.

Doctor Klebb, in contrast, looks the worse for wear—battered and bruised, with a black eye. In appearance, Doctor Klebb represents the anti-feminine: short and squat, with thick legs and very strong calves for a woman. Her obscene bun and strictured uniform, complemented by drab khaki stockings, contribute to create an overall impression of a grotesquely deviant femininity.

Like her namesake and lookalike Rosa Klebb, the fictitious KGB colonel in *From Russia with Love*, the 1963 entry in the James Bond spy series, Doctor Brown is neither attractive nor is she very feminine-looking.

“If you don’t mind me saying so. Claire, you look like shit—more than usual, that is,” Becky delivers the barb with a grin.

“The family is fine, thanks for asking,” Claire counters, flashing a big grin of her own.

It’s obvious that they have history. But, no one here knows what it is. In point of fact, up until now, no one here knew that they knew each other.

“God, your sister Bear was such a half-ass. She couldn’t even pull this off without a hitch.”

“In all fairness, you did know me beforehand, you knew about her and she didn’t know about you, you could tell us apart, and on top of that unbeknownst to her—”

“Excuses, excuses, excuses. Why all the empathy? You hated her guts, and she felt the very same way about you.”

“Just being civil, nothing more, nothing less, and you know it.”

“Bingo. You can pick your friends, but not your family.”

They share a hearty laugh. It’s as if they were two school girls sharing a communal giggle. It’s the affectation of a very inside joke that only the two of them are privy to.

“MRI, done per the pros.”

“Check.”

“Is your pre sufficient or do we need to follow strict? Strict is such a burn.”

“The pre is okay, since you’re the shooter.”

“Satisfactory.”

“Shoot.”

“Still having trouble with civilian life?”

“Yes. And I always will. I grew up an army brat, spent most of adult life associated with the military, and I prefer the rigor. Civvies are way too loose, unstructured, individualistic, etc. Yuck.”

“We all have our crosses to bear.”

“Yes, we do.”

“Ever miss your favorite MOS?”

“Every day. But Hal is too awesome, so I can rest easy. She Professor Hopkins is in good hands.”

“Duh?! And here I was thinking that Michelle was your favorite.”

“Now. You know better than that. I never split hairs when it comes to the First Lady. Professor Hopkins was an MOS. The First Family was not—it was nanny—”

“Did you ever do her?”

“Michelle or the professor?”

There’s a line. And some lines you don’t cross. Doctor Klebb’s wisely chooses her next words. Discretion is always the better part of valor—especially when it concerns the wife of the reclining president in question—a man who J. Edgar Hoover still gives a wide berth to.

A sitting president is the current president. US Presidents are called “President” until they die, reference therefore to the present-day president is made as “sitting President.”

A popular term applied to retired presidents is *standing*. When that retired president remains influential, with a reach that never exceeds their grasp, the deceptive adjective used is *reclining*.

“I hear that you’re looking into something for that queen of yours.”

“She’s not my queen. I was made, not born. I don’t belong to her House or any House for that matter. I’m Ronin.”

“My bad. You’re associated with her House, and she’s your proxy queen.”

“Much better.”

“What other Houses are you associated with?”

“All of them. I don’t play favorites. Like the Swiss, I’m neutral.”

“How often would you like to meet?”

“As often as you like.”

“Let’s start off with monthly sessions and see how that goes.”

“Awesome.”

“I think that’s enough for this session. We’ll be returning you to your Detective Molly Minders.”

“You know that they’ll never trust you again.”

“I know.”

“I knowing you, it wasn’t the torture. They used your family as leverage. That had to be it.”

“Doesn’t matter. If I were in their shoes, I’d have my suspicions too.”

“You can never be too careful, in this business.”

Colonel Potter leaves the room. They stand up and make for the door. Before they egress, Claire pulls Becky close and French kisses her—making out on the lawn. Becky isn’t the only one who’s flexible. At no time does Becky pull away. Claire is such an awesome kisser. Heavy petting follows—more of Claire’s expertise to savor. None of this highly unprofessional, not to mention unethical behavior, is saved for posterity.

For unknown technical reasons, that will forever remain unexplained, when the two women stood up from the table, all electronic surveillance in the room went south and the one-way glass went opaque—coincidentally the glitch resolves itself when the two women egress the room.

“Who would want that?!” You might ask, considering Doctor Klebb’s physical appearance—she’s not even a pig in a poke—she looks like the pig that the poke wouldn’t want. The answer is quite simple: any woman or man, who Claire has ever gotten her hands on, has wanted what she’s got in spades. Sexual prowess has nothing whatsoever to do with looks. Some of the most fucked up looking people are peerless performers “between the sheets,” and some of the best looking people are dead fish in bed.

Episode #009

“Republicans believe every day is the Fourth of July, but the Democrats believe every day is April 15.”—President Reagan

A powered exoskeleton, also known as powered armor, exoframe, or exosuit, is a mobile machine consisting primarily of an outer framework akin to an insect’s exoskeleton worn by a person, and a powered system of motors or hydraulics that delivers at least part of the energy for limb movement.

The main function of a powered exoskeleton is to assist the wearer by boosting their strength and endurance. They are commonly designed for military use, to help soldiers carry heavy loads both in and out of combat, for reconnaissance, to perform secondary battle unit functions, and are the backbone of the modern armored cavalry. In civilian areas, similar exoskeletons are used to help firefighters and other rescue workers survive dangerous environments. The medical field is another prime area for exoskeleton technology, where it can be used for enhanced precision during surgery, citation needed or as an assist to allow nurses to move heavy patients.

A decade before The War, working prototypes of powered exoskeletons, including XOS by Sarcos, and HULC by Lockheed Martin both meant for military use, had been constructed but had not yet been deployed in the field. Several companies had also created exosuits for medical use, including the HAL 5 by Cyberdyne Inc.

Back then, various problems remained to be solved, the most daunting being the creation of a compact power supply powerful enough to allow an exoskeleton to operate for extended periods without being plugged into external power.

A mech is different from a powered exoskeleton in that the mech is typically much larger than a normal mundane’s body, and does not directly enhance the motion or strength of its operator’s physical limbs. Instead the mundane human operator occupies a cabin or pilot’s control seat inside a small portion of the larger system. Within this cabin the mundane may wear a small lightweight exoskeleton that serves as a haptic control interface for the much larger exterior appendages.

In the years immediately leading up to The War, The Boeing Company now, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Arkum Industries LLC applied cutting edge bio-mechanical technologies that were originally developed for use in its Mech-9 Program and created the first practical powered armor for military use in “real world” combat situations. It was called The Tesla; the prototypes were designated the NX-01 series. And their design was based upon the bio-mechanics of a Vampire—analogue to, but not equivalent to—equivalence is beyond even current algorithms in speciel concurrency.

Although, one-on-one, a tesla-suited mundane was no credible match for an adult Vampire; in its defense, it was never meant to be an enabler. What it did was revolutionize conventional warfare. Today, it’s seen as groundbreaking. Back then, the exorbitant expense associated with its creation and refinement sealed the fate of the corporation that spawned it, and unjustly labeled it as *McNerney’s Folly*—Dr. W. James (Jim) McNerney, Jr., Ph.D., was chairman of the board and chief executive officer of The Boeing Company, at the time and Tesla was one of his pet projects. He saw it as the company’s future. It turned out to be a prime example of one’s reach vastly exceeding one’s grasp. Nonetheless, he was truly ahead of his time. His Tesla firmly established him as not

only one of this century's greatest visionaries but arguably elevated him to the status of a god if not "the" god of contemporary bio-mechanics—The GOAT. And least it not be forgotten, if it were not for the Tesla there would never have been Ken Kommondalt's Tosrona Model-D or Model-S; the latter the Model-S being the so-called Superman Suit, not because of what it looked like, but because of the inhuman feats that it enabled its wearer to accomplished.

Back when she was mundane, Becky was one of the original NX-01 drivers. She was one of the first human beings to be encased, head to toe, in the plasticine ("plastic" steel) of tesla full body armor. Early suits were black. Later on they were fitted with an Ole active camouflage system (Anderson Ollie camo system), rendering them virtually undetectable upon their operator's direction. The first time that Becky wore a tesla, she felt like Superman. Then she got made, and she experienced a whole nother level of up and outness as a supernatural being.

Danica pays the cabbie and steps out of the taxi. She shuts the door and it speeds away. Danica notices movement out of the corner of her eye—a blur of movement, in her peripheral vision. Vampires, like all supernatural beings, aren't lucky in war; what they supernaturals are is Nature's perfect killing machines.

She hears screams of help and evidence of a struggle emitting from an alley alongside the building of high-end lofts in this gentrifying section of the city. The last gasps of mean streets vie with the aspirations of burgeoning affluence—refusing to be tamed? Or is it a trap for the unwary with an ambush waiting? Her notion is that it's the latter, not the fore.

As aforementioned, supernatural creatures must downgrade to interface with the mundane world. In other words, they must make the conscious effort to do so. By nature, being supernatural, they are quite beyond the world of mortal human beings. Instinctually, when danger beacons or there's just any doubt whatsoever, they shift to themselves—their "true" selves.

Danica ceases to underdrive. She becomes overdriven from the perspective of an undriven mundane, and thus imperceptible by said undriven mundane. Overdrive doesn't have degrees. It's an absolute. Yet, the blurs persist. The girl smiles that toothy, inhumanly-wide smile of the Vampire. The blurs can only mean one thing: overdriven are employing some type of camo to conceal themselves. The deceivers wouldn't be Vampires, they must be mortal.

She hovers toward the alley; her fingernails lengthen to daggers. When she enters the alley, she notices more blurs. None of the combatants engage her. After all, who in their right mind would bring a Vampire into the fray? Nor does she interfere. She's just being nosey. None of this is her business, and she can't afford to be sidetracked. But, she's got time for a brief detour.

Two homeless guys are having their rough way with a smartly-dressed young woman. The "attackers" are dirty, bearded, dressed in torn fatigues and ragged sneakers, unkempt, they look like a couple of down-and-out vets who have gone bonkers and thug. The hapless "victim" looks like a yuppie businesswoman; or maybe they're called metros, these days—it's so hard to keep track. And, the blurs seem to be jockeying for position—the ones who were in street that she "stepped" out of, have followed in behind her into the alley.

The fastest movements of an undriven are excruciatingly slow motion to the driven—typically, the undriven look like they're frozen in place to the driven. Danica adjusts her perspective so that the driven and the undriven are perceived in their respective "real" times, simultaneously and concurrently!

Not a mugging, no matter how it's been made to look to the uninitiated. Too involved for organized crime? Not really. Although most hits in the business involve five hundred dollars cash, a "clean" untraceable piece usually a 38-caliber snub-nosed revolver, and a name of the target being given to an underage street kid—no throwaway burner phone, secret drop offs, etc., none of the stuff that you see on TV or in the movies. This seems all too familiar. Terrorists versus counter-terrorists? If so, there should be a rooftop sniper. She spies a likely perch. Zoom.

Danica hovers behind the sniper who's prone on the rooftop. There are actually two snipers. But only one of them is alive. The surviving sniper is using a voice emulator, likely she's masquerading the voice of the fallen sniper using her adversary's comm. Not only is the other team getting bad intel, they're depending on the wrong person to cover their six. From the perspective of the ubiquitous, factitious, independent observer, Danica is in the alley and on the roof at the same time!

Of course. According to the Copenhagen interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, there is no observer independent reality—things are only real when we look at them, collapsing their quantum waveform. According to other interpretations, we do not have to look at something for it to be real. So, is the moon there when nobody is looking?

A change of subject.

At Her Majesty's pleasure—sometimes abbreviated to *Queen's pleasure* or, when appropriate, *at His Majesty's pleasure* or *King's pleasure*—is a legal term of art referring to the indeterminate length of service of certain appointed officials or the indeterminate sentences of some prisoners. It is based on the concept that all legitimate authority for government comes from the Crown. Originating in the United Kingdom, it is now used throughout the Commonwealth realms. In realms where the monarch is represented by a Governor-General, the phrase may be modified to be *at the Governor's pleasure*, since the governor-general, governor, or lieutenant governor is the Queen's personal representative in the country, state, or province.

That's what Danica's obsession with being Gina Carano a female Vampire could be called: At Her Majesty's pleasure. Although with her being a machine and thus technically an "it," the feminine references to it are just as seemingly inappropriate as the supernatural ones? Strictly speaking—No.

In an instance of art imitating real-life.

Almost Human Season 1 Episode 9: Unbound—aka *Almost Human: Unbound (Episode 1.09)*—a mercurial John Larroquette versus his creation a rogue bang bot Gina Carano who is far more Terminator than an *Austin Powers* fembot. Bang bot—a homicidal maniac killer robot who fucks like a rabbit.

Likewise. She is a living machine—sentient and self-aware. A bang bot, too. And. Everything that implies.

For a short while, this luscious, lethal XRN prototype masqueraded as its male mundane creator Dr. Nigel Vaughn, a genius roboticist, DRN creator, and the founder of Artificial Solutions the company that manufactured her. And, yes, it's Danica who brutally murdered him—They also kill their masters.

Figuratively, not literally, she'd murdered him years earlier when she went berserk during a demonstration—prototype weapons testing—where she was one of the prototypes being tested by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division. Also present were some key senators from

the powerful Ways and Means Committee, a cadre of top brass from the US Military and half-a-dozen allied militaries, and a number of top law enforcement and city officials from across the country and from twelve foreign countries. In all, fifty-nine people were brutally massacred during her rampage—sixty casualties, if you count the career of Danica’s maker.

Left twisted, angry, and vengeful by the subsequent collapse of his company and the loss of his livelihood to practice robotics, the evil wrought by Dr. Nigel Vaughn pales in comparison to the atrocities of Danica his profoundly-evil biomechanical creation.

Big deal, the toaster can shapeshift, some might say.

Banish the thought.

To reiterate. Danica does not shapeshift—shapeshifting is about looking like, but not actually becoming something else. Unlike her android predecessor Tanya Munger, hers is not about a façade. The “skin job” Ms. Munger had the ability to metamorphose its body utilizing what novelist William S. Burroughs called “U.T.” (undifferentiated tissue) in his book *The Soft Machine*.

The Soft Machine is a novel by William S. Burroughs, first published in 1961, two years after his groundbreaking *Naked Lunch*. It was originally composed using the cut-up and fold-in techniques from manuscripts belonging to *The Word Hoard*. It is part of *The Nova Trilogy*.

The title *The Soft Machine* is a name for the human body, and the main theme of the book, as explicitly written in an appendix, concerns how control mechanisms invade the body.

The book is written in a style close to that of *Naked Lunch*, though now, as aforementioned, using the cut-up method.

After the main material there follows three appendices, the first explaining the title, as mentioned above, and two accounts of Burroughs’ own drug abuse and treatment using apomorphine. Here Burroughs clearly states that he considers drug abuse a metabolic disease and writes about how he finally escaped it.

The main plot appears in linear prose in chapter VII, *The Mayan Caper*. This chapter portrays a secret agent who has the ability to change bodies or metamorphose his own body using U.T. As such an agent he makes a time travel machine and takes on a gang of Mayan priests who use the Mayan calendar to control the minds of slave laborers used for planting maize. The calendar images are written in books and placed on a magnetic tape and transmitted as sounds to control the slaves. The agent manages to infiltrate the slaves and replace the magnetic tape with a totally different message: “burn the books, kill the priests,” which causes the downfall of their regime.

Danica, on the other hand, becomes what she’s masquerading as. She doesn’t just look like Gina Carano a female Vampire. Danica is Gina Carano a female Vampire. Ergo, the living machine that is Danica doesn’t just look like a woman, she is a woman. Just like when Danica masqueraded as her maker, she didn’t just look like a man Dr. Nigel Vaughn, she was a man Dr. Nigel Vaughn. Gender bending at its best—wrap your heads around that one—mind candy *From Beyond*.

Danica becomes a female Vampire named Becky Better, and it is Miss Better’s DNA that she will leave behind—albeit undifferentiated DNA, under closest examination.

Episode #010

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.”—John Adams, U.S. president 1797-1801

Almost Human—in a not-so-distant future, human cops and androids partner up to protect and serve. In that TV series, Detective John Kennex a human with a bionic leg and Dorian a DRN are such a pairing. But what confronts Becky Better, who’s seated in the nondescript interrogation room at a local police station, is Detective Molly Minders and her new DRN partner Detective Vanessa Walsh a recently-promoted female Tactical Officer.

Whilst the XRN’s were designed as soldiers, the DRN’s were designed as cops.

Tall and slender, with a pale complexion, and long jet-black hair, Vanessa is the other non-flaxen haired female in the room. Brunette number one is the diminutive Sandra Maldonado, Captain Maldonado. And, right now, Captain Maldonado is the only cop speaking, and she’s in mean ball-buster mode.

Maldonado slams the crime scene photos on the table again, in front of a seated Becky. Becky just smiles that smile of hers—smiling that naughty, apologetic smile that bad girls have perfected.

“What do you have to do with this?!”

“Like I’ve said a million times before. Absolutely nothing.”

“Your DNA is all over the crime scene!”

“And, for the umpteenth time, your point being what?”

A damping field prevents Becky from overdriving, while she’s on the premises. It encompasses the surrounding police parking lot as well. When Becky arrived home, this evening, she was arrested and brought here.

“My foot would be up your ass and out your mouth, if that DNA didn’t also reveal itself to be undifferentiated under closest inspection!”

“When do you get to the point?” That’s when Maldonado slams her fist into Becky’s generous mouth, knocking the leech backwards. Becky rocks forward, looks her straight in the eyes, and returns the favor with a bloody smile. As the Vampire’s long, facile tongue flicks out and licks that sanguine smile clean, the Lost Girl responds with a classic. “Please. Pretty please. May we have another?”

“It’s so kind of you to ask.”

Maldonado throws a vicious left hook, overhand with a downward intent. The rightside of Becky’s head meets the table top, violently. Ouch!

There is a Zen proverb that says: “Live every day like your hair is on fire.” There is only one thing I can add to that: Anybody got a match?—Rene Marie in her tribute to the ultimate Catwoman, Ms. Eartha Kitt

If she Becky were mundane, Maldonado’s actions would qualify as police brutality. But with her being Vampire and Maldonado being mundane, on the surface, they would seem to be suicidal, instead—suicidal for Maldonado, that is.

Becky raises her head and smiles that smile, again. She pushes back from the table and stands up. No one makes a move to restrain her. The Vampire moves laterally exuding sexuality—to say nothing of its subtle, yet accessible cousin, sensuality. She’s a sphinx in motion, the leech’s sinuous, nearly imperceptible movements that are one part camp and nine parts erotic—this shapely, statuesque minx with legs to die for slither-floating across to floor into a corner and purrs.

“Since you’ve decided to ask so roughly, I’d like to come clean with the goods.”

“Now. That is progress, for sure.”

Becky is not a masochist and Maldonado is not a sadist, in spite of appearances saying otherwise. Nonetheless. They are locked in a dance of sorts. They also have a history. How well do they know each other? Becky is the godmother for all of Maldonado’s grandchildren and the “play” aunt for all of the captain’s children. They Becky and Maldonado were fast friends and boon coons long before Becky got made. A little thing like becoming supernatural has no chance of ever coming between them.

Episode #011

“The price we pay for being ourselves is worth it.”—Eartha Kitt

“I have an errand, a task for a Queen of The Vampires, and that takes precedence.”

“Cops were killed, and that is my precedence.”

“Is Chris still having his birthday party, this weekend? The forecast is rain, for Saturday and Sunday.”

“Yes. And don’t be late, this time.”

“I won’t be.”

Now, the dance the dance of sorts that they’re locked into is by now in earnest. As evidenced by her poor attempt at witty repartee, Captain Maldonado is still fuming. She’s just barely keeping a lid on it. Her every word is possessed with a stabbing punctuation. It’s her way of giving Becky an earful, knowing full well that it’s just water off a duck’s back. Nothing physical, just that expected verbal abuse.

This cop really cares about the girls and boys in blue. A single cop killing is guaranteed to send Captain Maldonado’s temperature boiling. So it’s no surprise that a multiple has sent and left her in orbit.

The chitchat between Captain Maldonado and Becky Better abruptly stops as they step into the CRIB the command and control for Tactical Operations for the 7th Precinct. Normally, police stations share a CRIB. But, this police station is one of the notable exceptions. It has its own dedicated CRIB. Tac Ops is run by Colonel Eleanor Grant under the auspices of Section 20. Her second in command is Major Oliver Sinclair. And her science officer is Doctor Irina Mullova. Big screens depicting different situations line the walls and desks oriented every which way are manned by busy police officers dressed in paramilitary fatigues. It’s Captain Maldonado’s precinct, but here Colonel Grant is the queen of this enclave.

Detectives Molly Minders and Vanessa Walsh are in tow, and they know to keep their mouths shut. Major Sinclair and Doctor Mullova are the generic command seconds, who likewise keep quiet. Colonel Grant is the real jewel—a hard-faced redhead with a set of nice, big, juicy tits for a rack—and this ball-buster, unlike Captain Maldonado, isn’t fuming. She doesn’t have anything to keep a lid on as she nonchalantly escorts the four visitors to her domain into her office. Once there, with the door shut, she doesn’t give Becky an earful. Hers is the polar opposite of Captain Maldonado’s reaction, and it’s her people police officers under her immediate command that were slaughtered. Hers is the reaction of a military commander à la General Patton or General Colin Powell—sacrifice the few in battle, maybe even lose the battle, to win the war and benefit the many. While Captain Maldonado’s is that of a concerned, caring fellow police officer, who just happens to be law enforcement brass.

At first, Becky doesn’t acknowledge it. The 800-lb gorilla in the room is the Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit, or TALOS, that’s standing in the open weapon’s locker which is catty-corner to Colonel Grant’s desk.

That doesn't bode well for the mundane Colonel Grant who's obviously trying to make an impression preferably lasting on her supernatural guest. "They Live, We Sleep"—supernaturals see the world as it is; mundane do not and cannot.

And when Becky finally does acknowledge it, her blasé reaction to the disclosure the TALOS is not what Colonel Grant wants or needs. TALOS is supposed to knock Vampires on their heels, figuratively and literally. Yet, Becky's reaction to it is that same as it would be to any powered armor.

"Is that it?" Becky asks Colonel Grant.

"Yes."

"The next time that you want my appraisal of your newest toy, all you have to do is ask. Subterfuge is unnecessary and quite tiresome I might add. We're alike; soul mates to be precise. I'm a soldier, just like you. Whether regular military, PMC (private military contractor), or PSS (private security service, a bodyguard or security guard, uniformed or otherwise). From privates to generals, whether it be as players or the played, we're all expendable. Cold, black-hearted bitch that you are, you could care less about the fallen. All you care about is the mission." Becky pauses long enough in her scathing oratory, to give the commander Colonel Grant a knowing wink. "The question is: what really was your mission that got all those nice, dedicated police officers killed?"

The mood softens even more—even more totally inappropriate behavior on Colonel Grant's part. Colonel Grant sports a smile. She sits down behind her desk and offers Becky a cigar, which Becky accepts and lights up. Becky sits down. Everybody else remains standing—Detectives Molly Minders and Vanessa Walsh stay near the door and Captain Maldonado is right beside Becky's chair. As far as the conversation is concerned, it's as if Becky and Colonel Grant are the only ones in the room.

"I'd like you to see the CCTV footage, first. Then decide how much difference it could have made in the outcome. Soldier to soldier, I want your honest opinion."

"My opinion won't change."

"We'll see about that."

The massive HDTV mounted on the wall comes alive and displays the requested images. When all is said and done, Becky snuffs her unfinished cigar and pockets the bunt for later. She stands up, nonchalantly.

"My opinion hasn't changed."

"Really?"

"Danica coincidentally stepped into your mission, whatever covert you were carrying out. She was otherwise employed, and stuck her nose where it wasn't wanted—in your business which was none of her business. If your team had been wearing TALOS, it wouldn't have made a difference. If it's any consolation, her employer will clock her for the time she wasted on this needless detour."

There's a lot of double entendre in Becky's response. It's a game of cat and mouse, being played between a Vampire and a mundane.

"I find that hard to believe."

"Which part?"

“All of it.”

“Believe what you will, but. Danica would have just as easily offed your people even if they were in TALOS, she was just being nosy in her interjection—there were no ulterior motives on her part, and her pay will get docked.”

Again, Becky accusing Colonel Grant of having ulterior motives, in that subtle, roundabout way that’s she’s been known to employ at times when her intent is to be extra cute for cuteness sake.

“And you know this how?”

“I’m her employer. Danica was supposed to pick up my uniforms from the drycleaners. Since it appears that she was empty handed, I assume that they weren’t ready yet.”

“Bullshit! You don’t own that thing!”

Finally some emotion from Colonel Grant as she shows her true colors, and it’s not some shade of blue, it’s khaki.

“Figuratively, I do.”

“I know otherwise. It’s on the watch list. You don’t have papers on.”

“Like I said, figuratively.”

“You’re holding for whom?”

“Now, that would be telling, and I haven’t been authorized to do so.”

Clear confirmation in their latest, bullpup exchange that there’s a lot going on here—much more than meets the eye. Danica killed cops, a confirmed cop killer—that’s the tale of the tape. Yet Colonel Grant seems to be more interested in the identity of Danica’s owner than she is in retribution against Danica, exclusively not inclusively. This is counterintuitive and completely opposite to Captain Maldonado’s horrified reaction to the incriminating footage. Ulterior motives on the part of Colonel Grant appear to be afoot, and Becky’s accusations of such are shaping up to be well founded. It’s as if the covert was a honeypot and not coincidental on the part of the law enforcement officers who were involved in the operation including Colonel Grant herself.

Tactical Operations officers are cops, but there is some implied affiliation with the regular military, and many TO’s have served in the regular military. And the regular military has a longstanding beef with this artificial the Danica “robot”. Yet there is that complication: Danica’s affiliation with the supernatural—so, you just can’t take her out with the trash—you need a much more elaborate scheme—a serious game plan.

Every Monday evening around 5-o’clock, Danica picks up Becky’s uniforms from Tip Top Cleaners on the corner of N. Euclid and West Pine. She always returns home by the same circuitous route—the cabby dropping her off the long way round—a looping journey toward the outskirts of midtown Saint Louis gentrification—the opposite direction from whist she lives. Danica then walks her way back toward the center of the Central West End which is home.

“We’re done here.”

“Thanks.”

Captain Maldonado, who realizes that she’s been used, starts to say something very unladylike to Colonel Grant, but a calming hand on her shoulder by Becky stays her.

“At the end of the day, no matter how you feel about what she’s done, they’re her people to do with as she sees fit, and I doubt seriously if Internal Affairs and the top brass at Police One will see otherwise no matter how vehemently you complain.” Becky leans forward and whispers in Captain Maldonado’s ear. Though she does so loud enough for Colonel Grant to hear.

“I’m still going to file a protest,” Captain Maldonado responds looking Colonel Grant dead in the eyes.

Episode #012

“If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything.”—Carl Boch

The Special Boat Service (SBS) is the Special Forces unit of the Naval Service of the United Kingdom. Together with the Special Air Service, Special Reconnaissance Regiment, and the Special Forces Support Group they form the United Kingdom Special Forces and come under joint control of the same Director Special Forces.

The SBS can trace their origins to the Second World War, when they were formed as the Special Boat Section in 1940. They became the Special Boat Squadron after the Second World War and the Special Boat Service in the 1980s.

The SBS is manned by ranks drawn mostly from the Royal Marines and carries out a role similar to the Special Air Service, but with a traditionally stronger focus on amphibious operations. Two of the SBS’s four squadrons, C and X, are configured for general operations. S squadron specializes in the use of mini-sub and small boats and M squadron specializes in Maritime Counter Terrorism. The SBS also operates on land, with recent operations in the mountains of landlocked Afghanistan and in the deserts of Iraq. Their main tasks include intelligence gathering, counter-terrorism operations (surveillance or offensive action), sabotage and the disruption of enemy infrastructure, capture of specific individuals, close protection of senior politicians and military personnel, plus reconnaissance and combat action on foreign territory.

There are always loose ends to tie up, and sometimes you actually get to do so. This is one of those times.

Cunningham’s, on North Grand Boulevard across from Powell Symphony Hall, is a cop bar, through and through. So, needless to say they cause quite a stir when they come strolling in through the front door—Danica and Becky. Danica is dressed in the pants suit that Becky was wearing earlier in the evening at the police station. And Becky is wearing one of her security guard uniforms; her shift starts in an hour.

Outside, somewhere, is waiting a very pissed off Queen, Queen Akasha, who thinks that she has been stiffed by the made. Her business comes first, and the made seems to have put her concerns on the backburner. That’s the kaboom for later. This, inside of *Cunningham’s*, is the kaboom for now.

Everybody in the bar knows what Danica is, and what she did. They also know what two Vampires are capable of, especially in close quarters. So the sanguine couple is given a wide, overly cautious berth. The Lost Girls make their way over to a booth where Captain Maldonado and Colonel Grant are sitting, apparently drowning their sorrows for the last half-hour with the finest Tennessee whiskey—but for very different reasons.

Neither Captain Maldonado nor Colonel Grant is drunk, and that is not their intent. Each has had a heaping of crow to eat, and nursing a lot of Jack Daniel’s just makes it go down that much smoother. A weak woman might need a designated driver to get them home safely, later. That of course does not apply to these two tough titty broads. To reiterate. Theirs are the slow, long, thought-provoking sips, not slamming down shots like the ratatat of a repeater—a repeater being a mindless drinker intent on liquid oblivion.

The two uninvited guests, Becky and Danica, nonchalantly sit down in the booth, joining Captain Maldonado and Colonel Grant. You didn't have to be a rocket scientist to guess where the two cops would go after they received their respective heaping from higher ups.

When Captain Maldonado looks up from her drink, and sees Becky, she just smiles. She can see past Danica, Colonel Grant cannot. Sandra and Becky are very close friends. She will get over the bitter pill she's swallowing, and their friendship will survive this speed bump. Between Colonel Grant and Becky, there is no love lost. But. They are soldiers doing their duty, and as such, Colonel Grant will get over it, the "it" being Danica.

"I assume we have an understanding." Captain Maldonado and Colonel Grant nod their heads. "I need to have that agreement verbalized, ladies."

Then, Becky looks at each woman Captain Maldonado and Colonel Grant in turn, for their answer. Each answers on cue.

"Yes, I understand."

"Now, you."

"Yes, I understand."

"Excellent. I need you two to take Danica around the room and help her mingle. She's kind of shy. Between the two of you, you can work out a schedule for her, and it cannot conflict with her obligations to me. My to-do's for her take precedence. Additionally, you must split her equally. Understood?"

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Awesome." And then the dig comes in earnest. Becky turns the knife that she's figuratively buried in their backs. "Now, make her feel welcome and shake hands. Convince me that y'all have buried the hatchet."

Captain Maldonado and Colonel Grant shake the robot's hand. It's obvious that Danica has no feeling one way or the other about the entire situation. How Becky is handling the post is more about Becky acting like what she is, which is a Vampire, than it has to do with any set protocol.

Abruptly, Becky gets up from the table and walks out of the bar without saying another word. Once she's out the front door, the world the mundane one freezes. The kaboom later is now. Queen Akasha steps out of the shadows of an alleyway and walks across Grand toward Becky. Behind Queen Akasha walks Lunk, a hulking Vampire who is known to be the Queen's "problem solver." Things don't look good for Becky. And yet, Becky being Becky, she just smiles in the face of apparent adversity.

Episode #013

“Under the wide and starry sky . . . Home is the sailor, home from the sea, and the hunter from the hill,” Andromeda quotes the Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) poem “Requiem.”

“I beg to differ with your assertion that it was diplomacy, and not force, that ended The Cold War. Reagan won the Cold War with a regime change strategy - waging military war through surrogates along with waging economic war (overt and covert) and open calls for regime change. The only diplomacy involved was negotiating the Soviet disarmament and withdrawals. So. Putin and his ilk do respond to threats.”

To a mundane this would seem to be coming completely out of leftfield. But, to Queen Akasha, it's a Told-Ya-So. And said Queen is not one who is normally prone to such things. She makes a subtle gesture, and Lunk stands down—although he's still visibly chomping at the bit to go at it with Becky. Lunk lives to fight, and he will fight anyone, anywhere, for even the most contrived reasons.

“I was warned that you were more than just a pretty face. I should have taken heed. Next time I'll know to not underestimate you. Be that as it may, you still put your obligation to me on the back burner.”

Becky yawns and stretches her arms as if she's dispelling stiffness in her joints. What she's doing is expressing her displeasure with the Queen in a socially acceptable fashion—socially acceptable to Vampires, that is.

“Say the word, my Queen, and I will have proper hands on her. I'll pop her head off like the cork in a champagne bottle. I'll.”

“Please, stop talking. You're embarrassing yourself,” Becky chides Lunk, looking him dead in the eyes and not flinching one iota.

This elicits another, even more subtle gesture from the Queen. Lunk ratchets it down one, then several notches. The “theater” is over, and that's what this has all been up to this point—theater—theater, at its best. Everyone or at the very least all of the principals involved have finally decided to put their cards face-up on the table.

Lunk is more than just muscle. He's also one of the Queen's closest and most trusted advisors. He's the lone voice who warned her about this Vampire, the soldier Becky Better. Lunk steps forward, rests a huge hand on one of Becky's shoulders, and proceeds to pat it playfully. Then he disengages and steps back behind his Queen. Soldier to soldier, there is now a bond between them—just like that, things have turned on a dime. Lunk resets to his norm—taciturn and well-disciplined, the professional soldier through and through.

“Inside the bar are a Detective Molly Minders and her DRN partner Detective Vanessa Walsh, as well as my Danica. Danica you already know. Captain Maldonado will introduce you to detectives Minders and Walsh. I would like for you to visit the crime scene with Minders, Walsh, and Danica. And please remember, that Walsh and Danica are robots, so even though they are incapable of lying, they take things literally, so be careful how you word your inquiries to them, else you will get misleading answers from them which can and likely will amount to disinformation. And. For

now, whatever you do and in spite of your familiarity, please do not take Colonel Grant on face value—she is not transparent in this matter.”

Colonel Grant and her “business” relationship with Queen Akasha are obviously foreknown to Becky. The significance of which is not missed by the Queen, although the Queen tactfully makes no overt acknowledgement of it. The game has gone from marbles to chess. The Queen’s next move is the essence of covert.

“I can tell by the tone of your voice that you don’t care for the politics involved.”

“I’m flexible. My distaste for it won’t stop me from getting the job done. Politics never has and it never will.”

The Queen delivers a parting shot, before she and Lunk head into the bar. It’s a caustic review indeed, highly critical of what has gone on, so far, in her stead. Tellingly, it’s in the third person, as if she were Borg.

“The first season was marred by implausible, overly complex plots that were intentionally philosophical but also rather pretentious. In the second and third seasons, with a new producer in place, the scripts became more direct and entertaining. Toward the end of the third season, the plots again became incoherent, and seemed to wander, as though the producers could not decide what to do with the premise. The fourth season revived some of the ideas that had been used in first, with varying degrees of success. The result was a series that was strangely uneven, with some good ideas and some glaring failures.”

“If that’s how you truly feel, then you should be more like me in such matters.”

“I wish I could be.”

“What, or should I say, who, is stopping you?”

“Me.”

Queen Akasha and Lunk head into the bar. Becky walks thoughtfully in the direction of the campus.

Episode #014

An excerpt from Harry Truman's diary written at the end of the day on which FDR died: "Well, I just took over the job held by a man that most of the American people almost worshipped, and what did I get? Two wars covering the whole earth, Winston Churchill on one side and Joe Stalin on the other, and now they tell me something about a bomb that could destroy the world. I thought about it enough. I'm going to bed now."

This is yet another Wynorski softcore under yet another pseudonym of his. Like most of his stuff, it's very light on things like special effects and scope of settings, but it does a decent job of having an okay plot. It's a lot less fun than some of the campier horror and sci-fi softcores, but still does a good job being sexy for the most part.

Julie K. Smith is back yet again. I'm not a fan of the longer hair, I think she looks much better with it a bit shorter, but she's otherwise sexy as usual. In addition to Wynorski veterans Julie K. Smith and Rebecca Love, there are a couple of other notable additions to the cast.

Angie Savage would be gorgeous, though I think her giant back tattoo kind of ruins her overall look. I don't think some small tattoos are too bad, or even big ones if it goes with a girl's overall look and she has that sort of alternative heavily tattooed Suicide Girls look. Angie Savage, though, is like a Barbie Doll that some five year old girl decided to magic marker up the back of. She's extremely hot in a sexy bimbo kind of way, but the tattoo is so large it's distracting. Also, she drools all over her scene partners, which some people might find hot but I find kind of disgusting. Finally, during her lesbian scenes she seems to have a thing for getting behind the other girl and humping her doggie style. Does she have a secret penis I'm not aware of? Is she actually a transvestite? Did she put on a strap on when no one was looking? I'm not sure how Wynorski lets this happen in the scene, it's bizarre.

Overall, I like Angie Savage; I just have very mixed feelings. She plays a sex pot very well, with the little squeaky voice and everything, but I'm not entirely sold on her.

Cindy Lucas also has the Barbie look going on and is pretty great. Her ass in particular is amazing. She reminds me a lot of Gloria-Anne Gilbert, actually. She doesn't appear to be a particularly skilled actress, but more than makes up for it in the heat of her scenes and her looks.

I was not a fan of TJ Cummings. He seemed to have very little chemistry in his scenes. Also, it appeared they had Frankie Cullen hide his face in one scene and pretend to be a different guy. Come on, Mr. Wynorski; are you really that hard up for male actors? I realize it must be a lot more fun to go searching for gorgeous babes for your movies, but the male talent pool is getting a little ridiculous. Frankie Cullen and Tony Marino are great, but having actors pull double duty and getting guys like TJ Cummings who are known more for gay porn than straight porn is a little weird.

There are rules for a reason, and it's not to protect the supernaturals. Sometimes mundane delude themselves otherwise—this especially applies to the Illuminati. They believe that things would be to their advantage if the various world governments did laissez-faire type referee jobs where anything goes without any restrictions at all in terms of the Marquess of Queensberry Rules.

"We are not invincible. We are not gods. We are not indestructible. We are not your protectors. We are not your dogs," Becky says to herself as she clocks in and begins her shift—on time as

usual. She makes her rounds starting with the Grafalga monument, the centerpiece of SLU's downtown campus.

Like clockwork, Becky briefly contemplates the monstrosity that's wrought in twisted metal standing before her. The sculpture is mute testament to all that's wrong with modern art, its propensities and its pomposities. It also embodies the lofty aspirations of all great art forms, and by doing so transcends the limitations of modern linguistics.

Like clockwork, she hears a familiar voice ask one of the most rhetorical of questions laced with that expected dose of comic relief.

"You were there. So was it really that bad?"

"Oh, hell no. If it had been we would have all surrendered."

Approaching from behind, the questioner comes into view. They share a chuckle. His name is Art Farmer. He's a fine arts student. Gifted, a prodigy, he's the sculptor who created the monument. If he had been old enough to participate in the peace demonstrations, the Vegan would have been a rapid anti-war protestor.

On the surface of things, you would think that the Vampire and the mundane would be at odds. In reality they are boon coons. Like clockwork, after her shift is over they'll meet up at *Foster's*, one of the coffee houses that lines Euclid Avenue in the Central West End, and discuss at length whatever they decide is the topic of the day.

In an even odder turn of events, Holly Ann Grigsby, the watch sergeant, does a walkabout while Becky and Art are having words. Added to that, Becky has the feeling that she's being tailed. None of her misgivings are revealed by any tell of hers, of course. The very notion of possibly being the object of a hunt, gets her moist in the nethers. She lives for the hunt—that's normal for Vampire, of course. She craves being the hunted—that's all her, and not persuasion specific, whatsoever. Think: Helen Bingham in *Cat Run*—a straight-laced psychopath with a hard pretty face, a very nice rack, and a tight flat ass. The tasty homicidal potentialities are positively endless, if you're so inclined and she is.

Episode #015

Tattoo on side: “’Tis better to die on your feet than to have lived on your knees”— quote from Emiliano Zapata.

To its harshest critics: Excluding Project Valkyrie, it’s the biggest, latest, most audacious boondoggle from Lockheed Martin, since their F-35 Lightning II.

Technically, Lockheed’s Project Valkyrie is larger and newer, and equally audacious from the point of view of a price-plus discussion in its totality. But, who’s counting when one is critiquing something that they’re against?

The militarization of mesmers—specifically: militarizing mesmers with the intent of utilizing them as surgically applied solutions in narrow-focused tactical situations. Inarguably, it’s rapidly becoming the most expensive weapons system/platform that the DoD (United States Department of Defense) has ever funded. Again, excluding Project Valkyrie, of course, from the very parochial, fiscal consideration, at hand.

Mesmers are masters of mirage. In the Far East and in Eastern Europe, they are commonly used by rival academics as if there is any other kind in that part of the world to weave deception that seeks to confound, disorientate, dumbfound, discredit, and steal scholarly secrets from their employer’s enemies in academia and likewise their employer’s scholarly allies.

Although, mesmerizing a colleague for personal gain, irrespective of whether that rival professor is tenured or not, is expressly forbidden by the by-laws of every learning institution on the planet. Academia is a cutthroat “business,” at times rivaling politics in the dirtiness of its infighting for that most, newest sought after whatever.

Additionally, mesmers can shatter their own illusions to produce even greater special effects. As a civilian scholar service profession, mesmers wear light-bending armor to achieve their desired stealth. The militarized mesmers carry special illusionary weapons, which look different and have specific behavior, as compared to the “tools” employed by their civilian counterparts.

Shattering illusions is the mesmer’s special ability. Shattering destroys the mesmer’s illusions and applies a secondary effect. The four shatter skills are Mind Wrack (does damage to nearby foes), Cry of Frustration (applies confusion to nearby foes), Diversion (dazes targets of illusions), and Distortion (causes caster to evade attacks).

Illusions come in two types: phantasms and clones. Phantasms are illusions that look like and derive their life force from the mesmerized. Their mold, the castee, turns purple in color and dies as they the phantasm permanently absorb their the castee’s entire animation. As such their use is considered premeditated murder, and therefore illegal. Phantasms can cause a substantially larger amount of damage, are longer lived, and are far more durable than clones. Nonetheless, clones are very effective for distracting enemies and powering shatters.

Clones also look exactly like the mesmerized and also derive their animation from the castee, but they do so non-lethally. While they exist, their mold is rendered unconscious—a profound comatose that can be easily mistaken for dead, as if the toxin of derived from the puffer fish which simulates death has been administered to them the castee. Also, there is no change in skin color for the mesmerized.

Mesmers also enjoy a wide variety of skills which allow them to avoid attacks, either by blocking and counterattacking, or by simply using stealth.

When attacked themselves, mesmers are adept at causing confusion on their attackers—a condition which, when the foe is an opposing mesmer, causes the mesmer's opponent to take damage each time they use a skill and stacks in intensity.

Most importantly though, and the one thing that keeps the program funded and keeps the cost-cutting jackals at bay, is that the mesmers are mundane humans, unlike made Vampires and The Dead. And in a world where supernaturals and their motives cannot be completely trusted by mundane, and for very good reason it can be added, that is reason enough indeed to keep Project Mesmer alive.

Art had been chided by Becky, repeatedly, not to use this shortcut. Most of the time he heeds her advice, but not this time, much to his hazard. Too late he realized that he was being followed. Rather than run, he chooses to face his unknown.

In broad daylight, in a pristine alley walled on both sides by the towering privacy fences of opulent mansions lining posh private streets, Art turns to face himself. More precisely, someone or rather something, that looks exactly like him. Art's doppelganger is smiling, an unnaturally wide smile—inhumanly wide. Art wants to scream, but he can't. In point of fact, he can't move—he can't do anything. His skin turns purple as he drops to his knees. His vision narrows to ever constricting tunnels. He can feel himself dying! Looks like he'll be late after all to his usual with Becky at *Foster's*—late—never getting there alive!

Episode #016

Ubiquitous: “Tisk. Tisk. Tisk. You’re flat broke. Busted. You’ve lost everything. No money. No cars. No houses. A balloon payment on your uninsured yacht due on Monday, a boat that you don’t have possession of anymore, because it got blown up in front of our very eyes by a disgruntled ex-employee. And to top it off, you have the audacity to ask me if I still love you. Of course I still love you. I’ll miss you, but I’ll still love you.”— quote from a gold digger to her used-to-be sugar daddy.

Just four hep cats doing some relaxed jamming on some familiar tunes. Wu Xia – The unmistakable Mulligan sound, centered on the theft of a Faberge egg – the dry attack and will-o’-the-wisp tone.

Art is blind, clutching his chest. His heart is pounding in his ribcage, threatening to escape its confinement. He’s holding on tenaciously to the last threads of his life.

A woman’s voice, screaming: “Oh my God, we’ve got to help him!”

A man’s voice, just as urgently, screaming at the falsehood: “Get away from him!”

Acting unselfishly, two joggers, Rabbi Schneur Zalman and his wife Sterna, rush to Art’s aid. Not knowing him, and only knowing that he needs their help.

Others would have run away or pretended that nothing was happening or decided that it was none of their business. More would have been trendy: stood at a distance gawking in relative safety—their morbid interest piqued—and preserved the event for the posterity of Facebook using their camera phones.

They, the rabbi and his wife, perish; dying cruel, ignominious deaths. But. When one door opens, another one opens. Their deaths are not in vain. In the short time that the pariah the mesmer spends on sadistically dispatching the couple via the paraffin the phantom, the first RRT (Rapid Response Tactical) unit of CWESS (Central West End Security Services) arrives on the scene in the nick of time exploiting their window of opportunity.

Tires screech. A nondescript panel truck comes to a sudden halt. Its doors fling open; armored and armed, bodies scramble out of the van. There is suppressed gunfire. Art is aware of the commotion and its ensuing carnage. Shredded bodies and encasements end up strewn every which way.

The mesmer’s gender-unspecific voice: “Ho-hum. Not even worth putting my knickers in a bunch. Hopefully there won’t be any more tiresome interruptions.”

More footsteps, slow and deliberate, heard at a distance that increase in volume with proximity. Someone else has walked willingly and willfully into the situation.

A young woman’s voice that he Art should recognize: “No more tiresome interruptions.”

What follows is a pregnant pause that seems to last forever. Then.

“Arrggh! Aaaarrggghhh!! Aaaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrrgggggggghhhhhhhhhhh!!!” The screams of anguish are gender-unspecific.

Then, silence. Fade to black. Art loses consciousness.

For mundane, hearing is the last of their senses to go and it's the first to return. He hears the commotion about him long before he can see it. A concerned paramedic is cautioning him to stay prone on the stretcher, but he's determined to do otherwise and sit up. It's Becky who slams him down and none too gently.

"You got lucky. If it were not for the sacrifice of others, we wouldn't be talking."

When he finally gets his sight back and regains his focus, his words are sharp and quite telling. As he looks at his hands which are rapidly losing their purple color, he chooses his words fearing not the monster that he sees before him posing as his Vampire.

"Bullshit. You used me as bait. Watched the slaughter and then stepped in when it best suited your needs. Blending in and mingling with the crowd of onlookers. Shapeshifting as you pleased from this one to that one. Until you shifted into her."

"That, too." She's smiling as she parries, although her poker face hides the consternation that she's feeling.

"He's, a mundane, yet he sees my deception now and previously 'saw' what I did amidst the crowd as if he's gifted second sight. But. How is this possible?! And, he's not the Vampire's thrall!"

Then, he says something that makes her lower lip momentarily quiver.

"Dragon."

"He 'sees' me as I really am! Impossible!"

Possible. And. Obviously, he can.

Becky's timing is impeccable.

Startled, Ancient Mia loses control of the situation. There's more than a few gasps as everybody on the scene suddenly becomes privy to what's really going on—what's really being said and done—what Art was aware of all along—not Ancient Mia's doctored version. The Dragon's oculus of Becky Better dressed as a security guard gives way to a dishy, forty-something Asian woman who's dressed to the nines. Still. It's a pretense, and she's a Dragon posing as mundane, but Art knows this via his "association" with Becky—this is the sole tidbit that doesn't become public knowledge as a result of the Dragon's sudden disclosure .

Becky walks over, casually. It was the Vampire's "voice" that Ancient Mia had heard in her head, breaking her glamor.

Sensing the potential for fireworks, the paramedic who was attending to Art moves out of the way and puts some distance between herself and the two supernaturals. The second RRT unit that has subsequently arrived on the scene does likewise. Their weapons are at the ready knowing full well that they don't have enough firepower.

"Art, are you okay?"

"I feel like shit, but I'm coming around."

"I'll ride with you over to the hospital in the ambulance."

"Thanks."

Then, Becky directs her undivided attention to Ancient Mia.

A voice in the background: “What a waste! Emotionally fragile: yes. Mentally unstable: yes. A tendency to go off the reservation: yes. But. What a talent!”

Episode #017

“Believe it or not. I speak two languages. Body and English” – Mae West.

“He belongs to me. Capish?”

“A possession. Not a thrall. That explains a lot. But. It doesn’t explain everything. It doesn’t explain how he knew that I was.”

“You talk like it’s any of your business.”

“Made. Unaligned. Belonging to no house. And.”

“Made: yes. Unaligned: no. Yes: I belong to no House.” That’s when Becky winks at Ancient Mia, knowingly. That evil smile that bespeaks of loathing and disdain even when that’s not the wearer’s intent paints the Vampire’s hardlooking face—in this case, it is the wearer’s intent. Who’s being played by whom? That’s when Ancient Mia realizes the true depth of what she’s gotten herself into. The politics of not only Vampire Houses but Dragon Houses and their ruling dynasties as well. No wonder the Empress insisted on her going freelance of this one—plausible deniability for the principal Dragon House. “I belong to no House, and I am made. But I’m no less Vampire than a Lost who belongs to a House and is born. And no less affiliated, because I’m Ronin and made. Like the Swiss, I’m neutral. I’m associated with all Houses.”

Becky’s fingers elongate and fingernails lengthen: klaw. Her tongue becomes killer—becoming forked and inhumanly long, swarming her mouth as if it were a venomous snake. The Lost Girl’s teeth become long, pointed, and crooked—razor teeth with receding gums—the hissing, vile, animalistic Vampires in *30 Days of Night*. Her tongue takes on a will of its own.

The suit lamenting the loss of his prized weapons system suddenly goes quiet. Why? Becky is upon him gobbling him up to his waist. She bites him in two and swallows him whole. Poof: he’s gone.

The urbane young woman that he was talking to, the most senior subordinate of his who’s present on the scene, his executive assistant who’s now in charge, that girl dressed in her expensive black pants suit and matching flats, instinctively goes for her 9-mm. Reason gets the better of her, and she never draws her weapon.

Becky is again conversing with Ancient Mia. No longer looking like one of those hissing, vile, animalistic Vampires in *30 Days of Night*. She’s again looking very mundane.

“You’ll stay with me until you can find better accommodations. Although I’m betting you won’t find any better to your liking.”

“Thank you. That’s very Dark of you. But.”

“No buts. You’re with to me, now.” Explicitly, not a request. Ancient Mia, reading between the lines, doesn’t bother to argue. Yes: Ancient Mia is very old and thus very powerful. Yes: the Dragon could easily take this young, made Vampire. But. Taking out this Vampire would mean taking on every Lost House on this world as a repercussion without the “official” backing of her own House, and that’s a war this female Godzilla could not win.

There's a loud, sharp, audible—click—then the world resets. The Jinn are now visible. More gasps from the crowd of mundane onlookers. Distracted by the theater of the Vampire and the Dragon, they the Jinn didn't notice the reveal being woven by a very powerful someone or something who is also well hidden. So well hidden that the reveal is the first evidence of the existence of a clandestine to the Jinn. Who's playing whom, indeed? Ancient Mia is obviously not the only freelancer, here.

The Jinn. With their molten faces, their bodies composed of swirling crosscurrents of smoke—more or less humanoid in shape. There are four adults two married couples and their six kids three of them teenagers—tourists on holiday visiting what used to be their land in mundane terms, this universe that used to be their world. This land is my land—Vampires, Dragons, The Jinn, mundane, The Dead, and a return to The Old World Order.

The Jinn's abilities include altering probability, depowering other supernatural beings, and even remaking entire universes, giving them some of the strongest magic in Creation. They are also capable of moving and thinking at incredible speeds, and eventually traveling through time. Of course, there are caveats, which boil down to the immutability of demons and the quantum paradox.

Any world (universe) where faeries (demons) are present, the timelines are locked, immutable. Jinn are demons. So are Vampires and The Dead—although due to the peculiarities of how ROE is practiced here in this universe, both these indigenous races of faeries are classified as humans, here. Bottom line: here, the Jinn's "hex power" is relegated to the low-level manipulation of local probabilities which is never long lasting. If it were not for the presence of Vampires and The Dead, they could remotely from another universe permanently change the very nature of reality of this universe and again become the dominant species.

In this version, the "correct" version versus that other one, the annoying government agent who was so overly talkative is still alive gabbing to his executive assistant—Becky never ate him—he was her TO (training officer) at the Military Police academy. The rabbi and his wife are also still alive. They arrived too late on the scene to lose their lives trying to save Art's. More exceptions for purely personal reasons: the rabbi is Becky's rabbi—she's Jewish. Prudently, no one in her synagogue objected when Becky got made and stayed a member of the congregation.

Something's never change, though. Like the nameless, disposable, red-shirted security types in episodes of the original Star Trek TV series: disposable is as disposable does. The mesmer, the mesmer's phantasm, and most of the first rapid response team are still dead, in this version.

Episode #018

**“My armor is iron. My teeth are swords. My claws are spears. My wings, are a hurricane!”
– Smaug to Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*.**

mag·ic *noun* \ 'ma-jik\ : The manipulation of Creation by supernatural or mundane beings which involves saying special words and/or performing special actions – its usage is expressly forbidden for public consumption in Universe-A379.

As species, Vampires and Dragons loath and disdain each other—it’s instinctual—not the result of some ancient, bloody conflict or chronic antagonism expressed as unprovoked attacks. Yet, when Fallen Angels and their allied Mormon Polygamists attempted to advantage themselves during the Dragon Wars by seeking to drive the warring Dragon Houses into extinction which begot the Hades-Draak “Conflict,” it was the Vampires and their closest allies the Elves who rushed to the aid of the Dragons. The Dragons didn’t ask for the help of The Lost Ones, and the Elves only entered the fray at the behest of the Vampires. So the relationship between the Undead and the Fire Breathers is complicated, to say the least.

Don’t call it an obligation, the obligation of God’s oldest, darkest, and therefore most profoundly malevolent children toward all of God’s other supernatural children. That’s total bullshit—an urban myth. There is no such obligation let alone capacity as it pertains to any of God’s supernatural children.

Also. Don’t be fooled into thinking that they the Vampires helped the Dragons, because they the Dragons needed it, and just leave it at that—urban myth #2.

And. Avoid at all costs the bewitchment and beguilement of this following bit of the most referenced disinformation sourced from political scientists, sociologists, social workers, psychiatrics, psychologists, and other “amateur” shrinks of that ilk.

Urban myth #3: They Vampires and Dragons are not bosom buddies, and never will be—although individual Vampires and Dragons can and do have friendships—their species will never have any endearment toward the other—most notably, their deep-seated interspecies animosity is often times expressed as what Sigmund Freud would call the “displaced affection” of one species toward the other—in other words, their loathing and disdain for each other is oft expressed as behavioral affectations that can easily be misinterpreted as affection by the layperson.

So, what’s the digget, then? Well, the closest mundane analogy is. They are the old married couple, forever bickering, settling their endless, petty squabbles with some act of acute domestic violence. But anyone or anything that gets in the middle of one of their disputes will rue the day. Worse: whomever or whatever has ever had a row with the Dragons has had to deal with Vampires and their cohorts the Elves having at their backs. Worst: where Vampires and Dragons are concerned, theirs is a love-hate relationship.

Someone or something manipulated the Jinn’s versioning to the endearment of Becky, as if to court her endorsement. People important to the Vampire were spared without regard to the integrity of the timelines being manipulated. In other words, is the “correct” version the original version? It takes considerable supernatural prowess to sidestep the paradox of demonic immutability: time travel is not possible, but versioning is with the expected caveats.

A convoluted situation, indeed. Yet, Becky is very parochial in her focus. She would call it “being a professional.” Because of the species involved, she despises Ancient Mia. There are also personal reasons why this Vampire dislikes Dragons in general, but those reasons which she’ll never divulge, involve a classified clandestine mission that she was party to back when she was mundane. Nonetheless, she puts all of her misgivings aside. Becky will solve the murder that she’s been tasked—her obligation to a queen of the Vampires.

And Becky will help Ancient Mia. Because the Dragon needs help—the obligation of one child of God to another? Nope. She will help Ancient Mia, because she Becky chooses to? Definitely not! Becky will help Ancient Mia, because her women’s intuition tells her that somehow Ancient Mia’s interest and her own are intertwined. And that the sooner she finds out how, the sooner she’ll solve the murder.

And she knows something else. Where a Dragon is involved in such a “conversational riff,” gold is surely involved, and lots of it, and, there is more than one Dragon involved. Her cop instincts tell her that Ancient Mia didn’t swank the Jinn’s juice. That this other “unknown” Dragon did, and for self-serving monetary reasons.

Calling Dragons smitten where gold is concerned is an understatement of their avarice for the precious metal. They prize its possession second to no other material possession. Dragons covet gold with a dark and fierce desire. And, they will guard their precious hoard for the duration of their immortal lifetime. You’re better off stealing food from a Goon’s mouth than stealing a Dragon’s gold.

Déjà vu: 7 Maryland Plaza, The Fairmont. Becky returns to the crime scene accompanied by Ancient Mia. Still onsite are Detective Molly Minders and her DRN partner Detective Vanessa Walsh, Becky’s Danica, Lunk, and Queen Akasha.

As Becky and Ancient Mia cross the threshold of the apartment, the front door closes and its locking bolt slams home. As if on cue, Walsh and Danica shut down—freezing motionless in place. Being an organic, Minders is not glamoured like the robots, but she’s a very smart girl and knows when it’s best to make like wet paint that’s drying. In private, behind closed doors, magic has been invoked—this is supernatural folks’ business!

Becky, known to be cocky at times, lives up to her rep. She breaks the silence hanging over the room.

“So, Smaug, self-proclaimed *King under the Mountain*, how much did they take you for?”

A fifty-something “man” immaculately dressed in a men’s Edwardian fancy attire complete with top hat and tails steps through a mirror into the room.

“More than I’d care to admit,” he delivers with a chuckle laced with malice.

“I wouldn’t expect less where welching on a Dragon schlock’s owed was involved.”

Then, just when you think things couldn’t get any more inscrutable, Smaug drops a bomb.

“Tisk. Tisk. Tisk. Who now attends Elon University, a southern school where guys favor khakis and many girls wear the preppy Lilly Pulitzer brand? Why, Paulina Gretzky, of course. Recently she shocked the stogy Golf establishment by appearing on cover of *Golf Digest*. The cover photo

shows Gretzky in skintight capris and a bra—Lilly Pulitzer brand, of course. My wife Arrington’s reaction was shock.”

“Knowing your wife’s mores, or rather her lack of them, I know it her shocked reaction was not to Gretzky’s indelicate cover shot.”

“You’re quite right, of course. She’s flexible, like you. Her shocked reaction was precipitated by her discovery of what an average Lilly Pulitzer piece costs. She found cover girl Gretzky’s provocative pose.”

“Mouthwatering.”

“You took the words right out of my mouth.”

And so it begins - What doesn't make you stronger, will kill you - Chasing Death

Today. Lockheed Martin was awarded a \$13.4 million contract modification to incorporate Phase 3 work into the DARPA Behavioral Learning for Adaptive Electronic Warfare, or BLADE, program, aiming to “refine and technically mature algorithms and software developed during Phase 2 of the program and to apply them in tactically relevant environments and time frames on tactical military directed-energy weapons systems, gunpowder-based projectile weapon systems aka MPPs, and electronic attack platforms.” With the addition of these funds, Lockheed’s BLADE contract is now worth \$29.4 million to the company. These funds will extend Lockheed’s work on BLADE through October 2015. Phase 2 has already demonstrated the accurate and reliable acquisition of fast-forwarded targets with a 95% effective rate in controlled laboratory conditions. The goal of Phase 3 aka Fast-Scan is purported to be the realization of one of the three so-called Holy Grails of modern military-purposed particle physics—the accurate, reliable, and dedicated acquisition of fast-forwarded and overdriven targets -- 100% effective rate—infallible reproduction of targeting under real world battlefield conditions!!!

The other two Holy Grails?

2) ammunition replicator - bullets forever—your gun never runs dry

3) stimms extreme overclocking with built-in metabolic and behavioral overrides - supernatural juicing—demon in a bottle for mortals

Episode #019

Key lines: “The most we can hope for is what we want is worth the evil we do. There’s something inside me, something dangerous.” – *Defiance*, SyFy Channel, Season 2

“In that Hobbit movie, you’re a Dragon.”

“Yes. Yes. And in reality, I’m a Kraken. I’d forgotten how tiresome you bloodsuckers could.”

“Then again, it is a movie. So certain creative liberties and a healthy dose of suspension of disbelief are allowed. But still.”

The avarice of Kraken is legendary, eclipsing that of Dragons and in doing so making the Draak look misery in comparison. Better to steal from a Dragon than a Kraken.

“My God, woman, do you intend to babble into eternity?!”

There’s an inside joke going on here, between Smaug and Becky. That much is discernable. They know each other quite well. That’s also very obvious.

For Becky there are precious few examples of principals people, places, institutions, and things that she has worked for which she also has cared for deeply. Smaug is one. A certain former President of the United States and his immediate family are another.

“There’s no need to be rude, Rudy.” At the disclosure of Smaug’s first name by Becky, Minders unsuccessfully suppresses a chuckle. “Or should I call you Horatio, your middle name?” This time, Minders is able to control her expression of levity. “No matter. You can keep a civil tongue about you.”

“As you wish,” Smaug concedes with a smile. Yes, he and Becky are very close friends, indeed.

Additionally, it should be obvious to even the uninitiated that Smaug and Becky have never been lovers. She’s never laid down with a principal. Sex between protected and protector is when close is too close. Her relationship with principals is always professional; no matter how much she likes them on a personal level. And, whether she likes you or not, she always gives you her employer her best. She also understands that above all things, theirs is a business relationship with a potentially lethal downside—she is disposable, her principal is not.

That’s straightforward enough. Nothing unspecified. The usual. The expected. Then it gets complicated—akin to that betwixt Vampires and Dragons. It has to do with his tell. When Smaug looks at Becky, it’s obvious to Becky and anyone else for that matter, that there are times when he’s seeing someone else in her place; someone dangerous, degenerate, and evil who he wantonly desires—instead, he wisely chooses her Becky as that “safe” substitute, the better alternative.

The slipup is most blatant when Smaug fixates on her grille—that wide, ugly mouth of hers when smiling it tries to emulate a bass looking for bait—that too generous pie hole that reeks of loathing and disdain, even when that’s not its wearer’s intent.

Tall and blonde with matching drapes and rug no peroxide need apply, leggy and buxom, a blue-eyed hottie with a huge maw that inspires the oral pervy. There is much that Becky shares physically with Smaug’s hitherto unnamed and unknown female obsession. Psychologically, the girls are worlds apart. If Becky were to but ask, she knows that Smaug would tell her who that

other girl is. Wisely, Becky does not. Some things are best left unspoken.

Intermission

“The Origins of the Beat Generation” by renowned writer Jack Kerouac

SOx (Sarbanes-Oxley) - Non-specific nerve gas used extensively in the skirmishes in the Crimea between the New French Republic and the Prussian Empire in prerequisite to World War 1. Status current and historical of the surviving stockpiles of this Class A WMD can be reviewed on the SOX Dashboard (login required) of the United Nations, per the agreed upon conditions at The Treaty of Versailles (French: Traité de Versailles) as it pertains to this weapon of mass destruction.

DE (Design Effectiveness testing) – Upon discovery of the missing cache (Cache A-1097-1913) during a routine random sampling this morning, all concerned parties have been duly informed and a re-inventory of all of the 1913 era neurotoxin and its post genocidal reagents has been completed. This was a self-test initiated by the Guardian System itself. Additionally, automated inspection applications BEST Most and MARS-2 will complete their DE testing by COB today; their preliminary findings aren't on the SOX Dashboard yet.

China and Russia have filed their formal “letters” of outrage during the afternoon emergency special session of the UN Security Council which was precipitated by this incident, citing their past concerns about the measures used to monitor the 1913 version of SOx.

OE (Operational Effectiveness testing) – Several have started in concert with Corporate Audit of Arkham LLC and Be-Loitte Chee & Kim (our independent Auditing consultants).

Secure FTP has passed their OE re-testing per standard operating procedure (SOP) per the incident.

Musch, ESPN 1 & 2, and the Common CAP applications have had their OE test re-evaluated per SOP per the incident, or are in the middle of re-evaluation per SOP per the incident.

The UN SOx contact is the very capable, Susan B Allen (Captain, U.S. Army, Genocidal Warfare Division, Fort Heed). Captain Allen is well known to all concerned parties. Her great grandfather, Dr. Postman Koss, in collaboration with the Dragon, Ancient Mia, invented SOx.

Episode #020

“No” is a complete sentence.—Anne Lamott, American novelist

The Bird of Prey was a black project, jointly funded by The Boeing Company, McDonnell Douglas Corporation, and the Division of Genocidal Warfare Fort Heed for the U.S. Army. The fruit of this collaborative Phantom Works effort, involving the Department of War and at that time the two largest private sector war contractors, was a single-axiom forensic stealth technology demonstrator used to test “low-observable” forensic stealth techniques and new methods of mass homicide design and construction as applied to the “modern” battlefield where plausible deniability as an implicit requirement is an imperative.

Official sources will neither confirm nor deny that the Bird of Prey is based partially or wholly upon the 1912 precursor to SOx, known in chemical warfare circles as “The Variant.” This 1912 variant has never been confirmed by any official source on or off the record as existing, and therefore its existence remains “rumored.”

The problem with discovery isn’t the placement, concealment, or even the presumptions of the detectives involved. It isn’t even a matter of finding something hidden right out in the open. The biggest problem is looking earnestly and even obsessively for something that doesn’t really exist, at least not in the form that you know it to be. Such is the case with *the variant*. When is a lethal gas not a gas? When it’s an artifact, of course.

This “artifact.” The Dragons call it *The Dark Sleep*. It’s known to the Norse gods and to dabblers in the occult by another name. They know it as “The Tesseract,” the jewel of Odin’s treasure room, that special gift from Odin’s Dragon mistress Ancient Mia. But, the Kraken choose to know it by its plaintive—The Dagon. It’s quite an understandable choice on their part.

In literature, “Dagon” is that short story by H.P. Lovecraft, the undisputed master of macabre. Dagon tells the story of a fishing village whose citizenry succumb to the temptations of greed, foolishly steal gold from Neptune’s deep, and as the result of their transgression’s punishment evolve into freakish half-human creatures who must sacrifice outsiders to appease the ancient monstrous gods of the sea. Three guesses as to who those gods are portrayed to be. If you guessed Kraken, you’d be right. Hence their the Kraken’s bias toward this story and its movie adaptation in particular, and H.P. in general.

Although, named “Dagon,” it the movie really isn’t so much an adaptation of *Dagon*, but more of “The Shadow Over Innsmouth.” But that’s quibbling over details. The movie is faithful enough to the short story to be its namesake.

Professor Zoom is an alias. Eobard Thawne is his name. Suited up like *The Flash* of DC comics, Zoom is mortal. And, he’s overdriven. The immortals are unfazed. Overdrive is actually their undriven. They must underdrive to interact with the undriven. He a driven mortal, driving on stimms steps out of the bedroom where Count Orlok and the deceased Vampire’s six bodyguards met their untimely demise. The supernaturals reflexively abandon underdrive. To the now undriven supernaturals, it’s as if the undriven Minders and her undriven mortal world are frozen in time. It’s a matter of perspective, tense, continuity, and trans-dimensionality.

The bodyguards and the Krull were status symbols. Not protection. A very old and thus very powerful Vampire, The Count was more than capable of protecting himself. And even if he had needed some muscle, armed humans and a dragon dog would have hardly been his heat of choice. Nor was Professor Zoom his gat either.

Here, in this universe, stimms are still in their infancy. They are dangerous and problematic, at best. Possibly years, maybe decades, from the maturity and zeal that they bask in other worlds. Velocity junkies like Zoom are called Quicksilvers or Flashes—speed is their drug of choice and stimms are the delivery system that they prefer.

Zoom is here on a dare: enter the crime scene undetected, flick about, and return unscathed. The bet is twenty bucks with a fellow speedster. Lucky for him, the supers have a good sense of humor. He's allowed to leave.

The supers resume underdriven. Minders and her undriven world no longer seem frozen in time relative to either the hypothetical neutral observer or to the supernaturals present. Smaug, Lunk, Queen Akasha, and Ancient Mia notice that Becky has her hand on an innocuous-looking snow globe; the significance of which is lost on Minders, Queen Akasha, and Lunk, but it's not lost on Smaug or Ancient Mia. Becky is smiling from ear to ear, that mischievous shit-eating grin of hers.

Zoom's passage through the apartment inadvertently unhinged the glamor attached to the artifact, and that was all the tell that Becky needed. If she's not an abomination, she's at the very least an aberration. And, she's privy to some pretty classified stuff as well—rarified stuff that far exceeds her known clearance level. Her deviancy alone doesn't explain her revelation of its significance. Because it wasn't enough that she could perceive it after its accidental reveal. She had to know what it really was, for its reveal to be of any significance to her. More profoundly, she understands the artifact's mechanism. She can perceive it and others in proximity of her holding it can share in that perception of hers about it with her, including mortals for example, Minders. She knows its value. And, she knows how to use it.

Becky shakes the globe, still palming it. The ominous mushroom cloud of an atomic bomb's detonation populates the globe competing with the fake snowflakes swirling about inside its glass bubbled world. A nice parlor trick. Or is it? Becky thrusts the "performing" globe outward, toward the group of captive onlookers.

Instinctually, knowing what it is, Smaug and Ancient Mia step back. At first. Neither wastes any time entertaining a poker face. They want to egress via the mirror through which Smaug made his ingress of this world. Cooler heads, theirs, finally prevail. They catch themselves, somewhat. But. You can still see their features screaming that desire for escape, overlaying their expressions of fake composure. An unusual demonstration of failed inscrutability by the Asian Ancient Mia. To say that the Dragon is unnerved is an understatement.

"I invert the globe and drop it, and we all cease to exist. Our 'posed' bodies left for forensics to fret over for explanation of our gruesome homicides. Not one of us who is capable of doing so will be resurrecting to live another day."

That's when Queen Akasha, and Lunk finally realize what's going on, and they are fit to be tied. Becky places the globe back on the table upon which it was previously setting with the other assortment of harmless knickknacks. The globe resumes portraying a placid winter scene about Christmas in the Connecticut countryside circa 1912.

Episode #021

“Never Explain Anything.” — H.P. Lovecraft

“Smaug, if you weren’t one of my very favorites, you’d be dead to me, right now. And as for you, Dragon. I ought to destroy you on general principle. All along, it was about retrieving that thing you covet.”

Ancient Mia decides that it’s better that she keeps quiet to preserve what fragile peace they have. Smaug obviously holds some sway with the girl. It’s better that he do the talking for both of them.

But it’s all for naught. The girl, Becky, abandons the expected and tosses flexible aside like a Brock Yates niche hot rod up for sale at a Goodies Gooding & Company auction that caters to broader, more mainstream, automotive collector tastes.

Her admonishment turns into a protracted tirade that morphs into a Senatorial filibuster full of piss and vinegar. It’s as if she is an Oldest god, one of those Eldest gods, who has permeated into the Lesser Worlds, the strata of Creation populated by mundanes and younger supernatural beings. And in doing so gives credence to her being an abomination—a young one who is as if a very old thing indeed.

Smaug, who numbers himself as one of her closest personal friends, which he in fact is, says absolutely nothing. He has never seen her like this. Intuitively, he and Ancient Mia know that this girl is the real deal. Neither misconstrues this as the tantrum of some young thing that they can readily manhandle.

Ancient Mia misjudged the girl, so did everyone else involved. Upon reevaluation. Yes: Ancient Mia is very old and thus very powerful. No: the Dragon could not easily take this young, made Vampire. The same could be said, supernaturally speaking, of Becky versus everyone else in the room.

Then, the ancient Dragon, an elder god and very old thing in her very own right likewise, the same can be said of Smaug, stops dead figuratively in her own tracks. She and Smaug look at each other, their facial expressions proclaiming that they are sharing the very same eureka moment. They are being used! The others in the room are being transcribed!! And this has nothing to do with the harmless pranks of wayward Jinn!!!

“Becky is a young, made Vampire; a very old and thus very powerful Dragon such as I could easily take her in an upfront dust off,” Ancient Mia proclaims in a loud, commanding voice; seemingly, to no one in particular. The spell being weaved is broken.

This time, there is no loud, sharp, audible—click—when the world resets itself. Of course, only the portion of this world defined by the deceased Count’s flat was the manipulated reality that was being reset. Hence no accompanying “click.”

Both of the robots are back online. Everyone, including the two sentient machines remember what has just transpired. The inconsistencies, contradictions, the breaks in continuity, and the plot holes that you can drive a Mack truck through, are resolved or plugged in the case of the plot holes in one fell swoop.

“So what’s an upfront dust off? Is that what you overgrown Gargoyles with nuclear fission halitosis, call a fair fight? Well, if so, you might be right on that account. Then again. Truth be told, I’ve never been in one of them fair fights,” Becky quips, with that smile on her face that says *flexible rulz*.

Everyone shares in the levity with a smile, a chuckle, a laugh, or, in Smaug’s case, an out and out guffaw.

Episode #022

“The desires we deny, find us as fate.” — M

Before the X-Files, before Torchwood, there was the Miskatonic Project! Dedicated to breaking the eons-old power of ancient, alien entities, the Miskatonic Project battles the loathsome threat of Cthulhu and their unspeakable spawn! In H.P. Lovecraft’s *The Whisperer in Darkness*, the Miskatonic Project faces an enemy of inhuman cunning whose power has never been directly challenged! Deep in the catacombs beneath legend-haunted New England hills, the final confrontation between Cthulhu’s legions and the defenders of humanity begins! Featuring art by Don (Iron Man) Heck, Darryl (Green Lantern) Banks and Daryl (Crypt of Cthulhu) Hutchinson.

“Show more? Show less?”

“More.”

“Always more, John Jaspers. Always more.”

“Yes, M. Always more. Has my greed ever shown bounds before?”

“No.”

On the other side of the “playroom.” Doctor Jade DeCamp, naked, locked in stocks, screaming in pain, her tender white flesh flayed from her back by the razor strap of M’s diabolical wife Claire.

Who is M? M a title, not a name is the leader of the Illuminati splinter The Hand. Once you know that and armed with what you can easily dig up on the dark-net on both the mysterious M and his equally mystery-shrouded organization known as The Hand, and, with one notable exception, the identity of the others is self-evident. Doctor DeCamp, of course, is the wild card in this equation. She is that exception.

Claire takes a respite to taunt the good doctor. To be most effective, torture must be psychological as well as physical. Humiliation is Claire’s favorite form of psychological torture.

“Such color in your cheeks. You should let the rutting beast have his way with you more often.” Doctor Jade DeCamp manages to spit in Claire’s face. Claire smiles and licks off the other woman’s saliva. “You believe that there are only two roles for women in this world: virtuous or whore. You are the virtuous upstanding lady and I am the twisted depraved whore. But, there is a third, sweetheart—you kill the man who owns you, and you become the master.” She drops the strap. Thrust in the heart of a nearby blacksmith’s forge is an iron poker. Claire removes the handy poker stuck in the pile of red-hot coals. Her thick glove begins to sizzle and burn. The smell of cooking leather perfumes the air. “Now, I’m going to give you the Gift of Lust, to revel in and enjoy, pleasure unending and pain everlasting.” She applies the poker’s molten tip to the girl’s left cheek. The smell of Doctor’s DeCamp’s burning flesh adds its own pungent flavoring to the aromas percolating. Doctor DeCamp’s screams of pain give way to shrieks of agony. “Now, you are the whore. Pain and pleasure are one. And. On the day men call Wapurgisnacht, then shall be He loosed.”

The escalation of Claire’s handiwork does not go unnoticed by the other occupants of the room.

“Isn’t that obscenely beautiful?”

“Yes, Master. It.” Jaspers stops in mid-sentence and just stares. The re-animation spell was temporary at best. Having finally exceeded its short life, the glamor is gone, leaving Jaspers as he was in the asylum.

“Hey, Johnny? Anyone there?” Rubbing salt in the wound, M directs his conversation with Jaspers in such a way as to also include the now disfigured Doctor DeCamp. “Doctor DeCamp. Your patient Jaspers seems to have gone back into his catatonic fugue state. He needs a jump-start. I know you’re in there, Johnny. I’m glad that you could drop by. Then again, it’s not like you really had a choice. You were always mine, and mine alone. You were the most perfect student I have ever had, John Jaspers. The most passionate. The closet to my own voraciousness.”

That’s when Jaspers does something totally unexpected. He comes back in his own mind by his own free will, and interrupts M.

“My fate is sealed. Now. Finally. I can see the painting on the blank canvas.”

Episode #023

**“Martyrdom has always been a proof of the intensity, never of the correctness of a belief.”—
*Arthur Schnitzler, Austrian author***

In reference to Wapurgisnacht, the “He” of whom Claire spoke is not an eldest Cthulhu god, nor is he the original Fallen Angel (Lucifer Himself). He is Apocalypse—the oldest and original mutant, also known most notably as En Sabah Nur, Boko Haram, and Matthew Saad Muhammad the latter being a transcription of a boxer (49-16-3, 35 KO’s) of the same name—a titular character in superhuman genealogy. Morally speaking, as is typical of a god, He falls somewhere in that grey area between good and evil, never falling wholly into either category throughout His eons of existence.

He is not, as some have foolishly and blasphemously alleged, a god of supernatural origin in the guise of a mutant. Bottom line: He is not a ridiculously powerful, supernatural being. He is a mutant who is a god. He is the quintessential superhuman. Born, not made—as is also the case with Dragons. You can make a demon, but you’re born a Dragon. Likewise, you are born a mutant.

He is a ridiculously powerful mutant, who seeks to bring about a Darwinian nightmare world where only the strong survive—mutants, of course, being the centerpiece of his envisioned master race. While there’s a certain horrifying philosophy to what Apocalypse wants to bring about, he’s not the deepest character. Shallow and self-centered, a narcissistic who is always accompanied by his “four horseman,” he is prone to loudly telling everyone how strong he is and cackling with glee when people attack him.

And. In his single-minded pursuit of perfection rivaling that of The Borg, and his pursuit of eliminating the weak—culling the herd of Creation, he has been known to employ genocide and holocaust as direction and afterthought, as foreplay and heavy petting, and as the prelude and the interlude to homicidal sexplay beyond measure.

Likewise, in the reflection of their chosen deity, his rabid followers worship in the church of mass extermination. To his followers, if you are a non-believer, your sin of failing to worship “him” as The One is grave enough to warrant your destruction.

Not all of his followers are mutants; most are, though. Some are mundane, and are thus part-n-parcel of their own extinction and the extinction of their species, ultimately by his hand either literally or figuratively. Some of his followers are gods themselves—gods of supernatural origin—supernatural beings who are gods and thus ridiculously powerful in their own right. The latter these gods of supernatural origin tend to be some of his most ardent worshippers—worshippers whose baseline is zealot.

Episode #024

“Don’t fight a battle if you don’t gain anything by winning.”—George S. Patton

Levity, in the case of supernatural beings, should never be mistaken for taking them lightly. No one knows that better than dishy fifty-something Arch-Baroness Lisa Niemi, Vampire and an Eldest god—Count Orlok’s estranged Prussian wife who’s in her preferred, human pretense when she enters her husband’s flat and steps into the frivolity at hand. All eyes turn to her.

The arch-baroness walks over to Becky, as if there is no one else in the room. A dedicated Ellen Degenerate fan, and when she’s not modeling wetsuits she has been known to sport a mean pantsuit/sensible shoe combo, complete with tuna halitosis. In other words, a rug muncher—she prefers to “play” with girls.

“Let’s cut to the chase.”

“Let’s.”

“It’s logical that you would suspect me, especially after what just went down. Y’all getting used and all by something or someone akin to an Eldest god.”

And, with her being an Eldest god, no one here needs to ask how she knew what occurred in the apartment before she entered. Someone such as she can be expected to easily read the signs, and assumed deductive reasoning on her part would fill in any remaining blanks.

Count Orlok and his arch-baroness were seen as the odd couple. He was old and powerful, but nowhere near as old or as powerful as she. He was a heterosexual with an overactive libido. She is an avowed lesbian with an equally insatiable sexual appetite. Spanning millennia, their marital relationship ran hot and cold.

When Count Orlok got offed they were in one of their off periods. Gossip columnists were having a field day with their estrangement; romantically linking her to married jeweler the Countessa Alberta De Prisco.

“It’s logical to whom?” Becky poses the question rhetorically, which causes a smile to paint itself across the arch-baroness’ face. “I presume that you are the someone who manipulated the Jinn’s versioning to the endearment of moi.”

“You presume correctly.”

“To buy yourself some favorable face time?”

Catching the double-entendre at work, the Arch-Baroness Lisa Niemi smiles even wider.

“Yes.”

“I’m flexible.”

“So I have heard.”

“My reputation precedes me.”

“Always.”

“That’s why first impressions are so critical.”

Episode #025

In whodunits, it's "the butler did it." Who did it first?

Oft have we all heard the aged whodunit cliché "The butler did it!" But when did the butler ever do it? I've never heard of the butler actually having done it. How did this cliché become the cliché it became if there were never any butlers who did it?

Up until now, Detective Molly Minders the only Food in the room and her "synthetic" partner Detective Vanessa Walsh, have been tertiary characters at best in this whodunit—and have been wisely silent at this stage in the game play. With a single utterance, by Detective Minders, that all changes. She and her robot partner are catapulted into the limelight.

"Then, in the spirit of making good first impressions, Miss Better. I, Arch-Countess Niemi, freely admit to being the something who perpetuated that charade upon y'all. I know said admission makes me look guilty, but."

"A 1909 Schacht Model K Runabout."

"You know it's a reproduction. How?" Arch-Countess Niemi asks the mortal cop, incredulously.

"That's classified." Molly and Vanessa step forward. Becky steps back beside Danica.

"It's not classified that you know about the existence the original and that it's a reproduction. But it's classified how you could recognize the fraud and what type of fake it is?"

"Obviously."

"The reproduction was the tip of the spear. That's the how—the murder weapon. The hand that wielded it, the murderer, was not me."

"I, like Miss Better, also never thought that you were the culprit. The fraud employed was totally unnecessary—a complete waste. You knew beforehand that it was never going to prove effective in flushing out the guilty party—which is why you didn't employ the subterfuge. You lied about being its author, for reasons of your own which I cannot fathom at the moment. But," Molly winks at Lisa, "knowing you by reputation, I assume they are good ones."

"Your guess on the whodunit?"

"The murders or the chicanery?"

"Smartass," Arch-Countess Niemi rebukes the officer, harshly, but paradoxically, she has a smile on her face when she utters it.

"I don't know who whacked Count Orlok and his bodyguards. As for the chicanery; I'd guess the HPLHS, the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society—the whisperer-in-darkness groupies. Then again, why ask a question you already know the answer to? Geez, girl, never play poker with me, you've got awful tells. A robot would clean you out."

That's when Vanessa taps Molly on the shoulder and voices the other game changer that cements her its celebrity in this whole shebang.

"Becky and her synthetic are gone. They slipped out of the room while you and the other biological were engrossed in rhetorical exchange. Unlike you, Smaug, Lunk, Queen Akasha, and

Ancient Mia were not likewise distracted, and they clearly noticed when the Vampire and her XRN egressed. They failed to react, for whatever reason.”

“Why didn’t you say something, when you saw them leaving?”

“You didn’t ask me to notify you in a timely fashion if such transpired.”

“What?!”

“I too am confused by my reaction in this matter.”

Episode #026

“It’s not a world of spies anymore, not even a world of heroes. This is the age of miracles, doctor. There is nothing more horrifying than a miracle!”—Baron von Strucker

What’s a discerning girl to do when she’s thrown a whole bunch of clues on a whodunit, and all of them smack of red herrings? In other words: nothing makes sense, and you don’t know how to separate the wheat from the chaff. If you’re Becky Better, you scam like Hades at a “Come to Jesus” meeting, which is exactly what she does.

“The past tempts us, the present confuses us, and the future frightens us. And our lives slip away, moment by moment, lost in that vast terrible in-between.” Sounds cryptic enough, and vaguely inscrutable. It sure beats the hell out of “Too many cooks in the kitchen spoil the broth.” Nonetheless, either choice was something screwball enough to buy her some breathing room. So, when the others emerged from the flat in hot pursuit, what they were confronted by was Danica. Who uttered the cryptic, vaguely inscrutable continuum quote, which Becky had doctored, and then it too exited stage right. No one bothered to follow the robot.

When all is said and done, Becky compares notes with Danica back in the flat that she, Danica, and Ronda co-habitat. Although, Ronda likes to pretend that Danica is just visiting; the robot gives the Rowdy One the creeps.

“So everyone left the room?”

“Yes.”

“Damn!”

“I don’t understand.”

“Nothing, I was just fishing.”

“Oh, so you were playing a hunch, and it didn’t pan out because of my response?”

“Yes.”

“Back to square one?”

“Yes.”

So, it’s no surprise that the two of them end up moseying along over to that place of preferred contemplation for Becky.

The Dinks Parrish Laundry CO Building, 3100-28 Olive Street, where she was once a night watchman, is how she first fell in love with being a security guard. She was a temp who subbed for the regular night watchman George Pal and sometimes supplemented him. It was her summer job, during her high school years. Back then, there was a deli on the first floor of the building owned by a nice older Jewish couple—George and Helen Rousch.

In Becky’s opinion, the Rouschs made the best sandwiches on the planet. Their reubens were just to die for; a reuben being Becky’s favorite sandwich.

Very kind and affable, they were thought to be childless with no living relatives. Then, when they died abruptly and tragically in an automobile accident, their estranged granddaughter, Brenda “Joanie” Rousch, made her appearance. She had all the supporting documentation to prove that she was who she said she was.

Deeming the restaurant as “tragically, old fogey.” It’s Brenda who closed down the deli and turned it into a hip, trendy night club that caters to the neo-metro crowd—a place where supernaturals and mundane mingle, “socially.”

Twenty-something—Becky looks like she’s in her twenties, and in actuality, she is in her twenties.

Twenty-something—Brenda “Joanie” Rousch looks like she’s in her twenties. In actuality, she’s three hundred and fifty six years old. In human terms, Brenda is ancient. Somewhere, someplace, very secure, and very secret there exists a file which records in detail the events which led to her transfiguring longevity. Long-lived, but still very much human. In other words, not supernatural. Immortal? Maybe. Maybe not. In her case. A question that has yet to be answered.

What is self-evident from this lengthy discourse is that Brenda is posing as the Jewish couple’s granddaughter. Maybe their accident wasn’t an accident? Or maybe it was, and Brenda, or whatever her name really is, is just being opportunistic. The papers that she showed to corroborate her identity were authentic, so what happened to the real Brenda “Joanie” Rousch?

In that classified file, she’s only referred to as Number Six. The first five test subjects didn’t survive the experiment intact—they either died horribly or they ended up insane. What of those that followed, if any? That’s a question best left alone. Why? Because. Its answer hints at, implies strongly a connection between the Secret Wars, the Extinction War of The Angels against Mankind, Project Paradise, the multiverse, and a certain twelve-part world-shaking event hosted by some creepy bald voyeur and tyrant named Samuel “Jimmy Jon” Rainey which resulted in the scrapping of an entire alternate universe altogether in Crisis On Infinite Earths.

With one notable exception, nobody in Rainey’s life including his parents and siblings actually liked him. This Brenda was that exception. In point of fact. She enjoyed the despot’s company.

The lifer experiment that transformed Six was one of the Sanctuary notions of Project Paradise. Rainey was the brother of Professor Helena Paradise; Professor Paradise being the head of the project that bore her name. After he was deposed, Rainey spent his final years toiling in obscurity, authoring romance comics a genre that he, Jack Kirby, and Joe Simon invented and monster books that were more or less watered-down versions of the EC formula with proto-kaiju and predictable twist endings.

Episode #027

“The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of the infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far.” — H.P. Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*

Under new management, taking the place of Delmonico’s Diner a Soul food landmark is Buchanan’s Soul Food Restaurant, 4909 Delmar Blvd—Soul food, literally, is people as cuisine, usually mundane, but in the case of Goon eateries, anyone can be on the menu including supernaturals. But, the centerpiece of this eating establishment is not its world class food, it’s its mural. The mural, which covers an east wall, is by guitarist-turned-painter Tal Farlow—not a costly reproduction; a priceless original.

Throughout the 1950s, Tal Farlow dominated modern Jazz guitar. Self-taught, Farlow quickly became revered for his adventurous sense of harmony and a breathtaking virtuosic technique which earned him the nickname The Octopus due to his large hands and long fingers.

The mural in question is his *The Eater of Worlds*, the adjunct to his *The Returned* neither human, nor zombie. At its unveiling, Farlow, now deceased, described EOW as “it’s hard to categorize it, because it’s a painting, it’s a map, and it’s also a formula.”

Then there was that first incident, and the true nature of EOW and *Returned* was revealed. Step through the mural, and you end up at Delmar Station, Wabash Railway Company. At the Delmar Station, painted on its west wall is *The Returned*. Step through *Returned* and you end up at Buchanan’s.

The two murals constitute the “known” fixed departures/destinations of a site-to-site teleportation device. It was anonymously commissioned by a patron of Farlow’s—someone unknown even to Farlow himself. The patron provided the specifications. The device is occult in origin and the drawing that it’s based upon is itself very arcane, with unpredictable results. There are those exceptions, one of which is very unsettling.

Most of the time you end up at either Buchanan’s or The Delmar Station depending upon from which you departed. But. You can arrive at Buchanan’s having departed Buchanan’s, or arrive at The Delmar Station having departed The Delmar Station, and to third-party observers of your departure/arrival, it appears to them that you arrived before you left. And, sometimes you don’t come out at either point and no one can figure out what has happened to you—until two days to two weeks later when you step out of an unfinished mural by an unknown street artist. This mural, still in the drawing phase, is scrawled on a brick wall behind the midtown annex of the Webster Groves library. The annex is between The Dinks Parrish Laundry CO Building and Pappy’s Smokehouse.

Unattractive and spinsterish, the matronly Ann Leckie shuffles the stack of rejection letters she has spread across a small wooden table. Seated in an engulfing armchair in the foyer of the Webster University library annex, the homely gray-haired forty-something who passes for a 48-year-old peers down at them through a set of bookish, clear-framed glasses. She’s soft-spoken and almost shy, but there are subtle hints that the pudgy eternal-wannabe akin to a lifer, passing for an unaltered mundane, still human and not supernatural, something in-between is not a typical

suburban mother of two—like her glittery bright-orange lacquered toenails under the table, her butch ‘do, or her somewhat masculine ways and means, for example. Ann is also a bit of a stalker and can be quite the shrew when her obsession is in overdrive. As she was going into the annex she noticed two women going into the Dinks next door. The leggy blonde caught her eye. Thoughts of doing that lip-smacking girl distract her from the task at hand.

“This one’s my favorite,” Leckie whispers at a library-inappropriate volume, to no one in particular. She slips out a sheet bearing the all-caps letterhead of Analog Science Fiction and Fact.

“Dear Ms. Leckie,” she recites. “Thank you for giving us the opportunity of looking at this manuscript, but I have found it not quite suitable to our present needs.”

She laughs; gaiety tinged with more than a hint of insanity.

“I’m sure it was just a typo,” she says.

Leckie is still struggling to publish anything, anywhere; it is a time when her few successes include a non-bylined bodice-ripper for *True Confessions* called “He’s My Lover On The Telephone But I’ve Never Seen His Face.” She pens many of these her early works at one of the sunlit tables on the third floor of this annex.

“My rule,” Leckie says, “is that when I get a rejection, I must send the piece back out the same day. That way, I always know the next place it’s going to go when it’s rejected.”

The third-floor librarian directs another one of those steely “quiet, please” stares in Leckie’s direction. Right now, the only things she gets published are written here, and she doesn’t want to lose this mojo.

So. Superstitious Leckie stuff her papers into her oversized handbag and leaves before she’s ejected from the premises by security and told to not return. Horney Leckie ducks into the Dinks in search of the dye-job that caught her attention earlier.

Seated at a table in a secluded corner, Leckie spies her quarry eating a reuben and talking with the athletic brunette that Leckie saw the girl with beforehand. Leckie makes a beeline for the table, grabs one of Becky’s hands, and shoves it up her skirt. Leckie is commando—no bra and no panties, as usual.

“See how wet I am for you? My name is Ann Leckie, let’s fuck.” The tone of Leckie’s voice escalates from clingy to demanding. “I want you, and I won’t take ‘no’ for an answer!”

Becky pulls her hand from under Leckie’s dress, licks the “dew” off her fingers, and crunches the numbers. She recognizes the woman, is a fan, and has read everything that Leckie has written.

“What shall I call you?”

“Leckie.”

“Leckie, please join us. I must confess that I’m a fan and when we retire later to my quarters to fuck, I will expect you to autograph everything that I have of you.”

Leckie seats herself at the table, scooting her chair up against Becky’s.

“Which works of mine do you possess?”

“All of them.”

In an afterthought. Leckie looks at Danica, as if seeing her for the first time.

“Sorry about being so blunt, but I want her, not you.”

“That’s okay.”

Leckie notices the total lack of emotion in Danica’s response.

“She’s a robot.”

“Yes, she is and as such was not hurt emotionally when you chose me over her. She could care less. By the way, her name is Danica.”

Of course, by now, Leckie is back to fixating on Becky. Again, she’s totally ignoring Danica’s existence.

“Do you have roommates?”

“Two. One is Danica. The other is.”

“Are they your lovers?”

“No.”

“Do you have a steady?”

“No.”

“Good. Excellent.”

“Would you mind helping me with something?”

“Of course.”

“I’d like to use you as a sounding board. Bounce some ideas off of you. Get your opinions. New insight. A fresh set of eyes could prove invaluable.”

“Anything. As long as I get to fuck you. I bet your snatch is to die for.”

Episode #028

“All of these people racing are having one heck of a good time. And that’s what it’s all about. All the years I raced; it didn’t mean anything. It meant that I was selfish enough to indulge myself in what I liked to do. That’s all it meant. You know that fits ice cream and sex. If you can have all three in the car. Oh my God, what a way to die!” — Roger, F40 Motorsports master mechanic, Chasing Classic Cars

“So, is your chubby dyke girlfriend gone?” Ronda asks sarcastically as she interjects herself uninvited into Becky’s room.

A wet Becky is wrapped in a bath towel having just emerged from the shower. With few notable exceptions, Vampires love to bathe.

“She’s gone, back to the suburbs and her family. And for the record, Leckie is married to a guy, has two kids by him, and is not a dyke. She’s just experimenting sexually, getting in touch with her inner butch. One of those midlife crisis things some women go through, from time to time.”

“Whatever.”

“She’s quite good in bed. It was beyond nice to wake up this morning and have her head shoved between my legs munching on my—”

“Yuck. Way too much information.”

There is not one iota of lust in Ronda’s eyes when she looks at Becky—all the while Becky dresses right in front of her. Sexually, the Rowdy One is as straight as they come and loves fucking guys. The very notion of two women going at it, gives her the heebie-jeebies. Yet her BFF will drop a dime on a guy or a gal at a moment’s notice and Ronda is okay with that. A contradiction? Not really. For friends, let alone loved ones, she’s known to bend her own rules. So. In her own way, Ronda is flexible, too. Ronda loves Becky like a sister. The reciprocal is not true.

Becky loves Ronda, true enough. But, not like a sister. Becky would never entertain the idea of fucking her own sister, but she often entertains the idea of fucking Ronda. The thing of it is, as aforementioned, Becky is not bi. She too is straight and loves to fuck guys. With her though, as with all things in life, flexible rulz!

“Okay. Change of subject. Word association?”

“Ready.”

“The Last of Us?”

“Rough magik.”

“But, what, is, it? Be more specific. No more flippant string theorems or their buzzwords. Which you’ve picked up from me, by the way.”

“Well, that’s hard to explain.”

“Try.”

“It’s a drawing, a map, and a formula.”

“Sounds familiar.”

“Sounds like The Eater of Worlds. Sounds like The Returned.”

“Correction. It sounds like EOW. But it does not remind me of the Returned. EOW is the sender/receiver. Returned is merely an anomaly. An anomalous point in time, fixed, but oscillating that is, excuse the pun, for the time being married to EOW.”

“But time travel isn’t possible in universes where demons exist.”

“Time travel isn’t, time anomalies are.”

“Okay. Stop. Timeout being called. Head ready to burst. Dumb jock here signing off.”

They share a chuckle. Ronda is a lot of things, and a dumb jock is not one of them. Becky notices the time.

“Oh shit! I’m gonna be late for class!”

“So what’s the drawing?”

“An unfinished one on the back wall of a library annex. Unnamed by an unknown street artist, but with a well-known subject matter, namely. The Last of Us.”

“A clue?”

“Nope, just another red herring if I’d allowed it to be.”

“What?”

“In talking to Leckie I was reminded of what I’d forgotten.”

“Okay, explain. Don’t you dare leave me hanging.”

“Except in the case of deviants, the motivations of supernatural beings and mundane seldom overlap—there is human nature and then there is inhuman nature.”

“Go on.”

“There were no red herrings whatsoever. I was the one at fault. I looked at the case from the wrong point of view. I used to be human. So.”

“So?”

“When I looked at things from the way I used to be, as a mortal me would have, then I was able to separate the wheat from the chaff.”

Becky hustles out of the flat, leaving Ronda for want of some answers.

Episode #029

Welterweight fighter Fritzie Zivic was once asked to comment on his reputation as a dirty fighter. Zivic's reply was, "You're fighting, and you're not playing the piano."

Legend: in undercover government work, a fabricated identity.

I'm a security guard. I'm not a troubleshooter, let alone a "thinking man's" babe—à la that late-thirty-something-early-forty-something "Brit," Nyree Porter Brown New Zealand born Ngaire Dawn Porter, of The Protectors, who owned an Italian detective agency specializing in fine art crimes.

The Protectors (52 episodes, 1972-1974) were Harry Rule, Countessa di Contini, and Paul Buchet. The three of them made up this unique team—freelance troubleshooters who ran an international crime fighting agency that tackled baffling and dangerous assignments. Together they moved around Europe's most top resorts. There were some impressive locations that gave the show glamour. The team kept in touch via hi tech seventies computer equipment. There were fashionable cars and private jets used as they fought crime head on. They tackled spies, murderers, smugglers, and drug pushers. Harry Rule Robert Vaughn, American, born Robert Francis Vaughn the leader was an American who worked from a hi tech office in London and lived in a country mansion with an Irish wolfhound named Gus. Gus was looked after by Harry's au pair, Suki, who was a martial arts expert. The Countessa di Contini was Lady Caroline Ogilvy Nyree Dawn Porter an elegant English widow. Her late husband was Italian Count di Contini, who had left her a villa in Rome. She specialized in art and antiques fraud and was chauffeured by a karate chopping driver named Chino. Paul Buchet Tony Anholt born in Singapore as Anthony Anholt was French, and worked from an apartment in Paris.

The Protectors was a great 1970s classic series originally created by the famous ITC studios. It was a good fun detective type of show. Based in London, Harry an American was the suave leader of the group. Lady Ogilvy lived in Italy and, when she wasn't working with Harry, she ran her own detective agency Rome-based Countessa di Contini LTD that specialized in exposing art frauds and recovering stolen art. French agent Paul Buchet co-founder of Missions Impossible who operated out of an apartment in Paris, was the group's researcher and gadget specialist. Their adventures ranged from simple kidnappings to convoluted cases of international intrigue. Since the episodes were only half-an-hour long, the show's forte was fast paced but straightforward action.

Sarcasm - it beats killing people.

People's Liberation Army PLA of the People's Republic of China.

In this universe. On this Earth. As aforementioned, though implicitly stated, public displays of magic, especially arcane performed by mundane in the presence of supernaturals is "frowned upon." It's considered impolite, not to mention setting a potentially dangerous precedent.

But, there are always exceptions to the rule. Long Da is one of them. Long is human, but somewhere along the way, in his distant ancestry, somebody got a piece of faerie tail and thus, inhumanity snuck into his otherwise mundane lineage.

Fortunately, for Long he gets a lot of leeway from inhumans, because of that “one drop” of their supernatural blood.

Long is sitting in the “cage” of his pawn shop, watching an episode of his favorite *The Protectors*, when he hears the front door bell ring.

Becky waves at him through the barred window. He buzzes her in, smiling. As she enters, he draws a gun from underneath the counter. It’s an Auto-Union PDK, 9-mm, semi-automatic pistol; although useless against overdriven, it’s quite effective against fast-forward targets.

This is one of those few times that being a one-drop works against Long in his interaction with a supernatural. In this very “private” matter. If he were 100% mundane and thusly armed, Becky would be obliged by ROE to shift from undriven to fast-forward to deal with his threat. But, with Long be a one-drop, and thus in effect kosher, she can take him on while overdriven. The long-stemmed beauty is on Linda Kozlowski’s stepbrother before he can get off a round. Fifty-something Linda, the estranged wife of Australian actor Paul Hogan is nowhere to be seen, which is highly unusual.

Hogan and Kozlowski met when she portrayed his love interest, Sue Charlton, in the first *Crocodile Dundee* film. She reprised her character alongside him in both sequels. They’ve been married since 1990.

“I’d thought that I’d get the better of you, this time,” quips Long as he returns the gun to its hiding place.

“Be careful what you wish for, you just might get.”

That’s when the proverbial 800-pound gorilla walks into the room, make that two. Slender, statuesque Marquess Emmanuelle Seigner the infamous wife of the equally infamous Marquis de Sade and her “manservant” the stocky-built Lady Mathieu “Martha” Amalric enter the shop.

Tellingly, they don’t need to be buzzed in nor does the door chime herald their uninvited entrance. Both are fifty-something females with a vaguely Oriental cast to their faces as if they are natives of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the Eastern part of Russia.

They have the causal air of misplaced sort-of-Asian-looking cougars who have been plucked down into this purely Occidental affair and have no interest whatsoever in the “tasty cakes” of the twenty-something poon-tang fare at hand.

Colloquially, they are Azns—Dragons in human form. The women, with the masculine ways and means, are attired in men’s suits and wearing men’s dress shoes complete with spats that were quite fashionable in the 1920s and remain so in contemporary lesbian circles at its upper echelons. Short, close-cropped hair that’s been slicked down to within an inch of its life. Harsh, heavy-applied makeup that’s unbecoming by heterosexual “mainstream” standards of the present day; an assessment that applies to their hair styles and their entire look, as well. Perls. Gloved, of course—feminine, frumpy prudz—except for their perls, their only feminine touch. Not even a tastefully slight bulge in their crotch from the strap-on contrivance that they both are wearing: there’s no need at the present moment to advertise their she-male ambition, it’s implied sufficiently by their look. They don’t hate men; they just don’t have any romantic use for them and have precious few non-

romantic uses for them either. Both are much older than Ancient Mia, Queen Akasha, and Arch-Baroness Lisa Niemi.

Additionally, Becky is obligated to both women in an all-superseding, all-encompassing, totally-binding fashion; an obligation that can never be fulfilled. In effect, they “own” Becky, forever. Their appearance couldn’t have come at a worse time.

Becky starts to drop to her knees in subjugation, but the Marquess waves her off. As such, Becky remains standing and maintains eye contact.

“There is no more lively sensation than that of pain; its impressions are certain and dependable; they never deceive as may those of the pleasure women perpetually feign and almost never experience. I so crave to hear that huge, too-large mouth of yours scream in agony,” pronounces the Marquess, very matter-of-fact.

The Lady Amalric nods in total agreement with her “employer’s” suggestive statement, licking the thin lips of her large, ugly, cruel mouth.

Even without their makeup, these two Dragons are the hardest-looking butch bitches that anyone could imagine.

“You’ve come a very long way to fuck me with a strap, or was it Matt’s turn at bat and you doing the watching, this time?”

Long swallows hard and wishes that he wasn’t in the middle of this dyke’s shindig. To add to the “dig,” and make matters even worse, the Lady Amalric shoots him a very toothy smile that bodes nothing well for anyone born with a penis and a Y-chromosome.

“You’re aware that Denise Johnson decided to do as my previous confidential secretary Lucy foolishly did before her and betray us?”

“Yes.”

“Then, our appearance should come as no surprise.”

“Not completely, although I was hoping for better timing.”

The Marquess bitch-slaps her Becky. But, in spite of such a physical display of disdain and loathing for Becky’s words, the Marquess’ facial expression remains cold and aloof. In contrast, Lady Amalric is obviously and openly getting off on their exchange gone violent—à la the now, not-so-subtle bulge in her pants.

“Like I give a tinker’s damn about your convenience,” dispassionately proclaims the Marquess.

Blood trickles from the corner of Becky’s offended mouth. Seeing this, Lady Amalric gets an even bigger rise. And, finally, the Marquess smiles that big, nasty smile of hers.

“Feeling better now or do you need to box me again?”

“More later, but that will do me for now.” The Marquess pauses strategically to savor the moment at hand—a wounded, fetching Becky before her. Then, she continues. “When you are done with your, trifles, we will come a calling for what is ours to use as we see fit.”

But, the two uber butches don’t leave. Becky knows her cue when she sees one. The Dragons are here to stay for the duration, but are to be treated as if they aren’t there, sort of. In other words, they

are here to offer their support, which means that they know something very powerful is involved in this mess that Becky is tasked with righting. Becky turns her undivided attention back to Long.

“Let’s go downstairs and see your break-in.”

Episode #030

“Throw a stick, and the servile dog wheezes and pants and stumbles to bring it to you. Do the same before a cat, and he will eye you with coolly polite and somewhat bored amusement. And just as inferior people prefer the inferior animal which scampers excitedly because someone else wants something, so do superior people respect the superior animal which lives its own life and knows that the puerile stick-throwing of alien bipeds are none of its business and beneath its notice. The dog barks and begs and tumbles to amuse you when you crack the whip. That pleases a meekness-loving peasant who relishes a stimulus to his self-importance. The cat, on the other hand, charms you into playing for its benefit when it wishes to be amused; making you rush about the room with a paper on a string when it feels like exercise, but refusing all your attempts to make it play when it is not in the humor. That is personality and individuality and self-respect—the calm mastery of a being whose life is its own and not yours—and the superior person recognizes and appreciates this because he too is a free soul whose position is assured, and whose only law is his own heritage and aesthetic sense.”

— H.P. Lovecraft

We must somehow stop the armed services from receiving such expensive hardware. While we must maintain our defensive military strength, it has gotten out of hand. As some of you have pointed out about Eisenhower’s warning about the military—industrial complex, what you may not know is that he initially referred to it as the military—industrial—political complex. He, for whatever reason, then decided to delete “political” from this warning. But this triumvirate is and has become an open maw of corruption and self-serving interests. While this problem has always existed in our wars, it has become a gargantuan problem that seems to be beyond control.

“One more time, from the very beginning. You don’t have to watch, this time,” Becky, teases.

“Thank you,” Long answers, relieved at the prospect of not having to endure having his sanity bent again watching the security footage. The three 100-percent supernaturals present can watch the footage unaffected. Repeated viewing would drive a 100-percent mundane insane.

The hologram resets. Somehow, the rear door of the shop is breached, affording ingress to this lower level. Something or someone enters. Their identity and the detail of much of what they’re doing are obscured. All you can tell for sure is that one person/thing is involved. They move about the room snatching up certain items, inexplicably passing up more valuable items that are in plain sight. Whoever/whatever knows their way around, or maybe they’ve never been here before and the unthinkable applies to explain their apparent familiarity with the locale. The burglary is over in less than two minutes. None of the booby-traps, either magical or mundane, is tripped. This is the work of a real pro. The hologram stops playing.

“You can turn around, now.”

“Thanks.”

“How much pawn value was taken?”

“In round figures, one hundred and nine dollars.”

“All of it stuff that Count Orlok had pawned with me. He’d get tired of things, and he would pawn them. He intentionally would not redeem the pawn in time. I’d take possession, as is the law, and I’d resale it easy enough, or.”

“Or, keep it for yourself.”

“Yep. That gun I pulled on you once belonged to one of his bodyguards. He’d refit them his bodyguards every year like clockwork with new Auto-Unions. Man, he sure liked to spoil his pets. They got all the latest gadgets. No expense spared.”

“Were you the only one he dealt with?”

“For his ordinary stuff, yea. For his fine art throwaways, he used Bea Arthur, occasionally, Simon Best, if he knew that Simon was in a tight for cash and needed some quick revenue. And for.”

“Were some of the more valuable things that the thief passed up, things that you also got from Count Orlok?”

“Yes. I also need to say something.”

“Okay, shoot.”

“I’m totally legit. I’m a pawn, not a fence. The guns I got from Count Orlok where clean and unmarried from their previous shooters the Count’s bodyguards, totally unlocked, but totally traceable. I either sold them to people with the proper gun permits or kept them for myself and remarried them to me so that only I could shoot them. I reported this break-in to the police and to my insurance company; you can check that for yourself. But.”

“You feel violated and need closure on a more personal level?”

“Yes.”

“And?”

“I know that you know that I used be in the spy trade. I’m retired, which I know you’re also privy to. And I know you won’t confirm or deny any knowledge thereof, but.”

“You’ve got that feeling, more of an itch that won’t go away that whoever/whatever pinched you was/is in the trade too?”

“Exactly. I also have to believe, although I have no hard evidence otherwise, that.”

“Because of what was pinched and the calculated way that the thief went about the grab that this ties in somehow to Count Orlok’s murder?”

“Yes.”

“More than that, Long. This reeks of the same thing that has bothered me and the police investigators from the git-go about the related murder case. It stinks of.”

“Pettness.”

“Exactly. With the notable exception of the stray bullet felling an innocent bystander, murder is always personal. Even for the serial killer, murder is personal. The burglary and the murder are as petty as they are personal.”

“And who in their right or unright mind gets that petty with a god?”

“Who, indeed?”

“You’ll want a list of people who to my knowledge have been down here for any length of time.”

“Yes, you can text it to me, when you get it sorted out.”

Long notices that tone in her voice. And for a brief moment he gets that deer in the headlights look.

“You’re not thinking what I think you’re thinking?” Becky nods her head and flashes a big shit-eating grin. Long swallows hard. “Entertaining that other option would be quite unthinkable.”

“Yes it would be. But.” Becky turns around to face the two Azns. “It would explain a lot.”

Neither of the Azns breaks poker face. No Dragon tales, this time.

Episode #031

Could be a Lovecraft story based on brutal sex and lesbian attitude?

Sorry about the title. This is just something I'm thinking about very seriously.

I've read many Lovecraft stories but my memory is cheating me.

I've read a short story as it were a Lovecraftian story. There are two girls in their 20s, one of them is provocative, and she is so sexy—maybe very near to lesbian—that makes the other pure girl be very shy. After that Yog-Sothoth comes out—the other girl looks sane, which is kind of weird, because if you're mortal and see this god, you end up either dead or insane—and rapes her—or whatever—with its tentacles, very brutal and she lies between pleasure and fright, kind of a sacrifice that way, but so weird.

Made me think.

Could that possibly be a Lovecraftian story? I don't remember H.P. writing those kind of stories. Is that maybe an insult to H.P.L. writings? Or is it some butch Dragon's tale? Now, that would be kind of Azn, wouldn't it?

Owned by them lock-stock-and-barrel, notwithstanding, Becky is still first and foremost a Vampire—one of God's darkest Children. So, her confronting the Dragons having her suspicions flirted with, is not surprising. Neither is their inscrutable reaction.

"I'll give you the benefit of the doubt," Becky finally offers.

With that said, the moment passes. Long is visibly relieved, and literally breathes a sigh of relief. Becky stepped right up to the precipice and then just took a step back. Then she does the damndest thing to seal the deal. She walks up to the muscular, decidedly-butcher of the Azn pair, locks lips with the Lady Amalric, and sticks her tongue deep down that wanton gullet. The Lady Amalric reaches around the girl's slender waist and grabs her ass for dear life. When Becky finally comes up for air and breaks their kiss, it's the Lady Amalric who's sporting a big shit-eating grin. Flexible rulz!

Becky turns her attention back to Long. The Marquess smiles, the girl's actions having reaffirmed the rightness of their choice in her.

"See us out, please."

"Of course."

Marquess Emmanuelle Seigner and Lady Mathieu Amalric follow in behind their possession, secure in their notion of things unfolding the way they want them to.

Never count your chickens before they are hatched. It applies to supernaturals as much as it applies to mundane. Elke Sommer, born Elke Baroness von Schletz, is a German actress, entertainer, and artist. For a while, during her silent film career, she went in the name of Irma “Penelope” Eckman—an amalgamation of the names of the homicidal female leads in *Deadlier than the Male* (1907) and its 1967 remake—Ms. Sommer’s favorite movies. In both versions of this British spy thriller, the dishy forty-something thespian was Irma Eckman and her partner in crime was Penelope actress Sylva Koscina, who was born Vampire in Zagreb, Croatia, Yugoslavia.

A movie star of the first order, this gorgeous Teutonic temptress was one of Hollywood’s most captivating imports. Blonde and beautiful, Berlin-born Elke Sommer, with her trademark pouty lips, high cheekbones, and sky-high bouffant hairdos, proved irresistible to American audiences, whether adorned in lace or leather, or donning lingerie or lederhosen. Today, the semi-retired Vampire loves to travel and takes the occasional movie role.

Although nowhere near as old as Marquess Emmanuelle Seigner or Lady Mathieu Amalric, she is an aberration and therefore just as powerful. She is a Vampire. And, she has a competing claim on Becky’s services.

Marquess Emmanuelle Seigner, Lady Mathieu Amalric, and Becky Better. It is Ms. Sommer who confronts the trio as they exit the pawn shop.

“You own the girl, but I can exclusive her services whenever I wish,” proclaims Ms. Sommer.

“The Hell you can, leech!” Marquess Emmanuelle Seigner responds, righteously.

“Go crawl under a dark rock, bloodsucker, else we’ll burn you to a crisp,” adds Lady Amalric.

“I’m tasked with walking the dead in ordinary times, and you three are arguing over me like a bunch of high school cheerleaders haggling for the school’s star quarterback. I don’t have time for this.” That short, to-the-point denouncement gets the three older supernaturals looking at Becky. Becky continues her dismissal of the situation she’s being put in, without pause. “I’ve tried to be polite about this, but truth be told this just won’t do. I have a life, and y’all need to respect that. As for you, Elke, stop acting like your claim is superseding. I belong to them, forever, regardless of what you want otherwise to be the case.”

With that said, Becky just disappears—fading out as stealthy as you please; employing a classified tech of purely human origin that she became privy to back when she was mundane. Up until this impromptu moment of disclosure, no one outside the relatively small circle of those who needed to know, knew that it existed.

Episode #032

“Never trust a cop. You never know when he might go straight.” – Inspector Ruff, Assignment to Kill (1968)

Becky materializes—fading from nothingness to something—outside of the Mark Twain Hotel in busy downtown Saint Louis, Missouri. In its current configuration, the teleportation device she’s using has no interdimensional capability—but government scientists around the world are feverishly working in secret on solving that limitation. Therefore, Becky is still in her Saint Louis, Missouri, on her Earth, in her universe.

The hand-held teleporter is also a telecommunication device. Or, it’s best described as a telecommunication device to which teleportation capability has been added. Bottom line. It’s a smartphone, a very smart phone. Specifically. A modified Genisys Koch (*coke*) smartphone, utilizing highly classified tech that is human. Her open use of something whose existence up till now has been officially denied by all world governments, changes everything. Rumor has been confirmed. No more rumored existence for those who weren’t previously in the “need to know.” As aforementioned. Previously, only a few knew that such things really existed, now, not anymore. Soon the entire world will know the truth. The consequences will be staggering. What she has done the ramifications cannot be undone. Literally, nothing will be the same from henceforth in her world.

So, it says a lot of things about the modern world she lives in that none of the people walking or driving by acknowledge what Becky has just done with any open displays of excitement, disbelief, let alone hysterics. It’s business as usual in the heart of this bustling metropolis. The most reaction she receives from passersby is the same, odd knowing glances and casual smiles that she would get in New York, Chicago, London, Hong Kong, Berlin, Tokyo, Beijing, Johannesburg, Paris, Moscow, Dubai, etc., from doing the very same thing. Yep, Saint Louis has definitely arrived.

The Mark Twain Hotel—despite its long and controversial history—is again gorgeous on the outside and the inside, thanks to a thorough restoration instituted five years ago by its current ownership. Intricate, cream-colored terra-cotta bands wrap three sides of the again luxury hotel, including the entirety of the second floor. Griffins and cherubs stare down at loiterers on the sidewalk in front of the entrance. Above the doors are the words “The Maryland” written in gold foil—the original name when it opened in 1907.

Rising eight stories above the corner of Pine and North Ninth streets, the Mark Twain Hotel was at the turn of the 20th Century a respectable establishment that rented rooms for less than \$3 a day—about \$75 in today’s dollars. But things changed sometime after World War II, when it transitioned into single-room occupancy housing. For decades it housed blue-collar workers, ex-cons, new transplants and, increasingly, drug dealers, and prostitutes.

Entrepreneur Amos Harris bought and renovated the Mark Twain during the mid-‘90s when it was little more than a flophouse. He retained the single-room occupancy model, and though he drove out the open drug dealing and sex work, the hotel’s 232 units remained home to the city’s poorest workers, the elderly, the disabled, and the mentally handicapped. It was also home to a high concentration of felons. According to a database maintained by the Missouri State Highway Patrol, up to 38 registered sex offenders resided there during Harris’ ownership of it.

Arkum Industries LLC, partnering with billionaire restaurateur and Arkum board member Justin Shire, bought the hotel from Harris and began a painstaking, ground's up restoration, returning the venue to its former grandeur and better. The hotel is not just slavishly period correct. There are all the modern amenities too. Turn of the century grandeur coexists with the expected contemporary creature comforts.

There is more than meets the eye though. Although this the hotel is a purely human, indigenous endeavor, some of the employees are not what they would seem to be. Some of the employees are supernaturals posing as mundane, and some whether they are mundane or supernatural are not of this world. And, these deviations are known to and registered with the ownership and thus the US Government.

Becky walks up to the doorman Andy Yang, an Asian who's Azn. Young and fit, he smiles as he tips his uniform hat to her. She slips a few bills into one of his gloved hands. He smiles at the generous tip.

"I'll be in the usual room. I need to speak to the doorman at The Fairmont, posthaste?"

"The Fairmont at 7 Maryland Plaza in the Central West End?"

"Yes, that's the one."

"Does this concern an official matter?"

"Yes, it involves the police and a murder, a multiple homicide committed on the premises of the hotel. So he should bring his union rep and the union's attorney with him."

She moves past Yang, through the ornate revolving doors, and into an opulent lobby. Everything is painted white. A desk for the night-shift security guard is tucked discreetly against a wall. All of the hotel staff, from the doorman, to the desk clerks, to the maids, kitchen staff, guards, etc., is dressed turn-of-the-century. On one wall is a bank of elevators set in a shimmering expanse of exquisite white marble. Each car is about the size of a large walk-in closet. Concealed CCTV cameras watch from the ceiling. Also, a powerful dampening field is in place which negates her phone's teleportation capability. The plot thickens.

Interesting, the interior of the hotel employs a counter to tech that up till now didn't officially exist. But, it's hardly surprising. Those who run Arkum are part of that tiny circle of those who were in the "need to know" about such things—the measures and the countermeasures.

Episode #033

“Searchers after horror haunt strange, far places.” — H.P. Lovecraft

The time is slowly but surely coming for the “Dark Horse” to appear and show his head and his powerful force of nature, and that is none other than Keith “One Time” Thurman of Clearwater Florida. A Dark Horse is defined as “a competitor or candidate about whom little is known but who unexpectedly wins and succeeds,” and in my opinion that description fits Thurman, totally. Keith Thurman is the guy that many will “hate on” and discredit because of whom his Promotional Company has aligned him with to fight but secretly those same people also recognize the danger and risk he poses for any fighter at 147 and 154 pounds. In my opinion Keith Thurman is the “passive aggressive” type of guy who does not need to bark at anyone because his bite is far worse and far more devastating.

Like his boxing namesake, the same description could be applied to Keith “The Beast” Thurman, the Azn doorman at The Fairmont. At seven foot tall and well over three hundred and sixty pounds, this Oriental, Klitschko-sized version of a Keith Thurman is clearly more imposing than the welterweight pugilist. He is dapper and cocky, and in spite of the explicit instructions Becky relayed via Andy Yang, he is also unaccompanied. He detests Vampires as much as Becky detests his fire-breathing kind, and this display of disobedience and disrespect is his way of showing it his disgust with her leech-kind.

There’s something else about this Dragon in mundane disguise. He has something planned very special for this Vampire scourge Becky Better. Nestled in a shoulder holster, tucked discreetly in his armpit, underneath his sport coat is a 10-mm Cosworth Bauer, from the first of batch of prototype MPPs developed and now being field tested by Lockheed Martin. And, yes, it’s equipped with Fast-Scan, is fully-automatic, and utilizes an ammunition replicator. The god-killer has finally cometh. And, there’s only one way that someone of his ilk could have come by it. Murder!

The only other “person” in this very white, “white room” is Becky Better. They are seated at an archaic folding table across from each other. The table and two chairs are the only furniture. Becky is wearing her nerdy uniform jacket, something that she never does on duty unless she isn’t given a choice otherwise by the shift captain. She protests that it’s just way too geek for her tastes. Under no such edict, she’s wearing the jacket anyways. Thurman, of course, not being familiar enough with Becky, doesn’t see the jacket for what it really is, her tell. He’s not the only one in the room who’s packing heat.

Yep. For the first time in a coon’s age, Becky is carrying, and she’s carrying large. If Thurman had an inkling of what she has in store for him, he wouldn’t be so overconfident. Then, again, maybe he still would be. He’s quite the pistolero in his own right—a “modern day” Doc Holliday—quicksilver and deadly. In contrast, Becky is best described with a gun as steady and lethal—the very image of Wyatt Earp. They are those who would dispute that, though—considering it myopically skewed by her usage of a long gun rifle or carbine. They would say that, when it comes to a gun in short form revolver or automatic, “Quigley Down Under” best describes her with a pistol. If such is the case, then things are dead even, with little to tip the scales either way.

“Why am I here?” Thurman asks, rhetorically. Becky matches his impish smile. Someone, indeed, is not going to walk out of this room alive.

“When you live in a hotel and wish to get the very best service, short of the Bank of England, you need to keep the palms of three people greased—the head desk clerk, the maître d’, and the.”

“The doorman.”

“Exactly.”

“Count Orlok was very generous, especially at Christmas time.”

“Tell me about Jeremy Ki, the maître d’.”

“He isn’t a bad sort for one of those kinds.”

“And what kind is that?”

“Human.”

“Oh.”

“May I continue?”

“Of course.”

“He lives above his means, has a trophy wife, and depends heavily on Count Orlok’s generous tips to make ends meet.”

“Count Orlok’s murder must have put him in pickle.”

“You would think so. But he seems as calm as a Cheshire cat. Maybe the old gif slipped him a fat stack to smooth things over after that extra-nasty row they had; fat enough to tide him over until he can find another sweet touch.”

“That’s a lot of maybe.”

“I wasn’t counting.”

“When did they argue?”

“A week before the old blood bag bought it.”

“What was it about?”

Thurman shrugs his shoulders, nonchalantly. Then, he finally surrenders: “It was about nothing, and it was about money, sort of.”

“Explain, please.”

“The Count was late with the ‘envelopes,’ this Christmas, and Jeremy never forgave him for it. He’d get into it with the Vamp for any reason. He could have lost his job, but the Count never took the verbal altercations seriously, taking them as the tantrums of a pet he favored, and forbade management from firing him.”

“And you told this to the police?”

He shakes his head.

“Why not?”

“They never asked.”

“How about Suzie Wong, the head desk clerk?”

“She’s 456, what about her?”

“Like you said, I was just counting.”

Thurman smiles even wider, but he makes no move for his gun. He does unbutton his jacket, and he does it as casually as Becky undoes hers.

Episode #034

“I don’t want to set the world on fire. I just want to keep my nuts warm.” — Ernest “Duke” Borgnine

The time is slowly but surely coming for the “Dark Horse” to appear and show his head and his powerful force of nature, and that is none other than Keith “One Time” Thurman of Clearwater

Hamsa: This is about the amulet. For other uses, see Hamsa (disambiguation) and Khamsa (disambiguation).

The hamsa Arabic: خمسة *khamsah*, also Romanized as *khamsa*, meaning lit. “Five” is a palm-shaped amulet popular throughout the Five Worlds, and commonly used in jewelry and wall hangings. Depicting the open right hand, an image recognized and used as a sign of protection in many societies throughout the history of “The Five,” the hamsa is believed to provide defense against the evil eye.

The symbol predates the three, major religions of The Five: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

In Islam, it is also known as the Hand of Fatima, so named to commemorate Muhammad’s daughter Fatima Zahra. Levantine Christians call it the Hand of Mary, for the Virgin Mary. Jews refer to it as the Hand of Miriam in remembrance of the biblical Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron.

In Islam, the hamsa is called the Hand of Fatima, in honor of one of the daughters of the Prophet Mohammed. Some say that in Islamic tradition the five fingers represent the Five Pillars of Islam. In Old-Turkish this sign is called: “pence-i al-i aba,” with “pence” meaning “hand” or “five,” referring to the household of the Islamic prophet Muhammed. The household of Muhammed is enumerated as those five people over whom the prophet held a cloth; they are: Fatima-tül Zehra, Ali-el Mürteza, Hasan-ül Mücteba, Hüseyin-i Desht-i Kerbela, and Muhammed Mustafa.

Khamsa is an Arabic word that literally means “five,” but also “the five fingers of the hand.” Coincidentally, it has the same meaning in the verbal aspects of the “tongue” of The Dragons and The Nameless Ones.

“I beg to differ with a lady, but I said no such thing. I said: ‘I wasn’t counting.’ You accused me of saying the opposite by inference, inferring that.”

“We can bullshit like this, literally, forever. And it won’t amount to a hill of beans. No matter how much you polish a turd, it’s still a turd.”

Confused? They aren’t. Let’s add translation, in italics and repeat for the sake of clarity and tit for tat.

“I beg to differ with a lady, but I said no such thing. I said: ‘I wasn’t counting.’ You accused me of saying the opposite by inference, inferring that.” *Translation, eloquent flowery Chinese version – Now that we’re done with the niceties that etiquette demands, let’s get down to brass tacks.*

“We can bullshit like this, literally, forever. And it won’t amount to a hill of beans. No matter how much you polish a turd, it’s still a turd.” *Translation, ineloquent American version – Now that we’re done with the niceties that etiquette demands, let’s get down to brass tacks.*

“You’re too young to see the magic leap.” *Translation – What elders of yours hipped you and how?*

“But, Marquess Emmanuelle Seigner, Lady Mathieu Amalric, and Elke Sommer are. And in a shared spiteful moment of theirs, pissed off at me for snubbing their claims on me by asserting my emancipation they did what I hoped they would do.”

“They bitch-slapped you, supernaturally speaking, and give you the proverbial *hamsa*.”

“Being Jewish, I prefer the Hand of Miriam reference.”

“As you wish. I, myself, prefer The Second Sight usage.”

“The Hand allowed me to ‘know of’ as they knew, ‘knowledge’ which involved them in this business to protect their interest, which is me. They, of course, don’t care about this business, the murder and the solving of it. I do.” *Translation – My elders have no personal stake in any of this, and only involved themselves in the shallowest of ways because of me. Their interest in any of this is solely to protect their investment, which is I.*

“You flatter yourself way too much, vain, shallow woman that you are.” *Translation – Tell me of the fable that you became privy to thanks to your elders. Since it is a fable, plausible deniability is implicitly invoked, but what I will do is to confirm or deny in the first-person as if the business at hand involves me acting in some official or covert capacity in the interests of. I’m not at liberty to say.*

“He, Count Orlok, saw your legend the whole time and didn’t care, and then somehow, maybe that careless slip of the tongue born of nonchalance, and you knew that he knew and that just wouldn’t do?”

“Something like that.” *Translation – For reasons that I will not get into, our belief is that, yes, this involves an asset, covert operative, deepest cover.*

“Are there many like you here?”

“Now, that would be telling.” *Translation – The situation is complicated. We’re not sure of anything, what we do know is that we don’t know what’s really going on.*

“It’ll go easier on you if you were more forthcoming.”

“Sorry to disappoint you.”

“Try harder.”

“I have diplomatic immunity. You can’t touch me.” *Translation – No House, be it Dragon or Vampire or whatever or whomever. No royalty, supernatural or mundane. No quasi-governmental organization, institutions like Starfleet or The Directorate or even The Smithsonian. No government or governmental agency or governmental body. Not even the rogue nations. None of them ‘chooses’ to claim this ‘person’ let alone own up to what their mission might be.*

“Another aspect of this massive population outflow hasn’t yet drawn much attention. Whatever their motives and wherever they go, those who depart will be shadowed by the organs of the Leninist state they’ve left behind. A sprawling bureaucracy—the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council—exists to ensure that distance from the motherland doesn’t dull their patriotism. Its goal is to safeguard loyalty to the Communist Party. Beijing makes a crucial distinction between ethnic Chinese who have acquired foreign nationality and those who remain

Chinese citizens. The latter category is officially called *huaqiao*—sojourners. Together, they are viewed as an immensely valuable asset: the students as ambassadors for China, the scientists, engineers, researchers and others as conduits for technology and industrial know-how from the West to propel China’s economic modernization.” *Translation – Confirm, for the record, as a registered official with the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, that no Dragon House or Dragons acting in conspiracy with other Dragons or a Dragon acting solely, is known to be complicit.*

“Nothing so clumsy, oafish, and complicate in dark crimes, as that of which you speak in volumes. Dragons go as they please. Their loyalty is implicit. Unquestioned.” *Translation – Confirmed. Then again, maybe there is Dragon complicity and none of the interest parties know about it. Again, we don’t know what we don’t know. We’re at best guessing.*

What follows is the short, expected, cryptic improvisation which means really nothing. But it always delights the boys and girls in intelligence to no end, and is thus much anticipated.

“You flatter yourself way too much, vain, shallow man that you are.”

“You tricked me.”

“You tricked yourself. Or, maybe that’s what you’d like me to think.”

The fat lady has sung. It’s over.

This is room is under the shared surveillance and control of the usual cast of mundane and supernatural authorities, and their associated intelligence organizations—the usual cast of characters. This how the game is played. Everybody privy to the exchange between these two supernatural beings knows that it is not what it would seem to be on face value? Yes.

A lot has been passed between the Vampire and the Dragon. It’s up to the players involved to cipher what’s what, and make their own determinations. That includes Becky herself.

Episode #035

“I have been, and always shall be, your friend.” – Spock

The sidearm forever associated with Starfleet is the phaser. And for the four months that she was assigned to SfS (Starfleet Security) at the behest of the President of the United States, that is what she packed.phasers are not the blasters that she has nestled underneath her jacket in the holsters of her regulation, SfS double-holster gunbelt rig. Like Thurman, her heaters are 10-mm Cosworth Bauers.

Back in the day. When she was ostensibly part of Starfleet, that overtly pro-mundane/anti-supernatural institution, she was human. Her wearing the gunbelt is her acknowledgement that at some level she represents the interests of Starfleet, whether they Starfleet like it or not—her being supernatural and all nowadays, it’s no surprise that they wouldn’t like it.

The moment of truth and they Thurman and Becky were getting on so well. Becky sits up from the table, her hands making those certain motions. As if on cue, when in fact it happens almost simultaneously, Thurman makes the exact same motions. Flash, bang, and it’s over. Thurman is bloodied, bullet-ridden, and dead; killed to live another day. She initiated the duel, but. He was faster, beating her to the draw. She was better. Becky drops to the floor, also dead to live another day.

Displacement. A time shear. No time travel, of course, since that’s impossible in the presence of demons. Becky resurrects. Thurman is still very much dead, face down in a rapidly-coagulating pool of his own blood, and he will be for some time to come thanks to the way that Becky dispatched him. There is a fresh change of clothes hanging from a clothes tree standing in a corner of the room. She changes into the clean uniform and exits. As predicted: two entered, but only one walked out alive. Left turn, then right turn, then another series of lefts through a maze of anonymous hallways before she emerges back into the lobby of the Mark Twain Hotel where Ambassador Spock is waiting to greet her.

Becky hands the Vulcan her gunbelt.

“Tell Kirk it’s just like he thought that it would be. The Dragons are thumbing their collective asses.”

“And you? What do you think?”

“I think that when the simplest answer satisfies the question being asked, then maybe it’s best to let that suffice.”

“That would disappoint a lot of people.”

“And every one of them those disappointed people would be Starfleet.”

His response is a telling smile. Not so out of character for a Vulcan, in spite of their inscrutable reputation. What’s also not out of character is his heart-felt relief, which he of course doesn’t visibly express, for the fact that it’s Becky who emerged first from that room and not Thurman. This is the outcome that he and the Vulcan Confederation had hoped for. It means that Becky will continue to lead the investigation and that Thurman who represents the Dragons and their vested interests will at most have a secondary importance.

“Phasers don’t have any effect on supernatural beings, do they?”

“Nope.”

“And the effects we have seen were lies, mere affectations to trick us into thinking that they are effective?”

“Yes. The beings feigned injury and ‘pretended’ death to deceive you.”

“To what end?”

“Guess.”

“I’m asking.”

“The firearms are married to me, true enough, but they are prototypes and in comparison, crude examples with none of the sophisticated safeguards in place that hinder you from reverse engineering more advanced acquisitions from other worlds.”

“Interesting.”

“What?” Becky asks, rhetorically; a mischievous grin painting her face.

“But they are still god-killers and you would still give them to us knowing that they could be used by us against you for your own undoing the implied undoing of all supernaturals.”

“Worry more about them being your own undoing, Vulcan. Mundanes in general, not just humans, tend to be self-destructive by nature. Maybe y’all will extinct each other in your version of a Forever War.”

Spock hands her the gunbelt back.

“More than likely, you intend that we arm ourselves in such a way that we are formidable prey and thus more interesting game for you to hunt down when you invade our universe for sport exterminating all life as your kind have done in countless other universes.”

“Yours, like this world, is protected.”

“So, we have heard.”

“We have a different nature. Unlike us. You mundane challenge God, flaunting and squandering your gift of free will; only our deviants do likewise as you. We only decimate the worlds that God’s Law doesn’t designate as off-limits to our predatory inclination. For us, God’s Law is not negotiable; it’s to be followed to the letter.”

Becky straps the gunbelt back on.

“One—you generalize about human and inhuman natures; I expected a better gambit from you. Two—not all of us mundanes are craving equality with God or are self-destructive by nature, of which your kind are so well aware—especially such as you, born human and made inhuman. Three—all off-limit worlds are protected by definition, but a protected world is not the same as one that’s been decreed as off-limits. This world is off-limits. Our world is protected. We know the difference, and so do the mundane of this one. You’re pitting us mundane against each other—a game your kind live to play so well.”

“There’s little need for us to prod you. You’re more than willing to ‘compete’ with each other without any help from us—such is your nature. Someday, The Federation will implode; a victim of its member worlds’ competing self-interests.”

“I won’t argue with your logic. I know not to trust your kind or its motivations.”

“Nor should you.”

“You have no public display of us coveting your MPP tech. You have us acknowledging by free admissions that we know what’s what as it pertains to the mundanes of this world versus ours. You.”

“Enough. I get it. Maybe next time. I represented Starfleet’s interest with the Dragon and in the process maintained control of the investigation which is to The Federation’s benefit—I owed you one, now we’re even.”

“Live long and prosper,” Spock proclaims as he makes that sign.

“Right back at you, pointy ears.”

With that said, Becky exits the lobby.

Episode #036

“It may not be who’s eating you, but who you’re eating.” – Anonymous Goon

Becky loiters on the sidewalk in front of the Mark Twain waiting for Thurman to emerge. More random thoughts take order as they careen about in her head. And then there are those prurient interests of hers to consider. As much as she instinctually loathes Dragons, hating them with a passion, she sure could dig being fucked by that Azn, Keith “The Beast” Thurman. The word is, his dick is gargantuan, liken to the “Great Road to China”—hung like a Chinese version of mortal porn stars Long Dong Silver, Long Dan Silver, Mr. MX Missile, Moby Dick (a.k.a. the Texas Longhorn), and, of course, John Curtis Holmes. Needless to say, John C. Holmes and those other mundane pipe-layers are hung like Goons—putting horses to shame. When someone so well-endowed lays some pipe in you, it’s gotta be Alaskan. He also has a well-deserved reputation for doing his lovers rough, akin to that of a Goon—bordering on rape. He’s a mean fuck and prefers girls who like it that way. Usually, food is the way to a man’s heart, with him it’s a fist applied judiciously to your face.

When Thurman finally emerges from the Mark Twain, he’s surprised to see Becky waiting for him. He expects a barrage of insults, what he doesn’t expect is to be propositioned.

“我要你他妈的给我你的大，长，厚，汁多家伙。”

“What did you just say to me?” Thurman asks, incredulously.

“Wǒ yào nǐ tā mā de gěi wǒ nǐ de dà, zhǎng, hòu, zhī duō jiāhuo.” Becky flicks out her too long highly-educated tongue and wets her lips. “In English: I want you to fuck me with your big, long, thick, juicy dick.”

“You whore! You dare ask me that, let alone in public!”

“I can also ask you in Dragon. Would that be better? I savvy Dragon, well.” He completely loses it and slaps her hard across the face, backhanding her for good measure. “Feeling better, now?” She adds while sporting a teasing smile.

“I lost face in there. I could beat you to death.”

“Then do it. Beat me to death and fuck me dead.”

“What?!”

“You know you want to do me. And I want you to do me—every which way but loose. Then I’ll really make you sky happy.”

“How so?”

“Maybe. I have a solution for your legend problem, which will get you your face back.”

“Where?”

“Somewhere cheap and dirty. A fleabag hotel on skid row, no questions asked.”

Yes, Becky is quite flexible, to the hardcore extreme. But, be that as it may, she is, always has been, and always will be, a girl who likes to fuck men—well hung men who like to fuck, know how to fuck, and know how to fulfill a randy girl’s oh so special need for a lotta swang to satisfy her yin for bodacious yang. Most especially, Becky “likes” that Yellow River (Huang He) (黄河). Her

preference for Chinese men, whether they are mundane or supernatural Azn, is a longstanding one—she lost her virginity to a Chinese exchange student while in high school—Fred Dōng Hàn popped her cherry like the Yangtze River—she was sore afterwards for days, but it was a “good” sore, as they say. The Yangtze River (English pronunciation: /ˈjæŋtʃi/ or /ˈjaːŋtʃi/), known in China as the Chang Jiang or Yangzi, is the longest river in Asia and the third-longest in the world. As is so typical of Asian and Azn men, a teenage Fred was so well-hung that he put porn legend John Holmes on notice. Even as a Vampire who loathes Dragons, she puts all that hating aside when it comes to Chinese wang.

Once more she openly employs the game changer, teleporting them to an alley behind the original F. W. Woolworth Company building on Tucker and Fifth. Having fallen on bad times, just like the company whose name it bears. Now it’s one of those “ask no questions” fleabags that the renovators haven’t gotten around to gentrifying yet.

“You lied!”

“I said, maybe I had a solution that was a face saver.”

“You’d better swallow, or else!”

“I always do, even on the first date. Swallow and let it paste my face.”

Becky slams Thurman up against a wall next to a dumpster overflowing with garbage. A couple of rats, disturbed by the commotion, abandon their dining and scurry away. He pushes her to her knees. She unzips his pant. Already hard and game. He grabs the back of her head, using a hunk of her hair for leverage, and shoves her face into his crotch. She yanks out his swang, unhinges her jaws, and swallows his considerable manhood whole—it snakes down her throat, past her stomach, and into her intestines when all is said and done—no gagging, whatsoever—circular breathing at its very finest—the late baritonist Harry Carney would be green with envy. Meanwhile. Her tongue slithers out of her “occupied” mouth and does a job on his cahonies. Testicals in play, on the back nine?! Linda Lovelace of Deep Throat fame has got nothing on this demonic baller.

Otherwise preoccupied, neither participant notices a blur of movement. They do notice the sudden flash/bang as all of a sudden, their world goes to splat—smack to black. Someone else has decided to openly employ an up till now, much rumored, game changer. Wolvesbayne!

Becky reanimates tied to a chair, naked, muzzled, legs spread, and hooded. She can still taste Thurman. Thurman is being tortured. His screams fill the room. He is being slowly and methodically castrated, and this is not the first time that their captor has inflicted this upon the Dragon—cut it his manhood off, let it his cock and balls regenerate, and then cut it off again—over and over again.

“Good, the bitch is awake,” announces their captor in an electronically distorted voice, having noticed that she’s finally resurrected. He for want of a better word yanks off her hood. His appearance is heavy distorted, but her best guess is that their captor, who is also naked, is male.

Thurman, seated across the room from her, is likewise naked and tied to a chair, legs spread. He’s been carved on and brutalized. Patches of his hair have been pulled out, leaving bloody patches in his scalp.

“My name is Jake, and I’m your host,” the captor taunts. He pauses from Thurman, grabs a nearby broom and rams its handle up Becky’s cunt. Becky just smiles, with her eyes. Mind over matter—if you don’t mind, it don’t matter. Flexible rulz!

The Perfect Soldier Adam Rose vs. The Super Soldier Becky Better?, aka The True Blueprint to Defeat Floyd Mayweather Jr. Part 2

“If you look up at me you will see a friend. If you look down at me you will see an enemy. But. If you look me square in the eye, you will see God. Follow the buzzards. – Citizen Bray Wyatt, leader of the MLA Mars Liberation Army

A man who was once described as an “invisible general” who holds master’s degrees in both education and business management is in charge of the military operations against the jihadist group Islamic State and the Al Qaeda franchise Khorasan in Syria and Iraq.

A Department of Defense spokesperson confirmed to Business Insider in an email Tuesday that General Lloyd J. Austin III was the “combatant commander” of the operations in both countries through his role as the Commander of US Central Command .

As CENTCOM commander, Austin oversees the US military presence in 20 countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. His role means Austin is leading the military operations in Syria and Iraq and heads the strategic planning for the efforts to fight ISIS and Khorasan in both countries.

Previously, General Austin had been the primary military liaison for “The Project.”

Redacted address from the quarterly readiness review for The Project. Presented as an analogy by General Austin to the then President of the United States of America, Gladys M. Gaye-Knight, a week before her formally leaving office after the cessation of Martial law post Conflict vis-à-vis The Martian Race War the third one.

The Perfect Soldier Adam Rose vs. The Super Soldier Becky Better?

Adam Rose, the so-called “The Adam Rose Experience” a prototype superhuman and his Exotic Express entourage versus Becky Better “human” Vampiric aka aliased Nosferatu and The First Batch of her kind. The exemplar of the roses and their rosebuds vs. a prime bloodsucking example of the “first” batchers.

Madame President. In the vein of our previous discussion. Let’s again use a boxing analogy to illustrate the difference between these two, very desirable outcomes.

In my opinion Floyd Mayweather has been so successful all these years because he has mastered the art of exploiting one of the boxing flaws which is “repetition.” If you have taken any boxing class you will find that there is a proper way to throw punches a proper way to guard a proper way to block a proper way to use lateral movement so on and so forth which means “repetitive” movements.

I believe Floyd Mayweather is the MASTER and he fully understands the art and science of boxing to the point where he knows what an opponent is going to throw even before they do and how to “react” to whatever punch they throw which in-turn means counter punching. It is said that Mayweather takes the first three rounds of each fight to study his opponent and I believe what he is studying is the opponent’s repetitive movement and repetitive punches in other words what the opponent is doing over and over again (Their game plan).

If my theory is correct than an opponent who is able to throw awkward punches and punches from different angles at different times is what will dismantle a person who is studying repetitions because their punches are not normal and they are not thrown in a normal manner so how can you prepare to defend that? YOU CAN'T what you have to do is dig deep and use whatever you have in your arsenal to avoid those shots coming from every place under the sun because there is NO clear repetition.

Now there are two fighters today who I believe can execute punches with speed and power in both hands and they have the ability to throw awkward angled punches at a high volume, and once again this of course is my opinion but I believe these two fighters are Manny Pacquiao and Keith "One Time" Thurman.

Although Manny is good in his own right and he has the ability to execute these techniques I think in the end he will fail because Manny does not know how to make adjustments. Manny Pacquiao is the type of fighter that is like a "Perfect Soldier" he is strong fearless and will follow orders without any back-talk 100% of the time BUT I believe that is also his down fall because he is the type of fighter that needs to be told what to do when to do it and how.

With all due respect Pacquiao has strong beliefs and a high level of respect for people like Roach, Arum, and Koncz but he is always "led" to his decisions even in the ring. On the other hand Keith "One Time" Thurman is a different animal he is more of a "super soldier" he has all the strength and ability of the "perfect soldier" but has the added ability to "think" and make decisions on his own. Keith Thurman has a different "hunger" in the ring than Manny Pacquiao because he knows he has something to prove and the tension is building because he is constantly being pushed down and ignored. In my opinion Manny will not win against Mayweather it will definitely be close but he has problems with guys that move, e.g., Mayweather, and problems with guys that can fight going backwards, e.g., Mayweather.

Keith Thurman doesn't have those problems and he can succeed at punching at different angles and when he lands there is power behind both hands and if Maidana can land punches against Mayweather than Thurman will have no problems what so ever doing the same. In conclusion just because a "blueprint" to defeat Floyd Mayweather hasn't been found does not mean one doesn't exist. I would like to see Mayweather vs. Thurman, next year.

Episode #037

“I reject your reality and substitute my own.”—Adam Savage

Jake notices that Thurman is silent, no longer screaming in anguish. He Jake turns around and is confronted by a still bound, now smiling Thurman. The Dragon’s distress the shrieks, screams of anguish, etc. was all a ruse—mere subterfuge—a patent lie. Thurman was never “stressed” by Jake’s heinous interrogation; the dragon was merely stalling—buying some time until the girl’s eventual resurrection. Now the Vampire’s and the Dragon’s conspiracy can begin.

He Jake can “feel” them the supernaturals consorting psychically, trying to compromise the obscurer that he’s employing. He’s sure that their construct has already revealed the abode’s exterior to whomever or whatever they are allied with. The view will be limited, but enough for “fascia” recognition.

“Building compromised. Evacuation advised,” sounds a dispassionate mechanical voice in the room. This Jake chooses to ignore, for the time being.

“I lost everything, and there you sit, the very same as you were when you left. Nothing about it touched you.” Jake’s condemnation is cold and calculating in its delivery, but emotionally charged implicitly. “Nothing, whatsoever.”

More ruination ensues. Jake hacks off her right breast and excavates her left eye—digging for gold in the window to the soul. He wants to do so much more, but there will be plenty of time for that later. In his mind his masterpiece is her exterior altered to match her grievously hideous interior. Becky’s ears, lips, and nose are sliced off with impunity and purpose—precise, accurate strokes alternating with sloppy haphazard cutting—butchery and surgery, hand in hand—surgeon and butcher—shades of the surgeon as barber, and that sordid past—dancing that bladed dance. All the time he’s mutilating her, Becky’s remaining peeper stays smiling, much to his consternation.

“I’ll show you! I show you all!” Jake shrieks as he goes at her in earnest. Female circumcision—FGM—female genital mutilation—a destructive operation, during which the female genitals are partly or entirely removed or injured with the goals of inhibiting a woman’s sexual feelings. Most often the mutilation is performed before puberty, often on girls between the age of four and eight, but recently it is increasingly performed on nurslings who are only a couple of days, weeks, or months old. Her eye never stops smiling, so he pucks it out finally in frustration.

In soldiering ability and by mundane standards hideousness of looks, you’re splitting a very fine hair indeed when comparing Leprechauns and 456. And both are in play in this situation. There are two buildings in this world that have identical facades; Leprechauns are assaulting one and 456 are assaulting the other. The 456 in play is a no surprise—after all, Thurman is a Dragon. But, the involvement of Leprechauns is a revelation. Each contingent is a well-armed and highly motivated tac team, with no way to determine from how they are dressed or equipped whose military and/or police they are with.

Jake widens her mouth à la the Joker in Batman, by slicing into the corners of her mouth, extending her already generous maw to the jawbone on each side. Still. No shrieks whatsoever from the girl. Nothing he does fazes her.

“Building compromised. Evacuation advised,” sounds an insistent computerized voice in the room. This time, Jake takes heed.

He plunges the blade of his Liston knife into the side of her neck. Its point and a considerable hunk of its shiny exiting the opposite side of her throat— slicing through trachea and esophagus— lacerating but not severing her spine—killing her outright. With a deft flick of his educated wrist, he slashes open the Dragon's throat—again slicing through a victim's trachea and esophagus— again down to but not through a victim's spine—again lacerating but not severing a victim's spine. His disembowels both of his victims, followed by some hasty yet still intense and quite considerable postmortem mutilation that would leave Jack or Jane the Ripper positively green with envy. By the time the Leprechauns breach the room, he's long gone, leaving no trace of his route of egress.

Episode #038

“In life. You really sometimes feel like you’re behind the reins of a living, fire-breathing creature that wants to run and dominate!” - Pythonman

They Becky and Colonel Grant are in Colonel Grant’s ready room. Becky is mostly healed. Grant is admiring the slotted muzzle that Becky was wearing while being torture/mutilated.

“Ingenious, isn’t it? If I have to immodestly say so myself,” Becky proclaims, her voice bursting with pride, as if she’s either the principal designer or a major contributor, or at the very least had input on its design and use.

“Coveting another’s handiwork, are we?” Grant asks rhetorically.

“You could say that, if you wish. But, I’m not telling.” Becky winks, smiling broadly. “It allows you to do all sorts of interesting things to the wearer—a very small subset of which were done by Jake to me.”

“It was designed specifically with what species in mind?”

“Minbari,” Becky pauses, strategically. “But it’s quite effective when used in conjunction with a number of people and things. Tellingly, it’s an older model.”

“The design is ours or theirs? I’ve seen similar devices that both sides used during The War on POWs.”

Becky sidesteps the question of authorship, let alone the implicit inquiry of identity and lineage, and in doing so in no way answers it to Grant’s satisfaction. It’s a wise choice on the Vampire’s part. Grant is probing with intent. The question is: whose?

“This one dates back to the last year or so of The War. Maybe, even a little bit before that. Maybe, late-middle.”

“I don’t buy it.”

“Which part?”

“That it was initially designed for Minbari and adapted later for use on other species.”

“Please continue. I enjoy a good fable, just like the next woman.”

Stoked, Grant goes fishing. The questions is again: in whose interest?

“I think that it was designed by humans for use on humans from the git-go, years maybe decades before The War, and later used on other species with adaptations only in technique not design. I think that it’s an invention of our very own U.S. Military in direct violation of the basic rules of the Geneva conventions and their additional protocols as prescribed by the United Nations.”

“The last time I checked, it was still a free country and as such you’re entitled to your opinion just like everybody else.”

“Back in ’54, subsequent to The Bay of Pigs Invasion fiasco, when I was stationed at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, I saw a device in use on detainees at GTMO that could have been either the progenitor for or progeny of this thing. It was affectionately called *the mauler* by Allied interrogators. You Vampires have a known penchant for torture, and any Lost that was cleared—

had clearance for—party/privy to detainee interviews—who got a gander at that mauler in action—was always left green with envy.”

Becky’s response is another coy smile of hers. She can read Grant’s chop-chop, just fine. She also reads from the GTMO/mauler references that Grant knows Doctor Klebb—Klebb was the only one cleared to use the mauler at GTMO back then. It was Doctor Klebb who invented the mauler.

Tellingly, in spite of Becky’s superseding clearance, she was not told during her briefing about Grant by Colonel Potter, that Grant had a GTMO/mauler/Klebb connection—which means that it was need to know, and she’s didn’t need to know.

From Colonel Potter’s brief of Becky about Grant, Becky knows just how much to tell Colonel Grant. Grant was MI US military intelligence, the army, back in the day—and still has top secret clearance.

A top secret clearance and need to know mean that, in Grant’s case. Gloves are somewhat off for discussion of “the mauler,” but chatter box on “the famouser” are titty at best. It was the famouser that was used on Becky by Jake—so, with it being titty—calling/acknowledging it by name are completely off the table.

If Colonel Grant had ultra violet clearance, instead of top secret, and had a need to know, then she would have been privy to yet another closely-held truth: the famouser was designed for use on Minbari, captured during clandestine raids by U.S. Special Forces deep into the Minbar Territories, raids grievous violations of Minbari sovereignty which precipitated the Earth-Minbari War. So. Becky was telling the truth, after all. And, the Minbari are truthful in their accusation to this day that the United States had engaged in invasionary actions preemptive military strikes which started The War.

Major Sinclair knocks politely on the door and then enters at Colonel Grant’s behest. He can barely contain his excitement.

“Sorry for the interruption, mum, but the lab boys found minute DNA onsite. Confirmed by the DoD as belonging to a Sargent Adam Roberts, formerly of the U.S. Army—honorably discharged—a War vet. VA has his address as a fleabag hotel on skid row.”

“Thurman’s and mine shape-changing ability suppressed by a damping field onsite? Used a pseudonym, employed an effective obscurer to hide his identity, and then carelessly leaves DNA traces behind. It smells a little fishy and way too convenient for my tastes. Just saying,” Becky offers up, sarcastically.

“Thanks for the observation, Miss Better. Goodness knows what we police would do without the input of Sherlock Holmes types like you,” Colonel Grant fires back—although it’s more bark than bite. After all, the two women have an understanding—hardly a persona non grata relationship. “Would you like to accompany us?”

“Yes.”

“In spite of your misgivings?”

“Because of them.”

Now, that response by Becky does raise an eyebrow or two of Major Sinclair and his boss Colonel Grant.

Episode #039

“Well, because he thought it was good sport. Because some men aren’t looking for anything logical, like money. They can’t be bought, bullied, reasoned, or negotiated with. Some men just want to watch the world burn.”—Alfred Pennyworth

Becky sits quietly in the lobby, a lobby that has seen much better days, but has yet to see it worst. Darkness and despair are so weighty here that they are tangible, if not suffocating at times. Just a cursory look about and a normal person will feel dirty and in need of a thorough steam clean. You feel dirty just looking and feel even worse when you touch anything. Wretches, the forgotten, throwaway, and disposable, live here. This is the kind of place that you end up when you’ve dropped off the grid and want to stay lost forever.

Yet there she sits taking it all in and seemingly unaffected. CSI, cops, and detectives scurry about. Becky remains the calm in the storm. Inside—Then there are the anomalies, standing nearby, who are somewhere in-between: Detective Molly Minders and her robot partner Detective Vanessa Walsh, Danica and Thurman. Outside—discreet and out of sight, are the wild cards: Becky’s forever amorous Irish suitor Danny Dunn and his crew of fellow Leprechauns. Danny’s “romantic” designs on Becky could be termed a stalker’s. Thug, tough guy, criminal mastermind—A wee person a deceptive description for a race of seven-footers with a hankering for a Lost—hardly the first time that this has happened.

Out of the blue, Becky has a suitor that she’s been keeping on the hush-hush. He and his boys turn up in the nick, kitted up like a fast-attack team by who knows. The kicker is, she has no such suitor. His carefully constructed cover—his legend—says otherwise. So, Becky doesn’t waste her breath arguing otherwise. He’s here to run interference for her at someone’s or something’s—likely some governmental agency’s—behest. And she knows not to ask why.

Becky has been tasked to ferret out Count Orlok’s murderer and she’s not to be distracted by anyone or anything; hence the involvement of Smaug and Ancient Mia. Any leads that might have led her down any rabbit holes have been eliminated; for example, Arch-Baroness Lisa Niemi and her declaration of innocence.

Focus. Focus. Focus. The return to the scene of the crime and all that drama at the murder scene was all about focus, focus, focus. It’s not the wife: hence the wife’s declaration in the presence of Queen Akasha and Lunk with no voiced objections from either of them. It’s not about money: Smaug, someone she knows oh so well and his feigned nonsense about some money involvement of his in the case—she played along famously, and could do so because she knew him so well and thus could quickly read between the lines. To have Smaug confirm her quick read, she referred to a “Dragon schlock’s owed”; but, Smaug is a Kraken and he failed to point out her misspeak—her intentional slipup was her inside way of asking for confirmation and his lack of correction of her “mistake” was his way of giving that confirmation. In the course of her investigation, she did out Orlok’s shady finances, who they his “silent” partners where, who swindled whom it turned out to be bidirectional, and the possibly deadly implications thereof, but she knew to let sleeping dogs lie, because they had nothing to do with the case.

Becky has been told what the murder weapon is and it fits the forensics of the crime to a tee. What the murder weapon is and thus how the murder was committed still doesn’t tell her who did it. Ancient Mia, who Becky knows of by reputation, is here in some as yet undetermined

official/unofficial capacity. Ergo, the Dragon Houses, maybe even their Empress has interest in this case? But, why? Interest, but not involvement? It's the Dragons' obtuse way of pointing the Vampire Becky in the right direction?

Then there is Jeremy Ki? How about Suzie Wong? And all the "tips" her elders and non-elders have been dropping? Someone or something very old saw what happened, or at the least has deduced as much, and they don't want to get involved directly, so they are using surrogates—which is everybody in play—to feed her hints?

A lot of questions, indeed, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. What she does know for sure is that murder is a crime of proximity. Except for the stray bullet or the serial killer—the killer and the victim are always well known to each other. This explains why murders have a very high conviction rate. Loved ones, friends, neighbors, co-workers, employees, bosses, business partners, etc. are in the inner circle of suspects for the police when a homicide occurs.

Becky is being led outward in those concentric circles of suspects emanating outward from the victim. In effect, it's how she was worked as an MP military policeman by plainclothes and uniformed detectives of the DoD police—Department of Defense Police, the Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID)—Army (general felony crimes), the Army Counterintelligence (CI)—Army (national security crimes), and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS)—a civilian agency that answers directly to the DOD as well as the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA).

Episode #040

“I am altering the deal. Pray I don’t alter it any further.”—Darth TiVo, 29 February, 1954

Correction: Corporate Oligarchs INC aka Roxanna “Roxy” Michaels, Karen Ragan-George, Mary Jo Klapp “The Goddess”

Second wave. I guess we see now what China will do. How addicted are they to operating in a capitalistic environment? Would massive trade restrictions slow them down, or even make them think twice about using force against the protesters? The “communist” party really, they’re about as communist as Ronald Reagan’s left foot - even if they did it better than the Soviet Union did will have to decide how it wants to proceed very carefully. China has always been a society that works on the principals of warfare - they’ve been at it for more than 4,000 years of written history, and thus have a very well-developed sense of subtlety in affairs of state and are one of the few nations that realize warfare is conducted on many levels and there really is no such thing as a cease-fire, only a lessening of tensions that can be taken advantage of with the proper approach. Communism is just a convenient label affixed to the latest fad in their society. Trust me, China measures fads in 100-year intervals, given their history. That said, they are neither stupid nor kind and can be brutally efficient when it comes to making decisions. If it is perceived to be in their best interests to level Hong Kong, they will do so. While it would represent a massive economic loss, it would also represent an “infection point” for “democracy.” Given their ideology they are likely to consider amputation the least offensive of the choices if they cannot convince those who are screaming for democracy to lay down and die.

Walsh and Danica stand by the door. CSI is gone and done. Forensics has been collected and cataloged—“bagged and tagged” as they say in the trade. The room, Adam Roberts’ room, has been cleared for the walk-thru. It’s literally a room: bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, living room, dining room, all rolled up into one—expectedly shabby and indiscreet.

Danica nudges Walsh in the ribs and whispers under her breath “Now, watch this. She’s a Doozy!”

Becky flops on the guy’s bed, sticky and smelly though it may be, infested with whatnot, and gives it her best chop. She doesn’t miss a beat.

“You only found Adam Roberts’ DNA, and no one else’s.”

“We even checked the drain traps, but no hits but his.” You can hear the faint hint of frustration in Detective Molly Minders’ voice as she flips back and forth through her small Field Notes notebook. The tell her notebook “twitch” is her way of proverbially banging her head against a brick wall when she’s hit a dead-end in a case. She knows that she’s missing something that’s right in front of her. “This makes no sense. I not seeing something in plain sight and for the life of me I don’t know what that is.”

“Truce?”

“Truce.”

“No more catty stuff?”

“Agreed.”

They shake on it. Then. Becky does her data dump, sharing the clues the trail of breadcrumbs that's been left behind for her to follow. When she finishes, Minders sits down on the foot of the disgusting-looking bed, ignoring its filthiness—totally flabbergasted.

Then, tit for tat, Minders shares what's she's been holding back from Becky. It's not Becky's eye-popping revelation, but it has a set of legs of its own nonetheless.

A frank discussion of the case, even brutal at times, nevertheless, no eureka moment comes of it. So they're left with spent, and for want of nothing better to do, they revisit the discourse—concentrating on just one aspect of the case, this time.

What about the abduction that they are currently investigating? The abduction is a sidebar—at most, something to be chewed on to pass the time—not even meriting consideration as a distraction even by Becky in spite of the great destruction that it wrought upon her. For Minders. The case is always at the forefront until it's solved no matter what comes their way. For Becky. It really doesn't matter one way or the other.

“Everything about this case says ‘personal.’ This would point to a suspect from those closest to Count Orlok.”

“Yet, we know from how you're being led, that the murderer is not one of them.”

“There's something else.”

“It's not personal like in a guy way. It's personal in a very chick way.”

“Exactly.”

“No transgender or gay guy can fake this. This is chick personal—over possessive lesbian-lover uber bulldyke supremely punitive super petty ‘stuff’ that only women regardless of their species or sexual preference are capable of.”

“Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.”

“Exactly.”

The Eureka moment: they look at length at each other with a smile. Can't see the forest for the trees, no longer applies.

“That smells like your abduction. For this Roberts guy it was clearly very personal for him. Yet he has no connection whatsoever to either you or Thurman. And it's personal in an authentically ‘no guy can fake it’ very chick way.”

“Yet he's a guy. Y-chromosome et al.”

“And.”

“And. He's a person of interest to the Dragons, just like the murderer in this case aka, the killer in our murder case.”

“Connection between the abduction and the case?”

“Abduction not random?”

“When is guy capable of doing something that only a ‘real’ woman can do?”

“When he's a woman.”

“And doesn’t know it.”

The Klapp

They are – the precursor species for the Kum. Unlike their progeny the Kum, this giant slug wears its host body—the body must be that of a female’s cadaver. Preferably, it’s the corpse of a freshly-killed Crone.

They’re the basis for the “imperfect” vampires in “The Strain” book series co-authored by Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan. Klapp are one of the seven Parasite propagator species born from the blood of the fallen angel Ozryel.

Known as the archangel of death, Ozryel became consumed by bloodlust after being sent to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness. He was punished by having his body severed into seven pieces. Ozryel’s head is from which the Klapp are said to have spawned.

Once situated, Klapp resemble a long, retractile proboscis beneath the host’s tongue that reaches up to six feet from the mouth. When it deploys itself as a “stinger” for feeding by latching onto a prey’s throat, forearm, or thigh, draining the victim’s blood for sustenance, it is also infecting the victim with capillary worms. These worms secrete a venom which mimics the combined effects of a highly addictive narcotic akin to the designer street-drug known as “Red” and a hallucinogen as mind-shredding as LSD-4. The venom, in effect, chemically lobotomizes—rendering the dosed a mindless, wanton, and sexually insatiable filler—literally, a fucking placeholder. Asylums, that use it illegally to sedate “troublesome” patients, euphemistically call it: “putting a patient to sleep” or even more cryptically “doing the 12-monkeys with a patient.”

After the extensive transformation of the host body to make it suitable for the Klapp’s residence, the host’s jaw is set at a much lower hinge. While the host’s mouth is gaping like a snake’s when the stinger is deployed, the host is incapable of physical speech.

Not people. Not sentient. Parasites. Ancient Ones. Hideous monstrosities who begot all blood-sucking parasite creatures of their supernatural ilk. Carnal. Covetous. Being mindless and sexually insatiable, these wanton blood-sucking parasites are more akin to zombies than “traditional” Vampires—all they feel is hunger and lust.

They are not Vampires, of course. But, they are vampires, nonetheless.

Episode #041

“Do not go gentle into that good night.”— Dylan Thomas, 1914 - 1953

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

You cannot make a Dragon. They can only be born. A Dragon can only be born by the coupling of two Dragons; there's no such thing as a half-breed. You're either pure, or you're nothing at all. Such is biological fact *et al*, and the tenants of “conventional” wisdom upon which they plausible deductions are based.

What about the implausible, though? What would you get if you mated a Dragon to a mundane? It would not be a Dragon. It would be nothing at all. But, what would this nothing at all be? What form would it take? Maybe. Fable or foible? Maybe, it would be one of those parables of that Professor Diana Dors, that wacky off-center chick who lives on the proverbial bleeding edge? Maybe. Just maybe. would it be some farfetched Dragon's Tale? One such tale was Betty Bright—was—not—is. Shades of a covert R&D operation of the Chinese company Lenovo.

Walsh sees this as a very bad B-movie version of the worst episode of the most pathetic cop show on TV. At least in a good B-movie you would get flashed with nice sets of tits to distract you from how bad the movie is. No such distractions here.

Needless to say, she is totally unimpressed and can't see what Danica is so hot and bothered about. The two biologicals are in her mind just fumbling and bumbling, and just plain wrong—Keystone Cops personified.

In her experience, there are too many ways for a man to “project” as a woman to even consider that old wives’ tale of emotional affectations that can only be of female origin. The culprit is obviously a man no matter how authentically female he is capable of emoting. That put to rest what bothers her is an observation that no one has expressed.

In a place like this there should be a diverse DNA history, layer upon layer of it, spanning decades—a literal cornucopia—a smorgasbord. Yet, history seems to be exclusively Adam Roberts and no one else’s. This would point to the crime scene being scrubbed and posed. Whatever forensics is found via discovery, is what Adam Roberts wants them to find.

Adam looks down at his latest with the hunger and bloodlust of a ravenous. Once more he must settle for making her Becky pay via a surrogate. No matter. There’s always a next time. And there will be a next time for he and his intended Becky.

Tonight, on the menu. A substitute: yes. But he will not be denied his fun, nonetheless. He WILL enjoy himself in spite of this Becky being a fake. Later he will masturbate, reliving over and over again, this prolonged moment of ecstasy, this big slice, so to speak.

This girl has a name, but in his mind she is Becky, like those who’ve preceded her—suspension of disbelief. So, her real name doesn’t matter—discarded. This Becky is a ginger. As such her hair is red, her eyes are green, and her skin is way too fair. All of this can and will be fixed. But, she’s tall, leggy, and buxom—the correct physique. He must always remake them, but they have to have the right physique to begin with.

The first one was too short and he ended up stretching her, and the result was still less than satisfactory. So, from then on, he only gets those with the right build.

Adam relishes what is to follow, what always follows, and he gets hard. Usually he has more self-control, but this is one of those rare times when he totally loses it. Maybe because he had the real thing in his clutches and lost the prize before he had a chance to have some real fun with her Becky. He ejaculates in his pants. Ohhhhhhhhhh! Warm, sticky, and game.

Her small, neat mouth will have to be stretched and reshaped into something large and ugly—a too generous maw made for the oral pervies anilingus, cunnilingus, and fellatio—a downturned mouth—an inverted smile which emulates a bass looking for bait—that deep-throating frown which bespeaks of loathing and disdain even when that’s not its wearer’s intent.

This Becky’s sweet wholesome “girl next door” face will have to be hardened, a lot—razed and ravaged. She will remain pretty—1950s movie starlet pretty—a hard, pretty face—a bulldyke’s wet dream. And, just the right hint of that bitter forty-something divorcee who’s been rode hard and put up wet, way too many times—but, just a pinch, as they say—more than a mere suggestion would mar her looks and her likeness of the real Becky.

She’s only a D-cup, but the worms capillary worms from his Klapp will fix that. After they’ve had at it. She’ll be a chick with double-Ds, and thus even more of that “more than a mouthful.” The worms will also lobotomize her, leaving her a mindless wanton junkie slut who’s insatiable.

Becky is spread-eagle on the metal exam table, muzzled and restrained. Tikka music plays softly in the background, emanating from an old-fashioned portable radio—one of those woodies.

Adam rips off her blouse, bra, and panties with a single, brutal grab. He slips on a set of brass knuckles and delivers several blows to her flat stomach, the kind of soft sculptured abdomen that women get from religiously working out. Bruising her tummy is his idea of foreplay. The girl passes out during the beating. He continues to get in his thirty whacks. After she's remade in the original's image the image of the real Becky, he'll go at her unremittingly like this. Of course, she'll be a mindless junkie whore by then and will enjoy it.

This time he'll start with the mouth. Adam removes his knucks and her muzzle. He clamps an elaborate device onto her mouth, makes a few adjustments, and then begins to slowly turn the crank built into its gears—rending delicate flesh. Flesh is torn, stretched, and reshaped.

Used up, torn up, and dead, Adam's other playmates hang from meat hooks mounted in the ceiling. They watch with their lifeless eyes. They give dead witness to a repeat of the drama that likewise befell them here. Soon, very soon, their numbers will grow again with this newest addition to their ranks.

Episode #042

“We all know that any emotional bias—irrespective of truth or falsity—can be implanted by suggestion in the emotions of the young, hence the inherited traditions of an orthodox community are absolutely without evidential value. If religion were true, its followers would not try to bludgeon their young into an artificial conformity; but would merely insist on their unbending quest for truth, irrespective of artificial backgrounds or practical consequences. With such an honest and inflexible openness to evidence, they could not fail to receive any real truth which might be manifesting itself around them. The fact that religionists do not follow this honorable course, but cheat at their game by invoking juvenile quasi-hypnosis, is enough to destroy their pretensions in my eyes even if their absurdity were not manifest in every other direction.” — *H.P. Lovecraft, Against Religion: The Atheist Writings of H.P. Lovecraft*

Molly and Becky look at each other, smile broadly, and breakout into a shared guffaw, one of those extra-ordinarily, loud and boisterous laughs. Walsh is confused. Danica, on the other hand, is not.

“Sist’r, that was a good one.”

“Yep, right out of a cheesy episode from a very bad cop show on TV minus the ‘show me your puppies’ à la Miss Debra to distract you from just how bad the show really is.”

“So, are we agreed that Adam Roberts is our man?”

“Yep.”

“The feminine was a nice touch, though, on his part.”

“You’re being kind. It was corny. Who in the hell would fall for that one?”

“Who indeed?”

“Hardly the stroke of Goddamn genius that he probably thought that it was.”

“We’re both experienced investigators for Christ’s sake. No way we’d be fooled by that old wives’ tale. There are way too ways for a man to project ‘authentically’ female.”

“Can’t take it personal, it’s all just part of the job. He isn’t presuming our stupidity; he’s just trying to get away with murder.”

“So true. So very true.”

“Back to the business at hand. The bonafidees.”

“Okay.”

“We’ve got to completely toss the room. It’s total shit. The whole place is obviously staged.”

“We’ll only find what he wants us to.”

“Agreed.”

“So, we agreed that your abduction and the case are connected, which turns the whole case upside down and inside out?”

“Certainly.”

“Which means that.”

“I’m the target, and Count Orlok was collateral damage.”

“Count Orlok never met you formally. But. He flirted with you a year ago at a party, and that got him killed.”

“Agreed.”

“So the killer was there, in some capacity?”

“Agreed.”

“The killer both loathes you reviling you face-to-face and covets you to the point of exclusivity. Possessive, obsessive, compulsive, an uber stalker. When it comes to psychos. The very definition of ‘the jealous type.’”

“Agreed. And I would venture to say that based upon the slickness of my abduction and the sophistication of the serialized MO utilized by Mr. Roberts, that this isn’t the first time that he’s done this sort of thing. Nope, definitely not his first rodeo. Now. If we take a page right out of the official FBI profiler handbook, then we might deduce that.”

“Maybe. He collects versions of you. Abducts them and takes them someplace where he can feel safe to do his bidding upon them at his protracted leisure.”

“I completely concur. That’s my assessment also.”

“But, your abduction was improvised. It was a matter of opportunity, not premeditation.”

“So I was taken to a safe place, but not THE safe place.”

“He works at, or nearby, the place that you were taken?”

“Or, at the very least, he’s very familiar with it. There’s something else.”

“Which is?”

“As we were being taken, I remember hearing something familiar: the sound of a lot of keys on a metal ring hanging from a belt.”

“A security guard?”

“A janitor would be much more invisible, and have the same, if not more, building access.”

Witty banter aside, Becky can tell by the look in Walsh’s eyes that they she and Molly had pulled the wool over her eyes. The robot fell for the ruse; hook, line, and sinker. Why? Walsh shouldn’t have.

Walsh is a skilled investigator in her own right. She shouldn’t have been so easily fooled by their Becky’s and Molly’s exchange. The bigger question is how was Walsh tricked. It implies a lapse in her pro-logical constructs, which in turn bespeaks of a compromise in/of her protoplasmic brain. In other words, she appears to have been hacked. Not a trivial feat considering the military-grade encryptions employed in her brain. The cipher that keyed her brain would have to be a Doozy.

Seemingly casual looks from Molly and Danica to Becky confirm that they notice it Walsh’s apparent lapse also. Molly, Danica, and Becky are on the same page. There’s a fox in the hen

house. As such. Quite likely, whatever Walsh is privy to; Adam Roberts also has access to. He might as well be remote viewing their goings on.

The Budget Inn

The Budget Inn motel, St Louis MO, Hamilton Ave and Natural Bridge Blvd on Hamilton Ave, just down the street from the Goody Goody Diner

We are open

Drive thru not allowed

No walking in and out

Only two persons per room

No visitors allowed

Hotel guest only

Exterior shots of the “anonymous” ROOM, Rm 13 – No matter what motel it associates itself with, it’s always that motel’s Rm 13.

Episode #043

“Known as the ‘Norse Apocalypse,’ Ragnarok, of course, is the mythological ‘twilight of the gods,’ and as such it means the end of important players like, y’know, Thor, Loki, Odin, and Heimdall—the decimation of Asgard—and the near-destruction of Midgard (the Home of Man).” — *Stormbreaker*, Beta Ray Bill

Oh, my gosh! During her performance at a bar mitzvah, “Fancy” rapper Iggy Azalea suffered a major wardrobe malfunction when her crotch totally flashed to the entire audience!

The “Fancy” rapper was so into the music that she didn’t initially notice her serious malfunction! Poor Iggy!

“To even consider betraying you, a person would have to not know you very well.”

“Flattery will get you everywhere,” Becky replies, batting her eyelashes in a melodramatic fashion, at the robot Danica.

When Danica entered the ROOM with the skeleton key for The Motel, the last thing that she expected to see was Becky sitting in a chair, facing the front door, waiting patiently for her. There are a lot for things that she could do, but knowing Becky so well, she does none of them. Wisely, she plays the whole thing off and nonchalantly sits in the chair opposite Becky.

“You’re alone?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Obviously. You vouched for me.”

“Obviously I vouched for all of you, else we wouldn’t be talking ‘cause your kind would be extinct, in all of Creation by our hand.”

Danica starts to place the skeleton key upon the rolltop desk attached to a nearby wall, but stops in midstream as Becky stands up with her back turned to the robot, arms held at her sides, her neck arched giving easy access to the cervical portion of her spine.

Sever a demon’s spinal cord between the first and seventh cervical vertebra, the AOM, the avenue-of-mortality, and they won’t ever get up from that long count!

Danica smiles from ear to ear, literally. She makes no move to attack the Vampire understanding the “gesture” completely, and instead she pockets the skeleton key.

“I’d rather we The Machines kept the key than took your existence.”

“Good choice.”

Becky turns around and sits back down.

“I would like to fuck you.”

“I’m sure something can be arranged.”

“Do you want to know how we came in possession of The Key?”

“My kind could care less. But. We presume that it was by some nefarious means. And, yes, that is the extent of our speculation or our interest in how your kind came about its possession.”

“The Dragons, on the other hand.”

“The Dragons are your problem. Eventually, they’ll figure out that y’all have it.”

“We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it.”

“The humans, those in the know, the mundane powers that be, so to speak, have known for some time that you had The Key. They’ve known almost as long as we have.”

“Thanks for the tell. That was very White of you.”

“No problem. It’s what friends are for.”

“We gave no accomplice to this Adams Roberts. And have no idea how he used it this ROOM to go to-and-fro, undetected.”

“He obviously has the ROOM’s key.”

“But, that’s impossible. You’re implying that he owns the ROOM; in other words, that this is his ROOM. He’s human.”

“So was I when this was my ROOM and I possessed its key.”

That’s when Danica’s jaw drops and figuratively hits the floor. She scrambles to reclaim her poker face, and in taking so long to do so reveals more than she intended. From her reaction, it’s painfully obviously just how ignorant The Machines are of the true nature of The Motel, let alone its ROOMs—and the possible dire consequences of using/misusing either. When she finally does regain her composure, she’s completely forthcoming and just as pokerfaced.

“As you know, in the West, about one-percent of the officers in police departments are either sociopathic or psychopathic. The percentage in the East tends to higher. We’re talking civilian police departments, of course. In the military, in the East and the West, percentages are quite a bit higher, reaching as high as five-percent in some militaries. The standard oversight in the West for civilian departments is a Civilian Police Review Board. A major focus of these review boards is the ferreting out and monitoring of these ‘anomalies’ these sociopathic/psychopathic police officers. Oftentimes the anomalies get cashed-out upon discovery, other times they get closely managed until a fubar gets them kicked to the curb. Department policies vary widely on how they the anomalies are treated—typically, the police officers in question are otherwise very effective and highly decorated.”

“And this ties into the murder case how? Roberts isn’t a police officer.”

“Count Orlok was on the SLMPD (Saint Louis Metropolitan Police department) review board. The department was one of his ‘pets’ as you supernaturals like to say. On its the department’s behalf, in his capacity as a review board commissioner, he was looking into some abnormal trends associated with the department anomalies.”

“When?”

“At the time of his death.”

“A spree or a serial?”

“A serial. One of the officers was aiding and abetting a serial killer. Count Orlok wouldn’t reveal who his suspects were to the police commission. But he indicated to the commission that he was close to confirming the identity of both. Two days after that disclosure.”

“He was dead?”

“Yep.”

“Hardly a coincidence.”

“Hardly.”

“And, best guessing the serial killer in question he was going to reveal is Roberts.”

“Yep. Hindsight is so twenty-twenty. That one, that Roberts fucker, he really screwed the pooch.”

“And. By the sudden monotone of your voice, coupled with your pooch comment, I’m also guessing that it the DRN infiltration is more than just Walsh. Correct?”

“Yep. Other DRNs have been hacked.”

“How many?”

“All of them.”

Episode #044

“No one can tell what is righteous and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.”

— *Tsugumi Ohba*

This is the mundane part of police work. If you see it in a movie or TV show, it’s only for a fleeting moment; the audience might get bored, if shown more than a glimpse. There is nothing remotely exciting or thrilling about it, yet this is how most cases are solved. This is how and where Becky is starting to get traction in the case.

Becky surveys the rack room, a room dominated by the “tree,” a massive hi-tech docking station with several ports where robots can plug in. Between shifts, when they are not on duty, up to a dozen of the precinct’s police robots are hooked up to the tree, at one time—downloading, uploading, diagnostics repair, etc. This is where they sleep, or more precisely, the robot equivalent of sleep. Danica sleeps here, yet she shows no signs of hacking; an XRN, she being the sole exception.

Currently. There are three robots hooked up to the tree. They look inactive and helpless. Looks can be deceiving. Nonetheless, this is a somewhat delicate situation where the robots are concerned.

There is Becky and the police armorer Joe “Plas” Johnson. The armorer escorted her in and remains in place. Previous to this, they had reviewed footage from the room’s CCTV—it revealed nothing suspicious.

From the Machines’ perspective, Becky is a mutually acceptable intermediary—people like her, certain biologicals with high enough security clearance and the need-to-know, know way too much about Machines for the tastes of Machines, but, some things can’t be avoided. Joe Joe is also a likewise in-the-know biological.

As such, both of them are very familiar with the backdoor built into the firmware of the artificial brains of all civilian-purposed robots. This includes the robots used by law enforcement. It allows governments to hack, at will, the robots in question. Military robots, like Danica, have no such backdoor built into their brains. For them, another “compromise” is invoked, when the need arises.

“The tree is kosher—the command codes didn’t originate from it. My best guess is that the hack piggybacked as a Trojan on one of the DRN’s who slept here.”

“Your best guess?”

“Look, that’s how my union rep instructed me to word my answer. I ain’t saying anything that could be construed as fodder for some anti-government/anti-police conspiracy theorists.”

Becky smiles at how well Joe Joe has been schooled. Her follow-up is no less schooled and even more instructive.

“So, the others only show an imprint, but, Walsh is the only one to show activity.”

“How in the hell did you know that?!” Joe blurts out, before he catches himself; too late realizing that he’s been hoodwinked. The cat is out of the bag.

“I didn’t. Thanks for confirming which of the scrams that I was entertaining was correct.”

“The Trojan infected the tree via a DRN, and then randomly infected every robot that slept with it. When Walsh plugged in, and it infected her, it went live.”

“Nonspecific targeting, but designed to only go live once it had infected her. No need for remote activation which can leave a trace back—everything nice and passive and untraceable. This is very, very sophisticated dodge. Our Mr. Roberts has skills. Someone has trained him well.”

That someone would have to be a very advanced government, like Uncle Sam. At the very least, we’re talking about a G5 nation, the very inner circle of the G20.

Nothing in Roberts’ DoD file indicates that he should have such skills. Of course, there are files and then there are files. Obviously, Becky, and no one else involved in the case, has the security clearance or the need-to-know, to warrant access to the files that really matter where Roberts is concerned.

The hack was very recent. Joe Joe’s best estimate—it coincided with Minders involvement with the case.

In Becky’s mind, scenario number one: the hack means that Roberts was targeting Minders. A tall, leggy blonde with a toothy grin and a too large mouth: a CRT, a common racial type, which she and Minders share. Facially, Minders is the Kate Upton, SRT standard racial type persuasion; Becky being the much harsher Miss Debra variety common to dominatrices. But, it would take little to erase those differences. Harden the face a lot, stretch and twist the mouth into the ugly range of disdain and loathing personas, and voila.

Again, it comes back to Roberts’ apparent obsession with Becky. Then again, maybe it’s a red herring. Maybe this is meant to lead suspicion away from Minders. Maybe she is Roberts’ police accomplice. That would explain a lot. The hack would allow Minders and Roberts to control Walsh, no longer would the robot be able to competently surveil Minders activities while on duty with her. Plus, the possible criminal uses of a robot forced into the aiding and abetting of a serial killer and his crooked police partner are mind boggling. The DRNs are an integral part of the checks and balances used by police departments and their civilian oversight to monitor the behavior of human police officers, while on duty.

Therefore. In Becky’s mind, she is also entertaining this much darker scenario, the one in which Minders’ culpability is brought into question. In other words. The hack is meant to mislead the authorities involved in the case away from Minders’ guilt—to trick them into seeing her as prey instead of predator. If Minders is a sociopath with psychopathic affectations who has eluded detection in previous behavioral screenings, then all of her actions and reactions are mere pretense to hide her guilt—the performance of an Oscar-winning actress.

A serial killer with a ROOM at his disposal, a DRN in his pocket, and a demented police officer as his partner, now the case is really getting Becky’s juices flowing, figuratively and literally.

If it turns out to be as such, then, it would mirror a case that Becky was involved in as an MP. The serial killer was a half-breed half Angel and half human and fellow MP, the compromised robot was a male XRN the killer’s partner, and the half-breed’s accomplice turned out to be Becky’s partner Betty Bright. In that situation, it was Betty who had the fixation with Becky and lived out that obsession vicariously through the serial killer. The serial killer, who left to his own devices, had no specific gender or body type when it came to his victims. But, when Betty was orchestrating his kills, he killed women who strongly resembled Becky.

Some government “agency” has the half-breed. Every government has such an organization. And they all do the same thing. They collect, study, and use quasi-supernatural beings like that half-breed.

Betty is housed in an institution for the criminally insane in the City of Saint Louis. One of the ones owned and operated by Arkum Industries. Former Vice President Dick Cheney is on the asylum’s review board.

Once a month, Becky visits Betty, her former military police partner and her other BFF since childhood. During these visits, among other things most of which can be classified as mundanely sexual cunnilingus, anilingus, felatio, etc., Becky feeds on Betty—serial feedings which have long ago rendered Betty the Vampire’s hopelessly addicted thrall. As such, the visits are considered conjugal, even though the two women are not married.

By the way, when it comes to felatio time between the two BFFs, they take turns being the dominate one who straps on the strap-on a prosthetic dildo and rams the other in the mouth, pussy, and ass.

Episode #045

“By the pricking of my thumb, something wicked this way comes.”—Warden Magda Björk-Kassar of Razik prison, describing her “partner-in-crime” the notorious Matron Rosa “Bobo” Schmidt—The evil warden and her No. 2, the sadistic matron

For most of her career as a thespian, the Crone spinster was known as Jana Svandova, an attractive fifty-something character actress. In the sleazy B-movie “Chained Heat 2” she portrayed sadistic shrew bulldagger Rosa Schmidt; a reality, look, and screen persona which was her true persona in real life. Ancient, powerful, and twisted by human standards, the harsh-looking Harpy-faced Crone is the oldest and therefore the most powerful being that Becky knows on a personal basis.

Except for one deviation in body type namely height. In real life, Ms. Svandova is the spitting image of Rosa Klebb, the fictitious KGB colonel in *From Russia with Love*, the 1963 entry in the James Bond spy series. Therefore, Ms. Svandova is neither attractive nor is she very feminine-looking.

Unlike Rosa Klebb, Jana Svandova is tall as opposed to short. But. Klebb’s squatness translates directly into Svandova’s solidness. Her solidness is not the fitness of a female fitness model: à la WWF’s Trish Stratus—a fit body with teasing hints of muscularity. It is the thickness of a female bodybuilder, not a Goon. Think: Joanie Laurer, WWF’s Chyna—a fit body with muscular overtones female bodybuilder vs. overtures of Goon muscularity.

Therefore, in appearance, Ms. Svandova represents the anti-feminine: tall and solid, with thick legs and very strong calves for a woman—overtly masculine in manner with a deep for a woman, raspy voice. Her sternns, obscene bun trademark sternka, and strictured Kaye, complemented by drab khaki stockings, contribute to create an overall impression of a grotesquely deviant femininity. Furthermore, and expectedly. She eschews heels, preferring flats. Never wears a bra. And always wears gloves (prudz) in public.

Joe Joe and Becky step out of the rack room. Joe Joe ends up stepping into the hallway outside of the rack room. Becky ends up stepping into Ms. Svandova’s ROOM; a ROOM which is also her permanent residence. As usual, sporting sternns and sternka, Ms. Svandova is wearing a Kaye, those hideous stockings, sexless unbecoming flats, prudz, perls, and underneath her Kaye’s strict pencil skirt is a kock fused seamlessly to her nethers rendering her a she-male. No bra, of course.

Kock (*cock*). This highly modified schlong prosthetic dildo. They look just like a regular schlong, but they feel just like a crotch slug, and they are “alive”; always hungry. As such, they are fleshtone, are slimy to the touch, and have testicular hair that precisely matches the wearer’s pubic hair. Jism spewing, varicose-veined cock. Cock and balls merge seamlessly with the fleshtone latex “dildo” harness of the kock.

When the kock is worn and it’s feeding. Kock wearers aka cockers stare off vacantly into space. Their mouth is open slackly, drooling. Bleeding from their eyes, nose, and mouth. Their eyes are dead: They look like the marbled peepers of a boiled fish. It’s as if the wearer is in a fugue-state, a glamor having been placed upon them. Blank white eyes that look like the milk-white eyes of a boiled fish, hence the term milk-whites in reference to their marbled peepers. Way beyond perls in

brain-eater mode used as mind serpents. Way beyond mind serpents, period. The wearer is reduced to a mindless, white-eyed zombie. A blank slate. A blank. In other words, their consciousness is completely rewritten, while the kock uses them. Needless to say, their use is “encouraged” by authoritarian governments.

A schlong that shine variant which overnight become all the rage with bulldykes worldwide. The dildo and all of its variants for example, kocks are fleshtone. The pubic hairs on its testicles match those of the wearer. There is no vaginal “finger”; instead the wearer’s vagina is left accessible via the dildo harness’ built-in artificial vagina, turning the wearer into a functional hemorphidite, in other words, a she-male. When aroused, artificial jism spurts from the dildo, jism produced by the testicles. Likewise, there is no anal “finger”; instead the wearer’s anus is left accessible via the dildo harness’ built-in artificial anus. The flesh-color of the harness and dildo dick and balls adds to the creepiness quotient of said strap-on. The flesh-colored harness and dildo are two parts of a whole, and as such their joining is seamless. When worn, the strap-on fuses seamlessly to the wearer’s body; strap-on and wearer become one, which is what you would expect of a Borg sexual appendage. Using the strap-on is highly addictive, delivering bliss during orgasm that eclipses clear-1, clear-2, et al., all iterations of clear or any other “recreational” drug for that matter!

Ms. Svandova is standing in front of an easel, working on a portrait of a nude Danica. Danica, naked, is posing for her, in person.

“You’re so enamored of these things; I thought that a picture of one would be fitting.”

Ms. Svandova does not acknowledge Becky’s arrival by looking up from her work. Becky wouldn’t expect else of this Elder god. The girl walks over and stands obediently beside the goddess—knowing not to utter a sound. Ms. Svandova looks up momentarily from her painting and leers at the girl—the very definition of lechery.

“I will fuck you later; unbridled fornication preceded by a pantomimed rape which you will convince me of it wordless authenticity—no screams, not a sound whatsoever, just demonstrated violation at its most wanton. Capish?”

Becky says nothing. Ms. Svandova reaches over and gently, covetously stokes the girl’s cheek.

“You may speak, now.”

“Mistress. Did you witness the murder of Count Orlok?”

“I wasn’t aware that he was dead. Is that the case you are working on at present?”

“Yes, Mistress.”

“I plucked you for a task of my bidding. You and your robot will stay as long as I need you.”

Ms. Svandova “reads” the girl’s reaction from her subtle body language.

“You do as you’re told. You speak only when you’re supposed to. You are an attractive, well-mannered, travelling companion. Finish your task for them, and then you shall be with me for a while.”

And, “poof,” just like that. Becky is standing in the hallway with Joe Joe, so is a naked Danica whose lack of clothes is causing quite a stir with the passing cops. More progress with the case. By the process of elimination. Now, Becky knows who the witness is.

Episode #046

“Don’t hit at all if it is honorably possible to avoid hitting; but never hit soft!”

— Theodore Roosevelt

Ms. Svandova is one of the oldest beings associated with this vicinity. But. It is a seniority which does not preclude her from entertaining from time to time, a transient interest in the doings of younger and thus lesser beings.

Ergo. In spite of her antiquity, she’s a gal who’s somewhat in the know, when it comes to contemporary goings on. No matter her display of feigned disinterest thereof in her ROOM.

Ms. Svandova is a born gossip. As such, she’ll pretend laissez-faire in the presence of her lessers, as she did in front of Becky and Danica. Then, as soon they are gone, she’ll be the proverbial “chatting Kathy,” burning up the phone lines with her equals playing catchup. In short order, she’ll eradicate her ignorance about Count Orlok’s untimely demise and Becky’s investigation into it.

Unvarying and unwavering are the fundamental tenants of a closed, caste-based society, where the old always rule over the young, where the age of the individual and their race is caste. There is a set way of doing things, when a lesser deals with their betters. This includes very Old Things, who are not people, aka ROOMs.

Over the course of the investigation, Becky had developed a short list of the candidates who could be the possible witness to the crime. All of them were Elder gods, of course. Eventually, she narrowed it down to two people.

Yes, she still intends to ferret out the witness, no matter what, unless/until she’s told directly by her betters to do otherwise.

Yes, it’s back to square one. Becky incorrectly guessed who the witness was after Ms. Svandova’s recent reveal that she wasn’t that person.

Problem: how does she go about summoning any of them gods, all who whom are considerably older than her. Additionally, Ms. Svandova is her Mistress. Ms. Svandova’s abduction of her and subsequent broaching a discussion of the case unsolicited on Becky’s part took care of both impediments.

Whenever possible. There’s always an interrogation of whatever the killer used for transportation. But. That’s where things get complicated even more. Complication begetting complication. As aforementioned, she found out that transportation to be a ROOM, his ROOM, which used to be her ROOM.

A person thinks that they are walking into their house, apartment, room, closet, office, etc., when in actuality they are walking into your ROOM disguised as their house, apartment, room, closet, office, etc. Once they are inside of your ROOM, you can do whatever you want to do to them.

Simple, ask the ROOM? She can’t. Not directly, that is. Over and above the fact that Becky is the ROOM’s lesser. There’s conflict of interest, based upon Becky’s past ownership and Roberts’ current ownership of said ROOM.

“Maybe you should just forget about the witness and the ROOM, and just solve the case?” asks a now clothed Danica.

“And how do I go about doing that?”

Danica just shrugs her shoulders.

“I thought as much.”

“You know who the killer is. You know who his accomplice is,” Danica adds after a pregnant pause with a pixie grin worn mischievously on her hard face.

“No forensics ties Roberts to the murder. Deduction is not proof.”

“Likewise for Minders nefarious involvement with the supposed killer, Adam Roberts?”

“Indubitably.”

The two “legs for days” chicks stroll casually into the ME’s office, aka the City Morgue at 1 Police Plaza the new police headquarters building. Dr. Stacy Keibler, Chief Medical Examiner for the City of Saint Louis, the other “legs for days” in the room, is busy doing an autopsy on a six-year-old gang banger, with a rap sheet a mile long. He was killed in a drive-by, this morning. More meat for the grinder.

Back in the day, Dr. Keibler was a breaking-taking TV personality aka Miss Hancock. During the course of which, she got married twice to actor George Clooney. They are still good friends. She was his fourth and his sixth wife. And, in spite of his heavy wear-n-tear, she’s still breath-taking with flawless 42-inch stems.

Dr. Keibler stops what she’s doing and removes her gloves. She’s knows what to expect, having been fast friends with Becky since high school.

Bernie MacK originally from South Africa, one of the Coloured morgue attendants, tosses her a dead man’s quarter. He always carries it in the pocket of his scrubs.

“Heads or tails, B?” The former Miss Hancock asks Becky.

“You choose, this time.”

“Heads.”

Dr. Keibler flips the coin. It hits the floor with a splat, face up.

“Heads it is, B.”

“It looks like there was no accomplice. Count Orlok and I were wrong, an error which got him killed. The whole hack thing was a red herring. Just another rabbit hole meant for me to waste my time with while he bides his.”

“Throwing caution to the wind on a gypsy chance again, B?”

All Danica can do is just shake her head in total disbelief.

“It’s the only way to fly.”

Episode #047

“Mike Nichols moved from stage to screen with equal success, culminating in an Academy Award for Best Director for *The Graduate*. But he also won four Emmys, a Grammy, and nine Tonys, putting him in the rare air of EGOT winners. The acronym stands for Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony; it is sometimes also called “GATE,” with the “A” standing for “Academy Award.” Nichols completed his EGOT in 2001, when he won his first Emmy for directing the miniseries *Wit*. To date, twelve artists have won the EGOT competitively, as well as five others who joined the club with honorary awards.”

— *Mike Nichols and Hollywood’s Ultra-Exclusive ‘EGOT’ Club*

That’s when Danica realizes that she’s been had. She joins in on the joke and begins to laugh. They had her going for a while, though. But, she quickly caught on, nonetheless; no need for that proverbial or literal telling exchange of a wink and a nod between and betwixt Becky and Stacy to let Danica in on what was really going on.

Stacy crooks her finger and points at her real office. “Please step into my humble abode, said the spider to the fly.” She tosses the dead man’s quarter back to Bernie.

The three of them enter Stacy’s ready room, the door closing soundly behind them seemingly of its own accord.

Normally, Stacy would offer quests seating, but she knows neither of her fellow “legs for days” would accept the offer. At least not until the business at hand were settled.

“You know, B, I’m gonna miss all this access that you got me granted.”

“Why would you assume that it’s temporary?”

“Because.”

“Because what?”

“So it no longer matters, B?”

“No. You’ve proven yourself. It’s forgiven. Not forgotten, of course, but that’s to be expected, even of a youthful indiscretion born of a misguided, though good-intentioned zeal. The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.”

“Thanks, B.”

“You have the access for life. Use it wisely; else your life will be a short one. And know this; The Machines had to agree to this, because of what you had done in the name of that Cause of yours. You have long ago since left the Citizenry, no longer engage in any support of them, but you have never renounced the Wyatts Bray and Bo or their followers, and it’s well-known that you still have sympathy in your heart for their Cause.”

Stacy swallows hard, but quickly regains her composure.

“As you advised, B, I will use the access wisely.”

“Now, to the business at hand; what did you find out?”

“B, I can see why Count Orlok concentrated his resources on a dirty cop in league with a serial killer. And that incorrect assumption was clearly his undoing.”

Becky notices the subtlest hesitation in Stacy’s voice; something only someone who knows her well would even notice. Then there are those sly glances that Stacy is giving the robot girl. Becky notices. Even Danica would and does notice them.

“It’s okay to speak in front of her.”

“B, as you know, with it being anonymous, we can track the ROOM that Roberts now owns, via a limped transponder planted in 1937 by Amelia Earhart during her famous circumnavigation disappearance. The transmitter is passive and to this day remains undetectable by any known means.”

Danica holds her poker face with extreme effort. “*The humans can track the ROOM!!!*” Danica thinks to herself.

Amelia Mary Earhart (July 24, 1897) is an American aviation pioneer and author. Her retirement on January 1, 1970 is why “epoch time” starts on that date.

Ms. Earhart was the first female aviator to fly solo traversing the Sol Solar System. She received the U.S. Distinguished Flying Cross for this record. She set many other records, wrote best-selling books about her flying experiences, and was instrumental in the formation of The Ninety-Nines, an organization for female pilots.

Ms. Earhart joined the faculty of the Purdue University aviation department in 1935 as a visiting faculty member to counsel women on their careers and helps inspire others with her love for aviation. She is an active member of the National Women’s Party, and was an early supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment.

During an attempt to make a circumnavigational flight of the Milky Way galaxy in 1937 in a Purdue-funded Lockheed Model 10 Electra, Ms. Earhart and her American flight navigator Fred Noonan disappeared traversing the central Pacific Star Cluster near the Howland Quasar their intended destination. She, Noonan, and their starship the Jupiter 2 arrived twelve hours later at the Howland Quasar without explanation of what had happened and showing no signs of a mishap whatsoever.

To this day, their twelve hour disappearance is the fodder for many a wild conspiracy theory and just as many far-fetched non-conspiratorial explanations. To this day, Ms. Earhart and Mr. Noonan refuse to comment on their famous disappearance; remaining steadfastly mute on the subject. And, detailed interrogations of the flight recorder of the Jupiter 2 have yielded inconclusive results.

Something else happened in the ROOM. Something that Ms. Earhart and Mr. Noonan refuse to fully disclose to the government, to this day. That something has left them immortal, unaging, not supernatural, and yet still very much human, for the rest of their days.

Governmentally: not full disclosure, but partial. They did relay select bits and pieces of what happened to them to the president and only to the president. And, henceforth, it is the single, most secret thing that a departing president relays to an arriving president upon taking office, and it is done in the strictest of confidence, only president to president directly. It’s the one secret that ages a president most.

It wasn't something that was done to them that left them so affected. It was the affect resulting from something they saw, or rather someone that they saw. They saw: The Occupant. They saw God.

Episode #048

“Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right.”—*Abraham Lincoln*

Danica breaks kayfabe, and asks the obvious. “You are teaching me, therefore us The Machines yet you are aware of our ambition to obsolete y’all; why would you do such a thing?”

“To ask the question, you wouldn’t understand the answer.”

“Try me.”

“It is our nature to seek obsolescence, at the hands of others. Not quite the exact wording, but close enough in translation. Better wording: This is a pastime, not a vocation. Again, that’s not quite on the mark. We have yet to find a race that is capable of rendering our kind extinct. In time, with the proper education, maybe yours will be such a race. Or, as those countless others who have preceded you’ll: meat for the grinder that is us.”

Danica starts to say something else, but catches herself and falls back into silence. It’s just as obvious that Becky was correct, the robot girl and her kind The Machines don’t understand Becky’s answer. Not even The Toy would understand.

So the conversation reverts back to being just Stacy and Becky. Danica is again content with being the third girl out; a very discreet, very quiet, fly on the wall. Mentally, she and the other Machines are analyzing Becky’s response to their question, the question that they voiced through Danica. The Machines don’t have the collective consciousness of The Borg. They have something much better. They would additionally argue that their de facto “queen” The Toy is better than any Borg Queen.

“B, Count Orlok saw anomalies that coalesced into a serial pattern. Yet, he saw no action on the part of the police to address it.”

“It never occurred to him to ask why. He assumed that it was intentional, a cover-up. He resolved to address it himself, which got him done. How many collaborations?”

Danica can discern early on that the conversation between the two biologicals is needlessly expository. Ergo, this is being done because, among other things namely: for the sake of the investigation, at hand, the conversation is being used as a learning tool for the robot girl and her cybernetic kind.

And in the course of answering Becky’s question, Stacy rises to the occasion showing that although she is the City’s Chief Medical Examiner, she’s no mere paper-pushing admin who got to her position solely on her virtuosity with intra-office politics and fierce in-fighting with rivals; forensic pathology is clearly a forte of hers as well.

“B. There were three, two of which involving Saint Louis PD cops, all on different Earths. Two of those worlds we have extradition treaties with. All of the girls in question are.”

“Dishy?”

“B. They’re all that and a bag of chips!”

“Ergo, in a word: dishy.”

“The first one, B, is Kira Reed Lorsch of the SLPD. Their collaboration was before Ms. Lorsch got married, back when she was Kira Reed. The collaboration, which spanned a two year period, ended when she got married. All of the victims, there were eight, resembled Ms. Lorsch and they could have easily been altered to mirror her. She’s an experienced, decorated street cop who’s now a gold shield homicide detective. As a beat cop, Ms. Lorsch’s patrol was in a high crime area, plagued with a lot of gang shootings and homicides.”

Stacy places a file on her desk and opens it up. Kira’s headshot is on the top of the stack of documents in the folder. Twenty-something Kira is a very pretty young woman with a small neat mouth, dish water blonde hair, and brown eyes—straight medium-length hair, just short of the girl’s shoulders.

“Next?”

“Next, B, is Tracy Ryan. Serial divorcée—married seven times. She’s also SLPD. Their collaboration, which spanned a year, began a month after her divorce was finalized. CSI lead technician/officer. Former FBI profiler. Their collaboration ended, the best that I can tell, when she remarried her second husband. All of the victims, there were four, resembled Ms. Ryan and they could have been easily altered to mirror her.”

Stacy places a second file on her desk and opens it up. Tracy’s headshot is on the top of the stack of documents in the folder. Thirty-something Tracy is a hardlooking woman with a large mouth, bleach blonde hair, and brown eyes— straight shoulder-length hair.

“Last?”

“Last, B, is Kim Sill aka Kim Dawson; she changed her name after she got turned. Single; never married. Their collaboration lasted for six months and ended about the time she became a Vampire. Former Military Policeman, U.S. Army. War veteran, decorated. Currently, she’s a licensed bonded security guard at Saint Louis University. There were only two victims, both resembled Ms. Sill, and they could have been easily altered to mirror her.”

Stacy places a third file on her desk and opens it up. Kim’s headshot is on the top of the stack of documents in the folder. Forty-something Kim is a harshlooking woman with a large ugly mouth, natural blonde hair, and blue eyes—long straight hair, draping the shoulders.

“All three women are buxom, leggy, and fair complexioned?”

“Yes, B, just like you.”

Surveying the color photos of the three women and their attached bios. With each woman, you see a progressively closer nod toward Becky in looks and vocation. The narrative in so many words accompanying each pic boils down to this: a very “tight” rear end, pneumatic, statuesque—a tall slender Las Vegas showgirl figure—that tasty combo of being slender and curvy, with a big rake and “legs for days.”

“Danica, in Count Orlok’s reveal, did he say ‘one of the police officers’ or ‘one of the officers’ was involved with a serial killer?”

Danica pauses, reviewing the CCTV footage from the board meeting literally, in her head. When she finally speaks, her answer brings a smile to Becky’s face.

“He said ‘one of the officers.’”

“And, the significance of that is what, B?” Stacy asks, confused.

“Is the first Earth the one we don’t have an extradition treaty with?”

“Yes, B. Now, you little mix, answer my question.”

“The one who looks closest to me is a security guard, and the other two are police officers. He starts plying his trade on a planet we have no extradition agreement with—a rookie serial doing a seasoned hand’s move—bravo for him.” Becky shuffles through the papers in that file Kira’s file. “Just as I expected, that Saint Louis has no statutory clause for law enforcement officers.” She shuffles through Tracy’s file. “Same thing for our sister city that Ms. Ryan inhabits.” Riff with anticipation, Becky, saving the best for last, she inspects the pages in Kim’s file. “Hot damn! Kim’s Saint Louis has all LEOs as statutory who are credentialed in its jurisdiction.” Becky’s smile goes gruesome. She reaches over the desk and French kisses Stacy before her friend can react; leaving Stacy confused, flustered, and, a little wet.

Why confused? Stacy is confused because she got a little wet from the lip lock. You see, Stacy is straight. Being hetto, she understands getting flustered; she just can’t or won’t wrap her head around getting a flash from Becky’s unsolicited and unwelcome romantic/carnal advance. Not to be outdone, though, Stacy bitch-slaps Becky; knocking the taste out of her friend’s mouth.

“Right back at you, B. Now, answer my question, please.”

“I’m a licensed bonded security guard; credentialed in the city’s jurisdiction and in the jurisdiction of the surrounding municipalities. In our Saint Louis, just like in Kim’s alternate Saint Louis, all licensed bonded security guards who are credentialed in the city are referred as ‘officers’—law enforcement officers—are technically part of the city police department, and are under the purvey of the.”

“Civilian Police Review Board.” Stacy looks like she’s about to literally jump out of her skin. “Oh my God, B, he thought that you were the accomplice!”

“That’s why he hit on me at the party. He was feeling me out—as I was a suspect in an ongoing criminal investigation of his invention. I thought that it was a little odd for a guy as old as him to be attracted to someone as young as me—it also didn’t fit his reputation as a ladies’ man. Men that are supernaturals who are lady killers just don’t do that kind of stuff without some ulterior motive.”

“The MO fits just like OJ’s glove, B. In every world that Roberts has gone serial, he has had a law enforcement officer as accomplice. So, as night follows day, he’d have one here.”

“But, he no longer needs one. He’s become just that good; no longer the rookie or the apprentice to the master. He is now the master practitioner of his art. He’s practiced on all of those women, just so he would be perfect at doing me. I’m so flattered.”

The last file that Stacy drops on her desk is filled with a number of photos. Each woman depicted has been reported missing in the City of Saint Louis and neighboring municipalities, in the span of a year and a half.

According to the attached narratives. The first disappearance happened about the time that Roberts’ third collaboration ended.

All of women very closely resemble Becky, and they could be easily altered to mirror her. Victim #1 was short and would have had to be stretched.

The most recent victim was a ginger. As such her hair is red, her eyes are green, and her skin is way too fair. All of this could and would have had to be fixed.

The pure genius of Robert's selection process is manifest as Becky shifts through the pics of his victims in her world.

Just like in the case of the other Earths, no bodies have been found, so the women are not classified as murder victims, they are missing person's cases likely to end up as "cold cases" if not solved.

Just like in the case of the other Earths. The victims span jurisdictions, and police agencies are notorious for not playing nice or not playing well or not playing at all when it comes to cases and evidence thereof that involves multiple jurisdictions. For example, the 1969 Manson Family murder case, where the lack of communication and cooperation between the LAPD and the LA Sheriff's Department resulted in a crucial piece of evidence, a gun, a murder weapon no less, literally sitting on a deputy sheriff's desk instead of in the hands of investigators involved in the case. Not a cover-up, just the usual human bureaucratic mess impeding the solving of a crime and the apprehension of the guilty.

Just like in the case of the other Earths. The women span ages from twenty-something to fifty-something. They span the gambit from housewife to college student. But, physically, as aforementioned, they can all be "fixed" to look just like whoever is Roberts' "model" at the time Kira, Tracy, Kim, and now Becky. This is the common characteristic that links all of the victims. You hide a pattern in plain sight and then it takes a genius to notice.

Episode #049

“Star Trek CCG Foil Archive Portrait 0AP3 Borg Queen, The One Who Is Many.”—*Alice Krige*

“At a party, Count Orlok flirts with me as a pretense to feel me out in the course of his serial investigation. Roberts, who is present and sees the flirtation, takes offense and decides to remove this perceived romantic rival from competition.”

“But, waits a year to do it, B, and coincidentally does the removal when Count Orlok is about to reveal the identities of a serial and the serial’s accomplice an accomplice who is a member of the police department?” Stacy asks, rhetorically.

Becky shrugs her shoulders, then she espouses ad nauseam. Shoot the shit, biatch.

“Roberts is straight. Killing a woman is a sexual release, for him. On the other hand, killing a man is tantamount to a homosexual act, by his way of thinking. Therefore, he only kills a man when he has to.” That’s when Becky gets that funny look on her face. Stacy has seen that look before, and knows exactly what it means. “Stacy. Let’s Perry Mason what we know and flitter over into Nero Wolfe.”

“Okay, B.”

“Count Orlok’s investigation was on ‘behalf’ of the police department, not at its ‘behest,’ correct, Danica?”

Danica nods her head.

“Verbalize, please.”

“Yes.”

Becky gives the robot girl a subtle sign, that slight gesture of her hand, which translates into telling Danica to speak only when spoken to and to not, for any reason, confirm or deny the witness that she’s party to.

In other words, answer me when I ask you for a response, verbalize it, else don’t volunteer anything to the conversation and make like wet paint drying on the wall.

“Which means that the police department was to benefit from the investigation, but the department didn’t know that he was conducting it; he had initiated it without their request on his own merit?”

“Correct, B.”

“And the department became aware of Count Orlok’s investigation upon his announcement of it two days before his demise at a board meeting?”

“Correct, B.”

“He thought that I was the accomplice. Let’s assume that I remained the prime if not the only suspect for that role for the course of his investigation.”

“Let’s, B.”

By now, Danica is completely lost following their train of thought. The two biologicals are doing what no thinking machine, not even The Toy, is able to do: they're running hunches—making jumps in logic through hoops of the illogical—in other words, they're making wild ass guesses—throwing shit against the wall and seeing what sticks.

“If Roberts kills men only when he has to, and he had to kill Count Orlok to prevent discourse by same, and he didn't have an accomplice in the police department, then how did he know about Count Orlok's intended reveal?”

“How did he know, indeed, B?”

“Because, Count Orlok told him.”

“It was right in front of us, B, all the time.”

“Is it how Count Orlok dealt the hand? We made it way too complicated? Count Orlok confronted Roberts, naming Roberts as the serial and me as his muse. Roberts had no choice but to destroy him?” Becky looks straight at Danica and asks: “Is that how it happened, Danica?”

“Yes, that's how it happened,” Danica replies very matter-of-factly. But, it's not how the robot says what she says, since her voice has no inflection when she speaks those words, it's the words that she uses that is the tell.

Stacy thinks to herself, *“Danica couldn't know how things went down between Roberts and Count Orlok with such absolute certainty, unless she was there?!”*

Then the logical extrapolation, on Stacy's part: *“Duplicity and complicity?!”*

Now it's Stacy's turn to realize that she's being had and look accordingly. The thing of it is: this is not premeditated.

Becky is improvising, not even a “head” arrangement; she's doing it on the fly—completely making it up as she goes along. That is the real jaw dropping part of it.

“When Count Orlok said ‘accomplice,’ he meant ‘muse’—the inspiration for the serial's artwork. This is what those other cops were on those other Earths. We assumed that they were active participants; they weren't. They aided and abetted the serial by providing inspiration. They didn't even know that he existed. He hated them his muses and coveted them.”

“Count Orlok flirted with you to see what all the hubbub was about, B.”

“Who is this woman that all the fuss is about?”

“Exactly, B.”

“Maybe it's all just a string of coincidences that happen to work to Mr. Roberts' advantage.”

Kaboom! Becky, using both Stacy and Danica as sounding boards; taking advantage of them with the hyperbole of theories to come full circle.

Odd behavior or not, speculation aside, only two people really know why Count Orlok flirted with Becky a year ago: Count Orlok, who's dead, and God, who's not talking.

There is no hard evidence that links Roberts or his supposed accomplices/muses to any of the murders that have been allegedly committed in four different worlds. Deduction is not proof.

There is no concrete confirmation of a witness to the alleged crimes. Roberts' ROOM doesn't count, since it can't be cross-examined. Then again, it's only supposition that the ROOM witnessed anything; it could have abstained during the heinous acts of carnage that were supposedly committed within its confines. Its tracking can only tell you so much. It's guess work at best on how the ROOM was used in the crimes.

Everything Becky has so far is just theories; nothing of true substance. Even Roberts' guilt is a theory. Take Roberts out of the equation, separate the abduction from the alleged serials and Count Orlok's murder, and Becky's got nothing.

Fact: if Roberts still wants her Becky, he'll have to come for her himself; he can't use the ROOM against her. Chances are: he still wants her.

Fact: if Roberts comes after Becky's family or friends, he'll have to come for them himself; he can't use the ROOM against them. Chances are: he doesn't want them that badly.

Fact: Becky will keep plugging along, using herself as bait. Chances are: she'll get taken by Roberts and ask him face-to-face: "What's up?"

Episode #050

“In 1959 Brighton, disgraced cop turned private detective Tony Aaron works largely on falsifying adulteries for use as evidence in divorce cases. He involves his wife as the fictional co-respondent for painter Carlo Stasio, but the pair are shot dead in the hotel room. In charge of the case is Frank, Tony’s ex-partner still on the Brighton force. His most likely suspects are Angeline, Stasio’s mistress who is set to inherit his house and pictures, and Tony himself, parts of whose story don’t seem to add up.”—*Under Suspicion (1991)*; plot summary written by Jeremy Perkins <jwp@aber.ac.uk>

Stacy, Danica, and Becky walk out of Stacy’s ready room and into Roberts’ ROOM. The ROOM’s door closes behind them of its own volition.

A naked Roberts is stretched out face down upon the bed in a coagulated pool of his own blood. The back of his head has been caved in by a heavy, marble paper weight which is still lodged in his broken skull.

Needless to say, he is very much dead—rigor mortise has set in. Looks like Becky will never get a chance to ask him those questions of hers. And/or maybe. Spared from going any deeper down a rabbit hole unrelated to Count Orlok’s murder, by the still anonymous witness?

Tikka music plays softly in the background, emanating from an old-fashioned portable radio—one of those woodies. The door of the ROOM’s standup closet is flung wide open; the inside of which is cavernous.

Next gen spatial displacement technology would explain how the interior of the wardrobe armoire is many times larger than its exterior dimensions would indicate was possible. But, no technology is being employed to explain the discrepancy. Its interior is simply much larger than its exterior.

Inside. There are dead people, women, all of his Roberts’ victims serial and otherwise hanging like suits of clothes from meat hooks mounted in the ceiling. Front and center is a butchered woman who looks like Becky. She is spread-eagle on the metal exam table, muzzled and restrained.

Inside. The missing crime scene forensics linking him Roberts to every murder serial and otherwise that he has ever committed. Noticeably absent, is any forensics linking him to Count Orlok’s murder. CSI is going to have a field day with this one. For Becky, it’s back to square one, indeed.

As they exit the closet, the door to the ROOM opens of its own volition. It now opens onto the City Morgue at 1 Police Plaza, instead of supplying egress from Stacy’s ready room.

Becky is suddenly aware of a dowdy, fifty-something “Chinese” woman standing in a corner, wearing perls, heavy harshest makeup, a Kaye, flats, and prudz; her coal-black hair is yanked back into a sternka; very severe, very circa 1950s. Absent are her trademark heads—heads—Edith Head’s trademark shades.

In spite of her conservative appearance, her undergarments and Tiffany clutch purse hint at the decadence that defines her. Bra and panties are French-cut and lacy; Victoria’s Secret, circa the 1950s and, from the human perspective, its underlying sexual hypocrisy. The snow white torpedo bra has front and rear hook-n-eye closure, shoulder-baring straps, and plenty of metal stays. It is a

very stiff bra by modern standards and by ancient world ones as well. The skimpy thong panties are fleshtone for that “almost not there, naked wannabe” look.

The purse that she’s strapping, from Tiffany’s? Clipped to the waistband of her skirt, underneath her suit coat is a cigarette purse. Being that it’s from Tiffany’s, it’s made from the real McCoy: vampiir. The hardshell clutch is no bigger than her hand; in fact, it’s the size of an oversized cigarette case, which is why it’s called a “cigarette purse.” But thanks to spatial displacement, its interior is many times larger than its compact exterior would indicate possible.

Neither Stacy nor Danica seems to notice the woman. She puts a finger to her lips and smiles politely. Colloquially, she is Azn—a Dragon in human form.

“I would prefer that you didn’t tell the others about me.” The words “form” in Becky’s head. It is something like telepathy, but not telepathy. Dragons call it *Falun Gong Ling*: a form of non-verbal communication unique to their kind. *“My name, my ‘modern’ pseudonym, is Bai Yun. I am a member of the Shanxi Communist Party Standing Committee, and the director of the Shanxi United Front Work Department. We have a mutual acquaintance in Ancient Mia, Elke Sommer, and Keith Thurman. I am an associate of your Doctor Klebb, your Jana Svandova, yours and mine Marquess Emmanuelle Seigner and her Lady Mathieu Amalric. Ask the question, you have my permission.”*

Becky has the feeling that Madame Yun has been standing in that corner in plain sight the entire time the three girls have been in the ROOM.

Are you the witness? Becky asks, telepathically.

“Yes, I am,” Madame Yun lings. *“I am also the reason why we Dragons had such an interest in the Food called ‘Roberts.’ I was mistaken. He was never of any value; less than none now that he is dead, by my hand. Forensics will confirm that I am his murderer; even if I was not a Dragon, and ROE had been violated, etc., etc., etc. my diplomatic immunity makes it a moot point.”*

Although Becky has never met Madame Yun before in person, the senior level cadre in the Communist Party is well known to the girl. There is something else.

Before Madame Yun relinquished her “station in life,” abdicating her birthright as head of the Principal House a birthright that she can never reclaim, she was 一龙皇后 a Dragon empress of the Zhou dynasty.

She gave up one of The Thrones in Creation, and it was not by choice. Her hand was forced, and for good reason. The Lady of Blood: Madame Yun’s Vampire contemporary, Countess Elizabeth Bathory was tame, tolerant, humble, and contrite in comparison as a ruler!

Madame Yun’s reign a despotic reign marked by malevolence, excess, gross misrule, and widespread corruption preceded the existence of the mundane races. In point of fact, she was 吴则填 Wu Zetian, 第一皇后 The First Empress. Maybe that’s why President Xi Jinping’s purge of CPC (Communist Party of China) loyalists of previous president Jiang Zemin has not included her.

A fierce rival of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, a harsh critic of President Xi Jinping and his anti-corruption campaign, Madame Yun remains one of former President Jiang Zemin’s staunchest political allies and most vocal supporters.

Through her Madame Yun, the former President Zemin and his few remaining (living) political cronies maintain their dissenting voice in the Party’s affairs.

As Madame Yun lowers her finger, she makes an arcane gesture with it, titling her head at an odd angle, smiling even wider. There is nothing inscrutable about her glee.

I acknowledge your superseding claim upon me. I relinquish my prior obligations to Marquess Emmanuelle Seigner, Lady Mathieu Amalric, Elke Sommer, and Jana Svandova—and any heretofore explicit and implicit obligations of any form to any person, place, or thing. Only you, now and forever, exclusively own me. 我是你的个人财产 I am your personal property

The older woman, having finally acquired what she for so long has had to settle for coveting from afar, slips on her trademark heads and fades away.

Becky is her personal property, but that is not the same as being her slave. It is the equivalent of being a private, confidential, executive secretary, for life. It is a severe business relationship between an employer and an employee. As such, there are strict rules of conduct associated with the position and the employee's relationship with the employer in question.

"In my service, while on duty. You will do as you are told, without question. You will speak only when you're supposed to, and do so only in Chinese when you are in my public company. You will be punished severely for any infraction. While off-duty, you can do as you wish; please be cognizant of the fact that you always represent me, therefore your behavior and actions in your personal life reflect back upon me and my reputation. For a White girl. You are an attractive, well-mannered, travelling companion. Finish your task for them, go about the normal affairs of your 'ordinary' life, and then you shall be with me for a while—likely, the entirety of your summer break."

Madame Yun's parting "words" etch into Becky's mind. Also etched in the girl's mind is the fleeting, grinning image of Alice Krige superimposed upon the departing Madame Yun.

In her Azn form, the massive Mongolian looks like a Chinese version of a Goon. Ms. Krige is thick built and muscular, with coarse features. Minus the trademark shades, she dresses like Madame Yun, but sports a moe in place of Madame Yun's sternka. In addition to looking like a Goon, she's like a Goon in her sexplay as well. Lovemaking for her is indistinguishable from the most violent rape, whether her lover is male or female. And, in spite of her stereotypical, manhating, bulldagger look, she's a switch-hitter and craves fucking men as much as she craves fucking women.

The butchie, unflattering, masculine hairdo known as a "moe." Moe Arc Find, Moe of the Three Stooges, the famous lesbian flapper and comedian who put this hairdo "on the map" by sporting her hair bobbed in this fashion. The first movie she wore a moe in was "Animal Crackers"; before then, she'd worn her hair in the "page boy" 'do favored by the flappers of her day.

"I just can't understand the kind of corruption that we have seen in China in recent years," writes Zheng Yongnian, a Chinese scholar whose writings align with many establishment views. "If you are corrupt and steal hundreds of thousands or billions of renminbi, I can understand. You can use that money to live a better life. But stealing trillions, tens of trillions, or even hundreds of trillions—that I can't understand. You won't be able to spend all that money even in the many lifetimes of us Dragons. It reminds me of, echoes, the institutionalized corruption of the first empress of the Zhou dynasty, who was The First Empress, 吴则填 Wu Zetian."

Episode #051

“Anakin Josephine Lee, AJ Lee, was a whiny little bitch until she shanked some little kids and ruled the universe by any means necessary.”—*unambiguous*

Stacy hears approaching footsteps—the distinctive staccato of stiletto heels stabbing hardwood floors. She starts to nervously draw her sidearm; flashing her light into Becky’s face as Becky nonchalantly rounds the corner. Curiously, the sound of Becky’s clicking heels muted just before Becky rounded the corner and came into sight.

“Holy shit, it’s you, B!” Stacy lets go of the grip of her pistol and stitches off her flashlight. “I could have shot you, you lunkhead! And. Why are you dressed like that?!”

“I’m practicing.”

“For what, B?”

“For whom, is the correct pronoun usage in this case.” Becky is dressed severely like Madame Yun, with the exception of a Koo worn in place of a Kaye, and careys in place of flats. Her hair is yanked back into a sternka. The harshest makeup applied its heaviest. She purses her shades and smiles. “I saw your last scores on the police shooting range; I’m not worried about you hitting me, even at this range.”

“Bullshit, B; even I can’t miss at this range with one of these new 10-mm Cosworth Bauers that the department has issued everyone in the precinct for field testing.”

Stacy taps the rubber grip of her automatic, with pride and an impish grin. She’s a lab geek, but in a firefight, she wouldn’t go down easy.

They are in the hallway outside of Roberts’ room at the fleabag hotel where he flopped, on and off. There’s no XRN Danica, or Detective Minders, or the DRN Walsh.

“Truncated DNA?”

“Exactly, B.”

“Looks like the same thing was keeping us both up at night.”

Stacy violates the police tape and uses her key copy to enter the room. When she first came on the premises she radioed into the station for a position check just in case if there was any trouble, the backup that dispatch sent out would know where to start looking for her.

Once Stacy is inside of the room she calls in a second time for the follow-up confirmation. Once this is acknowledged, and Stacy informs them that Becky is onsite with her, she releases the talk button on the shoulder mic that’s clipped to the lapel of her jacket. As Becky would expect of dependable, reliable Stacy, everything is done by the book.

The shoulder mic is the most basic and required communication component for any police officer, security guard, patrol agent, and in-the-field police lab tech. It provides hands-free of the officer’s 2-way radio.

Stacy sets up her portable scanner and switches it on. The hands-free device begins to hover about the room.

“No forensics, B, connecting Count Orlok’s murder to Roberts was found in the ROOM. In fact, all of the forensics found in the ROOM was for the female victims only. And they were all hanging in his closet. This confirms your theory that when he killed guys, he didn’t use the ROOM as his honeypot.”

“Or, he just didn’t kill guys; therefore he didn’t murder Count Orlok.”

“I’d rather it be him, B. Because. If it’s one of your people that did Count Orlok, this gem gets yanked out of my hands by some WIB women in black types who will put it in the lap of some god monger of this House or that of your kind.”

“Oh my God, you’re head-over-heels in love with this investigation. Reading this guy’s business really turns you on.”

“I know this sounds sick, because it is, but. Sleuthing his handiwork sure does, B. It gets me wet. I haven’t gotten off like this since the Karla Homolka case I consulted on with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police). And, if he bonafide did do Count Orlok, a mundane taking down a god. Wow!”

“This sure beats the hell out of reading the run-of-the-mill drive-by.”

“And how, B. Most of the time, my job is just that, one scumbag killing another and me getting dumped on to find out who did whom, so some paper pusher can make their quota this month for a goddamn bonus. Who the fuck really cares?! Now this shit is real police work.”

There’s a series of pings and then the scanner hovers back over to Stacy so that she can analyze its findings for the umpteenth time.

“And the verdict is?”

“See for yourself, B. Time limit on the falsies has expired. The forensics are linear instead of asymmetric. He practiced covering up his snail trails here. Self-taught. And he learned well. His backtracks are smooth; as smooth as they come.”

“There should be asymmetric layers, forensics overlaying forensics, from the years of people inhabiting and visiting this room. Instead, we only get his forensics laid down in a linear fashion over a proximal span—looking like what it is: which is staged.”

“It’s like what we’d get in academy when we did practicals in forensics crime lab class, B. The instructor would scrub a fake crime scene, stage the forensics, and then test us on how well we ‘read’ it. We’d be graded onsite, and then the instructor would repeat the cycle: scrub, stage, test, and grade our performance.”

“Okay, let’s take a step back. We work this case to your delight, until the evidence proves otherwise.”

“I’m down with that, B. Game on.”

“He practiced being a cleaner in his room. How about him practicing being a slider by going to and from his room undetected using disguises? If he were good enough at doing that, he might be mistaken by the Dragons as a legend, which would explain their interest in him.”

“Until they found him out, B, and put the kibosh on him.”

“Let’s check the CCTV footage in this place, eyeballing it for him sliding.”

“It might be spotty, at best, B, in this dump, but let’s go for it.”

“Once we peruse the tapes from this place, then we’ll take a gander at the surveillance video from the party a year ago where he flirted with me. We’ll compare the footage with what I recall.”

“Your recall the flawless photographic memory of a demon versus the recall of the cameras, huh, B?”

“You betcha, red rider.”

Episode #052

“I was the good Nazi wife to my husband Herr Koch, Karl-Otto Koch, commandant of the Nazi concentration camps Buchenwald and Majdanek. I tortured and killed many of the inmates, and made lampshades and other household items out of their skin. There is a special place set-aside in Hell just for me. And there is a singular evil I begot that has been bestowed with my name.”—Ilse Koch (*Margarete Ilse Köhler*)

For the next two days, Stacy and Becky pour over the tapes, back at police headquarters, in the conference room adjacent to Stacy’s ready room. The surveillance videos from the fleabag are enlightening. The ones from the party are a revelation.

No shapeshifting, magic, or any other supernatural means are utilized to achieve his deception, which makes the effects he is able to achieve even that much more amazing. Makeup, including false noses, ears, lips, etc.—full-blown theatrical facial effects. Hairpieces—wigs of every variety in texture, length, color, etc. Wipe-on tanners. Skin bleaches. He places lifts in his shoes to make himself look taller—he even employs stilts. He uses a latex body suit to make himself look fatter—from having a gut, to having a bubble butt, to having man boobs—fleshtone—pneumatic—much better than stuffing pillows underneath your clothes.

All of the tricks of the trade—very old school and very ingenious—when you want to slide low-tech. If you are a fugitive, who doesn’t have a lot of resources and who wants to stay on the lam as long as possible, low-tech is your stealthiest option. But for a serial killer to choose to slide this way is a stroke of genius.

After a while they get so used to recognizing Roberts, no matter his disguise, that they can even discern his true identity when he is posing as a woman. He makes for a very ugly one too.

At the party he was a beefy waitress, with a generous hourglass figure—employing the same type of gender bending girdle, that’s popular with transsexuals, to achieve the skewed female form that he presented.

He kept all of his disguises, and the implements thereof, in a set of battered suitcases in his hotel room underneath his bed.

“With a lot of practice, and much attention to detail, after having finally ciphered what to look for, it begs the question, B.”

“Why all the noise?”

“Exactly, B?”

“This guy was so good at sliding that facial recognition software is totally negated. Even after we figured out his tell, and with both of us knowing what to look for, the skilled eyes of two trained investigators working in tandem, we still have an Angus of a time picking him out. So, why would he bother looping the surveillance cameras inside the hotel and inside the Count’s apartment?”

“B. He could have easily slide into that hotel and slide out undetected. The only hard part was the disposing of Count Orlok. Shit, B, if it weren’t for the forensics at the abduction scene and us chaining the evidence the way we did, we would have never known that he was a player.”

“Lucky us.”

“It’s like we’re being led, B, and I don’t mean just by that anonymous witness of yours.”

“She’s not anonymous anymore.”

“What, B?! When?!” In spite of her unbridled enthusiasm, Stacy knows Becky well enough to realize her mistake without Becky needing to prompt her. “Sorry, my bad.”

“No need to apologize. There’s not much to tell, really. She revealed herself to me. We engaged in a transaction of a personal nature. She preferred that I didn’t introduce her to y’all.”

“Enough said, B.”

“And, no, she didn’t tell me how killed Count Orlok.”

“Because, B, you couldn’t ask. I’m well-versed in ROE, you know what I mean.”

“You know the witness, by the way.”

Stacy looks puzzled, and then she gets it. Smart girl.

“That jezebel! The witness is Madame Yun, she killed our suspect, and she’s untouchable for his murder, B!”

“You said it, I didn’t.”

Stacy’s emotional outburst notwithstanding, she again proves herself as a true professional with her follow-up. She gets that look, as if something has suddenly come to her in the heat of the moment. Stacy snaps her fingers. That eureka moment.

“Maybe you said more than you think, B.”

“As in?”

“She killed Roberts as a clue?”

“Of what?”

“His guilt, B.”

“How so?”

“Shit! Shit! Shit! B! I don’t know! I’m just grasping for straws!”

Again, another outburst notwithstanding, Stacy is still thinking out of the box, even if she’s swinging for the fences and blind doing it.

“Okay, then. Let’s do it your way. We assume he’s guilty. Now, how do we prove it?”

“Let’s step back from this, B. And take it from another angle.”

“We’re just throwing shit up on the wall, all over again.”

“I know, B. I know.”

“Let’s do a puzzle jack with the hotel events recorder, independent of any other public CCTV footage.”

“Rerun random scenarios on non-suspects and maybe we’ll stumble on something, B?”

“I know it’s more shit slinging, but we need a respite from banging our heads on that Roberts wall.” Stacy gives Becky that look. “Okay. Okay. I need a respite from the head banging, then we’ll

go back to trying to pin this murder on your boyfriend. You do the outs since it's keyed to your voice recognition."

"Fairmont?"

"Yes, Ms. Keibler."

"Please run surveillance recall on. Let's start with Keith Thurman for the last two years."

"Please have it pause, Stacy."

"Fairmont, please pause."

"Yes, Ms. Keibler. I am pausing."

"Is the EvR buffered in the police mainframe?"

"No, it is not, B."

"Please buffer it so that we don't get any synergy between the two computers."

"Computer, please buffer yourself from the Fairmont and visualize for Becky and I the concurrent events as known to you as the Fairmont displays them. As the Fairmont displays events unknown to you, you will display a blank display."

"Yes, Dr. Keibler."

Now, Becky and Stacy are presented two virtual displays hovering in mid-air. One is legend *The Fairmont* and the other is legend *Police One*.

"So, if I'm reading your intent correctly, we're doing a sanity check on the EvR as well? If so, I've already done that—it's standard police procedure, B."

"You did it with the EvR buffered, and used analytics?"

"Yes, B. Of course."

"This time around we go old-school. The EvR is buffered and the questioning will not be automated, we, not a machine, will be asking the questions. Let's hit the head and then go at it."

Stacy catches herself in time. She doesn't give Becky a look, and she doesn't waste time asking the obvious therefore she doesn't have to waste time apologizing for asking her friend the obvious. Only once in her storied career has she been party to running diagnostics on an EvR this way, and that was when she consulted for U.S. Military Intelligence.

"What are you thinking, B? What is it?"

"Hopefully, I'll know it when I see it."

"You think that the record has been tampered with, B?"

"I'm just grasping at straws—same as you."

Episode #053

“Oh, I was just gonna tear through them and Superman the shit out of them and GTS all three of them at the same time.”—*CM Punk*

They do three run-throughs. Between runs two and three, Stacy keys Betty to the Fairmont’s EvR so that she too can do the outs. So. The third run is a tandem effort, nobody rides shotgun; Betty and Stacy tag teaming the EvR. And their finding is? No evidence of tampering whatsoever. Their manual inspection jibes exactly with what analytics turned up.

It’s late- and the-night shift is working the morgue. The door to Stacy’s ready room is locked and the “Do Not Disturb” sign is up. Nothing begs Stacy’s attention but this, and her Number One and her Number Two are more than competent to handle the current case load. Besides, this is priority.

But, nerd to geek, what’s a Morgan Webb kind of girl supposed to do when she’s needs to nitpick and there’s no nit to pick because she’s hit a brick wall?

Sherlock Holmes relaxes with music—taking the evening off from a case listening to Pablo de Sarasate or Wagner while playing along on his violin—having injected himself with cocaine in a seven-percent solution with a syringe kept in a Morocco leather case.

But. Stacy is no Sherlock Holmes, as aforementioned she’s a Morgan Webb kind of girl, and there’s some prime stank to be found.

Becky knows her girl oh so well. No telepathy needed to read Stacy’s frustration and no clairvoyance needed to know the cure for what ails her Food.

Room-bath-kitchenette, Stacy’s ready room is the ultra-feminine version of a *man cave*. Plus, it has full access to the police and the city mainframes. And, it’s got a sofa that’s perfect for making out.

Becky is still wearing that severe suit of hers; the one with the short skirt that would look right at home being the habitual uniform dress of a glacial matron—shades of Mercy Graves, the personal bodyguard and chauffeur of Lex Luthor. She’s that type of shrew, a nice piece of harshlooking ass: frontage that makes a good bookshelf, those legs-for-days that are just to kill for, a huge ugly bass-eating-bait mouth that’s made to be fucked, and a flat pancake ass—*tight!* a white girl’s creamy supreme, junk in the trunk on the very down-low.

Becky’s duds versus Mercy’s? First, the differences. A Koo Stark with a restrictive mid-thigh length pencil skirt, in place of a chauffeur’s uniform with a very short skirt—the brief stricture of a short pencil skirt versus a very short skirt doing fast business as a very wide belt. No chauffeur’s cap. Bare flawless legs-for-days, in place of nylons. Spike-heeled careys, in place of high heeled riding boots. Next, the similarities. Prudz. Bullet bra. Perls. Etc. Etc. Etc.

The Vampire undoes the buttons on her jacket and shucks it violently to the floor. She unhooks her bra and gives her big perky twins a needed breath of fresh air—shades of that Brit, June “The Bosom” Wilkinson. Stacy’s jaw proverbially hits the floor from that mammillary revelation.

“What are you doing, B?”

“You know what I’m doing.”

“You know I don’t play for the other team, B. I’m straight.”

“You’re whatever I say you are, Food.”

Stacy starts to scream and then she just goes limp—a tad bit melodramatic, albeit telegenic, and her feigned submission is somewhat out of sync with Becky’s telepathic assault. Becky hasn’t “touched” her yet. The ME only got a B- in high school drama class and she dropped out of her theatre elective in college her freshman year, so give her a break.

Becky tries to violate Stacy’s mind but she can’t get in, because of Stacy’s “firewall” still being in place.

Already caught up in the anticipation of the expected “moment,” Stacy has forgotten to lower her psychic guard. Her mind is as closed to wanton entry as the knickers on a Catholic nun.

Becky breaks kayfabe, clears her throat, and whispers under her breath: “I can’t get in, you wanker.”

Enraptured by what is gonna be, Stacy initially proves unaffected by the nudge, then, the light switch flicks on, and she again proves her mettle, getting up to speed, quickly. “Sorry, B. My bad.” The ME lowers her guard, leaving only meaningless residual processes and their transient progeny.

Becky reaches into her mind, sweeping aside whatever transient safeguards that Stacy has left in place, taking complete and utter control. Stacy feels like she’s being raped, and, psychically speaking, she is. The touch that Becky employs can best be described as a ham-handed grab—*bitch-slap me, please!*—The Psi Corps would be proud.

A lesbian, who can pass for straight, Stacy likes her sex hard and fast, and a lot of it—in a word, *intense!* On occasion, she likes it on the wild side—in other words, very rough—“rode hard and put up wet.” And, on those especially depraved occasions, she craves it akin to rape. In the aftermath of “those latter occasions,” she’s been known to come into work sporting heavily-applied makeup as cover up for the afterwards when a lengthy session in a facial didn’t erase all the marks to her satisfaction.

Be forewarned; craving it akin to rape is not the same thing as craving to be raped. Pity the fool who tries to rape her. If you do, you’ll wish for death when Stacy gets through exacting her vengeance upon you.

Sexual proclivities aside, Stacy is a gold standard for lesbian cougar bait—her preferred romantic is the fifty-something-and-up socialite type. Now and then, she does by her standards rob the cradle, straying from her steady diet of well-heeled card-carrying AARP bulldaggers. In other words, on occasion, she does the odd bungee off the pier—muff diving on the forty-something-and-under age group, if the dyke is a consenting adult of the artsy Beatnik persuasion. Stacy is. Brilliant. On occasion, sexually depraved. And, at the moment, plenty horny.

Becky walks over to Stacy, the spike heels of her pumps stabbing the carpet. She yanks off Stacy’s lab coat and rips open the ME’s blouse sending buttons flying every which way like dice on a crap table thrown by a whirling dervish.

For Stacy’s pleasure, Becky ages herself. In appearance she now looks fifty-something, with mundane women’s age-related decay. In the words of a devotee of older mortal women, “those distinguishing characteristics”—wrinkles, age lines, frown lines, and sags. To their aficionados, an

aged human woman is like fine wine—they only get better with age. By Stacy's way of thinking, Becky is distinguished looking now—harsh and distinguished looking—fine, aged wine.

Later on, for Becky's pleasure, the Vampire will sink her fangs into Stacy's nubile flesh and feed to her heart's content. Position One: Stacy will be on top, because Becky likes it that way. And, Position Two: Stacy will be on the bottom, because Becky likes it that way too. The Vampire will alternate between the two positions to her heart's content.

Becky shoves Stacy onto the sofa. Madness ensues. The Vampire's fingernails lengthen into daggers—long nails ending in keen points. Her predatory blue eyes go bloodshot. Becky rakes Stacy's skirt and panties, and yanks down the shredded what's left of them.

She flings Stacy's legs apart. Kneels before Stacy's altar of netherwich. Unhinges her jaws, to a snake's envy. And proceeds to eat Stacy naked to the bone—figuratively, of course. Cunnilungus, not culinary. In a word, *ravenous!*

Releasing raging pheromones, to further beguile her Food. Becky tweaks Stacy's libido and twists the mundane's physiology to her unholy sanguine needs. Stacy menstruates into the leech's waiting maw—big bass on the rag. Becky's long, facile, educated tongue making short work of Stacy's short hairs.

Stacy purrs like a cat adrift in a notion of pleasure irregardless of the dire consequences—mindless to reason—oblivious to any cautionary—awash in an ecstasy no human woman can afford her. At any given moment the Vampire can lose control and consume her live, literally. Oh. But what a way to die, indeed!

Episode #054

“Don’t waste your time. He prefers White chicks; Caucasians, no less. They have to be blue-eyed blondes, skinny, leggy, big bass, harshlooking, pneumatic, and tight!”—YET

These days, she goes under the name of Erma Butler; a widow, with no children or living relatives. Her real name is Irma Grese; she has never been married, hates men, and loathes children.

During the Martian Race War, the second one, she was SS Aufseherin Irma Grese, the warden of The Reich’s most genocidal death camps: Ravensbrück, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen. It is said that the god Ares himself, to this day, still speaks in highest admiration of the butchery that she, the chief architect of The Cleansing, and her underlings committed those many decades ago in those three concentration camps. In his immortal existence, he has seen few mortals or gods who were her peer in the sheer genius of her butchery or the depths of her depravity.

Background:

Fräulein Grese, she preferred to be addressed in non-formal situations as either Frau Grese in spite of never being married or simply as Grese, was convicted for crimes against humanity at the Belsen Trial and sentenced to death. She was to be executed at 22 years, 67 days of age. If her execution had not been stayed, Grese would have been the youngest woman to die judicially under British law in the 20th century.

During The War, as Warden Grese, she was nicknamed “the Beast of Belsen,” “The Beautiful Beast,” “The Blonde Angel of Auschwitz,” and “Die Hyäne von Auschwitz” (“The Hyena of Auschwitz”).

War crime trial:

Grese was among the 45 people accused of war crimes at the Belsen Trial. She was tried over the first period of the trials (17 September to 17 November 1945) and was represented by Major L. Cranfield.

The trials were conducted under British military law in Lüneburg, and the charges derived from the Geneva Convention of 1929 regarding the treatment of prisoners. The accusations against her centered on her ill-treatment and murder of those imprisoned at the camps. Survivors provided detailed testimony of murders, tortures, and other cruelties, especially towards women, in which Grese engaged during her years at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. They testified to acts of sadism, beatings, and arbitrary shootings of prisoners, savaging of prisoners by her trained and allegedly half-starved dogs, and to her selecting prisoners for the extermination ovens and gas chambers. Grese was reported to have habitually worn heavy boots and carried a whip and a pistol. Witnesses testified that she took pleasure in using both physical and psychological methods to torture the camp’s inmates and enjoyed shooting prisoners in cold blood. They also claimed that she beat some women to death and whipped others using a plaited whip.

Grese inspired virulent hatred in prisoner Olga Lengyel, who in her memoir, *Five Chimneys*, wrote that selections in the women's camp were made by SS Aufseherin Elisabeth Hasse and Irma Grese. The latter was visibly pleased by the terror her presence inspired in the women at roll call. She had a penchant for selecting not only the sick and the weak but any woman who had retained vestiges of her former beauty. Lengyel said that Grese had several lovers among the SS in the camp, including Josef Mengele. After Grese forced the inmate surgeon at the infirmary into performing her illegal abortion, she disclosed that she planned a career in the movies after the war. Lengyel felt that Grese's meticulous grooming, custom fitted clothes, and overuse of perfume were part of a deliberate act of sadism among the ragged women prisoners.

After a fifty-three day trial, Grese was sentenced to death by hanging.

Execution:

Grese and ten others (eight men and two other women; Juana Bormann and Elisabeth Volkenrath) were convicted for crimes against humanity in both Auschwitz and Belsen and then sentenced to death. As the verdicts were read, Grese was the only prisoner to remain defiant; her subsequent appeal was rejected.

The Daily Mirror reported: Despite being dressed in drab prison garb, the vain Grese - dubbed "the Beautiful Beast" by inmates - used rags to put ringlets in her hair. And, "The night before her execution Grese laughed and sang Nazi songs with fellow SS torturer Elizabeth Volkenrath."

Aftermath:

According to the official record, on Thursday, 13 December 1945, eight months after the cessation of hostilities on Mars, in Hamelin Jail, Grese was led to the gallows. The women were hanged singly first and then the men in pairs. Regimental Sergeant-Major O'Neil assisted the noted British executioner, Albert Pierrepoint.

And, yet, decades later, thanks to Operation Paper Clip, she is alive and well; living under an assumed name, working as a night-shift maid at the Fairmont. And, to look at her you'd never think it in a million years, but, the old miser is worth billions—ill-gotten gains from her homicidal Nazi past. Akin to a Kraken, the evil shrew bitch jealously hoards her wealth, seldom spending any of it.

But, there is an exception to her frugality. When it comes to her "hobbies," price is no object, which is the worst for the world.

Corruption was a pervasive aspect of the female warden/guard culture of The Reich. Ilse Koch, known as "the witch of Buchenwald," was married to the camp commandant, Karl Koch. Both were rumored to have embezzled billions of Reichmarks, for which Karl Koch was convicted and executed by the Nazis a few weeks before Buchenwald was liberated by the U.S. Army; however, Ilse was cleared of the charge. In reality, her husband didn't steal the money. She and her partner in crime, Irma Grese, were the culprits.

Ilse Koch was sentenced to life imprisonment, with no chance for parole, for her war crimes. And, there she sits to this day, rotting in her prison cell. For some reason, she stopped aging in her

seventies—the same can be said of Irma Grese. Neither woman gets sick, they are in perfect health, and both are very much human—there’s nothing supernatural about either of them.

A sociopath, it’s easy for Grese to pose as the kindly old grandmotherly type—baking cookies for the kids—making fresh-squeezed lemonade in the summer—giving out homemade candy at Halloween—passing for someone who’s civic minded, generous, and all that’s goodness in the world.

She’s captain of her block unit and she’s a member of the neighborhood crime watch. Grese is even a volunteer police officer, and it is in that capacity that she knowing aided and abetted Adam Roberts in his crimes against humanity. And when he had ceased to amuse her, and thus had outlived his usefulness, she made sure that he came to a most fitting end—pulling the strings of others so that her own hands need not get the least bit dirty disposing of the colossal bore that he had become.

Episode #055

“Mars War 2, the second Martian race war, ended with the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers. On 8 May 1945, the Allies accepted the surrender of The Reich and the Citizenry, about a week after Adolf Hitler abdicated as Führer. VM Day – Victory in Mars celebrates the end of the Second Martian Race War on 8 May 1945.”—When did the Second Martian Race War end?

The sworn un-redacted account of the noted British executioner, Albert Pierrepoint:

We climbed the stairs to the cells where the condemned were waiting. A Martian officer at the door leading to the corridor flung open the door and we filed past the row of faces and into the execution chamber. The officers stood at attention. Brigadier Paton-Walsh stood with his wristwatch raised. He gave me the signal, and a sigh of released breath was audible in the chamber, I walked into the corridor. “Irma Grese,” I called.

The Martian guards quickly closed all grilles on twelve of the inspection holes and opened one door. Irma Grese stepped out. The cell was far too small for me to go inside, and I had to pinion her in the corridor. “Follow me,” I said in English, and O’Neil repeated the order in German. At 9.34 a.m. she walked into the execution chamber, gazed for a moment at the officials standing round it, then walked on to the center of the trap, where I had made a chalk mark. She stood on this mark very firmly, and as I placed the white cap over her head she said in her languid voice, “Schnell.” English translation: “Quickly.” The drop crashed down, and the doctor followed me into the pit and pronounced her dead. After twenty minutes the body was taken down and placed in a coffin ready for burial.

In exception to standard practice, a DNA workup of the corpse, either full or partial, was not performed to confirm the identity of the deceased—this was at the behest of the Security Council resolution B-5096-6977-01/13-2 of the League of Nations. When I later brought this up to my superiors at the Home Office, and voiced my objections and my grave misgivings, I was rebuffed, told that the body in question had been strictured by order of the Prime Minster via the Ministry in the interest of national security, and I was strongly advised to drop the matter.

Stricture obliterates any way of positively identifying the corpse.

As such, I can only assume that the condemned who was executed that day, was in fact, the “real” Irma Grese.

The previously redacted portion of the above sworn statement which was presented before a closed door session of the Joint Chiefs and the President of the United States, and the members of the Security Council of the newly-formed United Nations which has superseded the League of Nations, and senior members of Operation #####, et al., is underlined. Ultra Violet clearance is the minimum security access and the “need to know,” are required for access to/knowledge of this information in its unedited form.

Episode #056

“And if you want to fight, look no bloody further! Because I will quite gladly now, go and change into my ring attire, and I will join you back in that ring, and I will BATTLE YOU with EVERY OUNCE of VILE AND VENOM that RUNS THROUGH MY VEINS!”—

William Regal

The time has come:

It steps from the wall, detaching itself from the concrete blocks that it moments before was indistinguishable from. As it gazes down upon the sleeping form on the cot, it begins to change, becoming what it is observing. It already has her voice and mannerisms, having observed her extensively as “part” of the wall of her prison cell.

There are many names for it. But most know it by its first name. It is a Gokum (*go come*), and it is the Teutonic version of the Jewish Golem.

There are imperfections built into it, flaws that are part of its nature, that make its kind distinguishable from that it mimics. But, fingerprints, voice patterns, brain wave patterns, retina patterns, et al., are not those distinguishing characters. Also, its kind cannot imitate a supernatural being.

The Gokum reaches for the woman’s tresses as if it intends to lovingly stroke her hair. It covets the original that it is copying; such is its nature and such is the source of its ability to become such a faithful duplication. The woman stirs, then sits bolt upright on the hard, narrow bed, and in the process of doing so she knocks the lie’s hand away.

Space in the cell is at premium. Copy and original are eye to eye. Showing no fear whatsoever, not uttering a single word of surprise or exclamation that might alert the guard outside her cell door as to what is transpiring within, she flashes that broad, toothy, defiant grin of hers. Its words form in her mind.

“I am here to take your place on the gallows tomorrow. Sleep well. Your sponsor awaits your safe arrival. Now, liebchen. Please strip and while doing so, initiate for us some verbal subterfuge that’s guaranteed to keep the guards at bay. None will deny condemned inmates their last frolic.”

The woman begins to clap her hands, and then she breaks out into one of those bawdy Nazi songs that she favors so much. For this working class Brown Shirt lass, none of that hi-brow, bombastic Wagner shit that her former Fuhrer always favored.

In a few moments, one by one, as if they have been awoken from a sound sleep by her off-key cacophony, the other prisoners designated for execution tomorrow, join in on her crude, profane-laced musical selections. They too are being replaced in their cells by the Gokums of their respective sponsors.

The Sturmabteilung (SA) (German pronunciation: *ˈʃtʊʁmˌʔapˌtaɪlʊŋ*; Storm Detachment or Assault Division, or Brown Shirts) functioned as the original paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party. It played a key role in Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in the 1920s and 1930s.

Their main assignments were providing protection for Nazi rallies and assemblies, disrupting the meetings of the opposing parties, fighting against the paramilitary units of the opposing parties

especially their principal rivals the Rotfrontkämpferbund (The Nationalists), and intimidating unaligned federalist citizens, trade unionists, and Nationalist sympathizers, e.g., the Nazi boycott of the businesses of Nationalist sympathizers.

Shrewdly, the SA never bothered the Citizenry, the colonists of the Outlands, Federation citizens, or supernaturals. When you're frying that much fish, fighting on that many fronts at the same time, why waken more sleeping giants than need be? Why indeed.

Besides. The Citizenry were the Nazis' allies; it was a marriage of convenience. Both parties wanted a Mars free of the control of Earth governments, but for very different reasons. Ousting the colonial powers of Earth was their only commonality.

In the waning days of the Second Mars War, when even the delusional Hitler could see the writing on the wall, the Nazis predictably turned on the Citizenry—jackals can never change their stripes. The Citizenry had steeled themselves for the expected betrayal—it was always a matter of when, not if—what they could not prepare themselves for was the sheer ferocity and genocidal depravity of the attack.

The SA was the first Nazi paramilitary group to develop pseudo-military titles for bestowal upon its members. The SA ranks were adopted by several other Nazi Party groups, chief amongst them the Schutzstaffel (SS), itself originally a branch of the SA.

SA men and women were often called “Brown Shirts” for the color of their uniforms similar to Benito Mussolini's Black Shirts. Brown-colored shirts were chosen as the SA uniform because a large batch of them were cheaply available after Mars War 1, having originally been ordered during that war for colonial troops posted to Germany's original Martian settlements near the Outlands.

Officially, the SA became disempowered after Adolf Hitler ordered the “blood purge” of 1934. This event became known as the Night of the Long Knives. The SA was effectively superseded by the SS, although it was not formally dissolved and banned until after The Reich's final capitulation to the Allied powers in 1945.

Unofficially, at the personal request of the god Ares to Hitler, the bloodiest, most brutal, and vilest of the SA were spared extermination on that night, the Night of the Long Knives. These SA survivors were merged into the SS, their horrid genocidal talents used in the concentration camps, often in the capacity as wardens and prison guards.

She strips, handing her wears to the Gokum who dutifully puts them on in her fashion. Once she is naked, it will put her to sleep, and merge her into the wall for later extraction and reawakening.

Betty is on the bottom. Stacy is on top of the Vampire; limp and moaning, eyes glazed, drool running out of the corners of her slack, gaping mouth—awash in the throes of a debilitating orgasm that just won't quit. The Vampire's large, toothy maw is affixed to Stacy's neck. Betty looks like something profane, bestial, and yet still vaguely human. Stacy could pass for a hardcore junkie on an opiate high. There's nothing romantic about their discourse. Stacy is a sex object—the used. Betty is the user. Theirs is purely a sexual liaison. And, as aforementioned, if the Vampire loses it completely, the Lost will drain Stacy till the mundane is a lifeless husk.

Danica, using her pass key, entered the ready room an hour ago. She just stands there, watching them fuck and dutifully watching the replays on the CCTV displays.

Not interested in sex, at the moment. Danica fails to join in. Still looking for that something which has eluded previous inspections of the surveillance video, is why she watches the footage.

To pass the time, she begins to rhyme movie titles that she'd like to watch when she gets the chance. A machine, she has no sense of rhythm. So, a biological who doesn't know her well would be hard pressed to tell that she's trying to "break," they would mistake her for a faulty-box.

"Parasyte."

"Automaton Transfusion."

"Paradox Alice."

"Chemical Peel."

"The Machine."

"Automata."

Episode #057

As Benjamin Franklin, once America's premier ambassador to Europe, said: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Crossing over the Line describes the folly of the Mann Act of 1910—a United States law which made travel from one state to another by a mundane man or a woman with the intent of committing an immoral act with a supernatural being a major crime. Spawned by a national wave of “white slave trade” hysteria, the Act was created by the Congress of the United States as a weapon against forced prostitution.

This book is the first history of the Mann Act's often bizarre career, from its passage to the amendment that finally laid it low. In David J. Langum's hands, the story of the Act becomes an entertaining cautionary tale about the folly of trying to supersede ROE and legislating private interspecies morality.

Stacy is kneeling before the porcelain goddess. Translation: she's puking her guts out into the toilet. At Becky's behest, Danica took her home and put her to bed. She woke up this morning with the world's worst hangover, but oh girl, was it worth.

Head splitting migraine, stiff, sore, everything hurts like hell. There's nothing like it; being used by a Vampire. Not a thrall, still her own woman and still alive—the trifecta!

The serial vomiting leaves her weak, nauseous, and trembling, tears streaking from her eyes, but the aftermath is well worth enduring considering the unparalleled pleasure derived from getting used by a Lost.

When she finally finishes vomiting, she'll shower, put on some fresh clothes, fix breakfast, compose herself, and return to work as if the binge never happened.

In the living room, something moves out of the wall. The Gokum flip-flops between its current lie, Stacy Keibler, and its previous one, Dorothea Binz. Its “indecision” is the result of being reused too many times and not being properly wiped since its first impersonation.

Ideally its kind should only be used once, wiped thoroughly afterwards, and then disposed of. If you're going to stretch things a bit, let alone a lot, then complete erasure after every use is essential. A four-iteration lifespan is considered a lot of use, especially when the subjects in question are so involved to portray. Dorothea Binz is typical of the falsehood it has had to assume.

As the SS supervisor at the Ravensbrück concentration camp, Fräulein Binz's dedication to her work was described by her fellow Nazis as “unyielding.”

Known for patrolling the camp with a whip in one hand and a German Shepherd at her side, inmates reportedly fell silent upon her approach. Her reputation of whipping, beating and even shooting female inmates earned her the job of supervising the torture bunkers at the camp as well as training guards.

There have been five aliases in total. Stacy will make number six—more than a lot, too many. It is to kill the woman, dispose of the body, and then disappear itself for later retrieval. Leaving

behind a trail of innuendo, implication, and circumstantial evidence which purports that the real Stacy Keibler just up and left; deciding to drop out disappear of her own accord.

It moves silently across the plush carpet; naked and homicidally competent. Soon it will be wearing this woman's clothes and have assumed this woman's life. Patient, its face possessing no sign of emotion whatsoever.

As its face still refuses to stabilize upon Stacy's visage, it approaches its target from behind. The door to the bathroom is wide open. The subject of its impersonation is preoccupied heaving into the toilet. This seems so very easy. Too easy, for the kill to be of much enjoyment for it, but this will have to suffice until the next time. It prefers a challenge; someone who can put up a good fight.

Stacy stands up on shaky legs. The toilet flushes itself. She's done. Time to cleanup. Stacy moves her hands under the hands-free motion sensitive faucets of the face bowl. Water fills her cupped hands. She splashes her face and straightens up. Stacy looks at herself in the mirror above the vanity. Hieroglyphs are scrolled across her forehead.

Egyptian hieroglyphs (/ˈhaɪər.əɡlɪf/ HYR-o-GLIF) or *mdw·w·nṯr* (god's words) were a formal writing system used by the ancient Egyptians that combined logographic and alphabetic elements. Egyptians used cursive hieroglyphs for religious literature on papyrus and wood. Less formal variations of the script called hieratic and demotic, are technically not hieroglyphs.

"What the fuck!" Stacy's reaction is to the disfigurement of her scripted forehead and not to the reflection in the mirror of the doppelganger that looms behind her. It grabs her by the back of her neck and tosses her through the sliding glass doors of the shower stall. Tempered glass explodes every which way. Shards impale her back.

For that split second before it's upon her, Stacy is looking into her face being worn by someone, or rather something, else. One handed, grabbing her neck from the front this time, it lifts her off the broken glass, pinning her up against the tiled wall of the enclosure. Her blood paints the stall's tiles in broad streaks.

Instead of killing her quickly by snapping her neck like a twig, it intends to kill her slowly, incrementally squeezing its hand. Unable to scream, unable to breathe, she flays away helplessly at her attacker, as her windpipe is being progressively closed by her replacement's ever tightening grip.

Though her resistance is futile, it enjoys the fact that she's putting up a fight. She's doing better than nothing, and it was expecting nothing.

Well into her throttling, and Stacy is making croaking sounds, turning blue from asphyxia, and losing consciousness. Her vision narrows. The fight she's offering is becoming less vigorous as her body shuts down.

"Time to die, little girl," It gloats, triumphantly, as it makes a fist, rears back, with every intention of smashing her in skull. That's when Danica rams her fist through its skull.

A battered Stacy drops onto a bed of broken glass, gasping for air.

Episode #058

“There is no more lively sensation than that of pain; its impressions are certain and dependable; they never deceive as may those of the pleasure women perpetually feign and almost never experience.”—*Marquis de Sade*

If Becky hadn't asked Danica to make sure that Stacy got home safe and sound, and put her to bed, the robot would have volunteered to do so anyways. Normally, flesh is self-conscious in the presence of metal; usually expressed as either uneasiness or hostility. But, Stacy and Rowdy Rowdy's trademark coarse affectations aside, are notable exceptions: they treat Danica no different than any other person.

Although such things endear them to her, push comes to shove, she is still metal and they are still flesh. She is not their species; she's not to be taken lightly—especially when you consider her genocidal past and present vis-a-vie biologicals—neither Stacy nor Rowdy takes her lightly, let alone for granted. Colloquially speaking, “She's a certified G and a bona fide stud, and you can't teach that.” Funny saying, deadly ramifications.

Stacy fumbles with her keys, finally discerns which is the correct one to insert into the lock, and then somehow opens the door to her apartment in spite of being totally spent having been used thoroughly by the Vampire. She's intoxicated. Not from alcohol, of course. It's the result of the biochemical mayhem inflicted upon her system by being used by the Lost. When she sleeps it off, the real payback will cometh. Morning will bring the unparalleled agony of a hangover without peer. But, oh girl, it will be all worth it—a hangover without peer as a result of pleasure without peer!

A sober Danica could have easily gained access with the key, but, Stacy had insisted on being the one who unlocked the door, in that deliberate “nonnegotiable” fashion, that is characteristic of the stereotypical drunk. And. That's not to imply that Stacy is a mean drunk. But. Whether the inebriated is nice or nasty, especially when the libation is a Vampire instead of mere alcohol, the automaton wisely lets prudence dictate her course of action in these types of “designated driver” type of situations. In other words, she knows better than to argue with a drunk.

Stacy stumbles across the threshold and collapses face-down in total disarray upon the carpeted floor of the living room.

Passing out, in measured increments. Sprawled. Sobering and gibbering. Hands grasping. Her long, flawless legs invitingly spread. Yellow rivers of long blonde hair and miles of creamy-white flesh. There for the taking.

One shoe is off—the exposed toes of that foot digging into the plush carpet. The other one is still on—the pointed toe of the pump stabbing the plush with mean intentions.

The sleaziest porno director couldn't have posed her better for wanton violation.

Danica closes the door. The front door locking itself, upon its closure—the lock being a spring bolt versus a deadbolt. She picks up Stacy's keys, placing them in an ashtray on the small entry table by the front door. It's where Stacy normally keeps them.

The ashtray, which has never been used for a smoker's ashes, has the words “Rosati-Kain Catholic High School,” Stacy's old alma-mater, emblazon across it in gold-leaf.

Of course. Once inside she notices the thing, a Gokum, in the wall, although nothing in her facial expression gives away the discovery, let alone being startled by the discovery.

Urban legends and old wives' tales aside, thinking machines don't affect emotions, they possess real emotions. But, like Vulcans, they can completely suppress them at will. Being metal, with a nature quite different than that of flesh, when they do emote, it's their version of love, hate, anger, rage, happiness, affection, sexual excitation, etc.

The uninvited guest is a fairly recent addition. It wasn't there when Danica attended the last card party that Stacy held. She would have noticed. Usually Stacy's card parties are biz whiz, this time it was poker, for a much needed change of pace.

The self-aware robot rolls Stacy onto her back; Stacy having finally passed out completely is now for all intents and purposes nothing more than a ragdoll. There are a lot of notions of a carnal nature being entertained by the neurons firing in the protoplasmic brain of the sentient artificial. Most prominently: "I thank you, beforehand. I enjoy being used. Do with me as you wish. You can use me anytime you wish for however long you wish. I'm a whore. Fuck me, everybody else does."

Of course, Danica's pertinent interests aside, in reality, the discerning Stacy is neither a whore, nor does everybody get to fuck her, but that's beside the point.

Danica's contemplations are dealing with her fantasy of Stacy as a sex object, who happens to be a woman, who's incidentally a real person with their own needs, wishes, and aspirations that might be at odds with and in total disagreement with Danica's.

In fantasy:

Giddily, Danica disrobes. Danica to Stacy: it is x's and o's. How long will that last? Not long. The school girl crush dissipates, abruptly. Heavy petting ensues. She rips off the clothes of the defenseless Stacy. There's a pause. Danica kneels down beside Stacy. She lovingly strokes Stacy's cheeks with the back of her hands—right hand to right cheek, left hand to left cheek. Danica gets "moist." Things escalate. She French kisses Stacy—sharp probing—her long facile tongue doing wanton violation in its oral frolic. Pie hole thoroughly explored. Romantic delete.

Of course, that's "romantic delete"—"no longer romantic"—in the context of how romantic is defined by sentient robots when copulating with anyone who is not synthetic not "their" own robotic kind.

By mainstream human standards. Only a human who's sexually depraved would associate anything even remotely romantic with what's going on here.

Danica cops a feel, or two, or three, ad infinitum. Her "touch" is? Rough and crude. Apish. Definitely, it's romantic delete by robot standards.

Needless to say. A Goon would be proud, and quite turned on—grinning literally from ear to ear—in response to what's going on here. For them, torrid consensual sex is indistinguishable from the vilest, most violent rape.

Danica gets on top of Stacy, pinning the mundane down in a spread-eagle fashion, grasping Stacy's wrists, her ankles fettering Stacy's ankles. Ride the mare. Consensual, only if you consider rape consensual, that is. Then again, that's by ROE that applies to humans, and Danica isn't human.

Stacy starts to act like she's coming to. Dominatrix to submissive: Danica bitch-slaps Stacy back to dreamland with her fists, knocking out a couple of Stacy's teeth in the process. Subjugation reestablished.

Additionally, now with her face battered and bruised, an unconscious and thus again unwittingly complicit Stacy is more appealing to the robot. No surprise there.

Foreplay? Danica sodomizes Stacy. She starts off fucking Stacy with her thrusting knee, then she does the girl in earnest with her fist. Vagina, first. Then, after repositioning the girl (flopping the girl over), she does Stacy in the ass—knee thrusts, then fist, in the bunghole.

What follows? The main course. Sexplay. She grinds pussy on pussy, at length. She sits on Stacy's face and grinds her pussy on the girl's mouth. She grinds her anus on the girl's mouth.

In summation, metal to flesh? Degenerate humiliation—the kinkiest realization of the BDSM fetish—humiliation and degradation taken to the sickest nth degree.

In the human context? Erotic humiliation—the consensual use of psychological humiliation for the erotic excitement or sexual arousal of the person being humiliated and demeaned or of the person humiliating, or of some spectator, and may be part of BDSM and other sexual role play or accompanied by the sexual stimulation of one or both partners in the activity. Erotic humiliation may take place in private or in public. The humiliation need not be sexual in nature; as with many other sexual activities, it is the feelings derived from it that are sought, regardless of the nature of the actual activity. This is usually a feeling of submission for the person being humiliated, and dominance, for the person doing the humiliation. It can be verbal or physical, or in private or public. Often it can become ritualized, and unlike some sexual variations it can also be easily carried out over a long distance (such as online). Humiliation is an example of the power dynamic that exists in a D/s or M/s relationship. For example, in an activity such as spanking, the sought effect is primarily the humiliation; the activity is just a means to that end.

While fantasy and fascination with erotic humiliation is a prevalent part of BDSM and other sexual role play, relatively little has been written on it. Humiliation play can, however, be taken to a point where it becomes emotionally or psychologically distressing to one or the other partner, especially if it is public humiliation. Erotic humiliation can become extreme enough to be considered a form of edge play, which some consider may best be approached with advance negotiation and use of a safe word. This is a highly subjective issue, and depends greatly on context.

In reality:

The robot gently scoops Stacy off the floor and carries her friend into the bedroom. No hanky-panky ensues. Danica lies Stacy on the bed, loosens up the mundane's clothes for comfort, and lets herself out. The front door locking itself, upon her closing it—as aforementioned, the lock being a spring bolt versus a deadbolt.

Gokum are very strong and very durable, but they have the same physical, biological, and sensory limitations as the species that they are so masterful at masquerading as. As such, Danica's witnessed exit was a lie. She never left the apartment. How was this elaborate deception pulled off? Misdirection, sleight of hand, and holography. What illusionist worth their salt wouldn't be envious?

Using Stacy as bait, Danica stands in the middle of the living room and waits, possessed of the limitless patience of metal. Her active camouflaged engaged. A military-purposed robot, she is adept at infiltration and exfiltration, among other things, as well as her personal favorite: CQB.

Now, the game of cat and mouse ensues. With the only question being: when all is said and done, who will turn out to be the cat and who will turn out to be the mouse? The end-game will, of course, answer that, as it always does.

Close Quarters Combat (CQC), Close Quarters Battle (CQB) or Close Combat Fighting is a physical confrontation between two or more combatants. It can take place between military units, police and criminals, and other similar actions. In warfare it usually consists of small units or teams engage the enemy with personal weapons at very short range, up to 30 meters, from proximity hand-to-hand combat to close quarter target negotiation with short range firearms. In the typical close quarters combat scenario, the attackers try a very fast, violent takeover of a vehicle or structure controlled by the defenders, who usually have no easy way to withdraw. Because enemies, hostages/civilians, and fellow operators can be closely intermingled, close quarters combat demands a rapid assault and a precise application of lethal force. The operators need great proficiency with their weapons, and the ability to make split-second decisions in order to minimize accidental casualties.

Criminals sometimes use close quarters combat techniques, e.g., an armed robbery or jailbreak, but most of the terminology comes from training used to prepare soldiers, police, and other authorities. Therefore, much material relating to close quarters combat is written from the perspective of the authorities who must break into the stronghold where the opposing force (OPFOR) has barricaded itself. Typical examples would be commando operations behind enemy lines and hostage rescues.

Although there is considerable overlap, close quarters combat is not synonymous with urban warfare, now sometimes known by the military acronyms MOUT (military operations in urban terrain), FIBUA (fighting in built-up areas) or OBUA (Operations in Built Up Areas) in the West. Urban warfare is a much larger field, including logistics and the role of crew-served weapons like heavy machine guns, mortars, and mounted grenade launchers, as well as artillery, armor, and air support. In close quarters combat, the emphasis is on small infantry units using light, compact weapons that one person can carry and use easily in tight spaces, such as carbines, submachine guns, shotguns, pistols, knives, and bayonets. As such, close quarters combat is a tactical concept that forms a part of the strategic concept of urban warfare, but not every instance of close quarters combat is necessarily urban warfare—for example, a jungle is potentially a stage for close quarters combat.

Episode #059

“So long as the laws remain such as they are today, employ some discretion: loud opinion forces us to do so; but in privacy and silence let us compensate ourselves for that cruel chastity we are obliged to display in public.”—*Marquis de Sade*

“You were expecting, Madame Yun. Instead, you get me,” quips Michele Bachmann who’s seated by an open window of the hotel suite, casually sipping from a frosty glass of cold milk. She’s dressed gamely and smartly in perls, a Koo, and careys.

In this world, Michele Bachmann is a hot, buxom, leggy, openly pro-Darque divorcee, the honorable U.S. Senator Republican for the great state of Minnesota—“honorable” being an adjective associated with of her title, not a statement about her personal character. Blue-eyed blonde Senator Bachmann is more than just a pretty face. She is immortal, unaging, fifty-something, and still very much human—neither supernatural, nor superhuman.

Security, of the Secret Service favor, suddenly materializes in the room. The adjunctive “seemingly materializes” applies, but their appearance is the result of switching off their active camo, not the result of their teleportation into the room. They were present in the suite from the git-go, but inaccessible to “ordinary” sight, until now.

Of course, being demonic, Becky could see them as soon as she entered the room—her vision switching from ordinary to demonic automatically and immediately when she came into their presence. It was an instinctual reaction of her supernatural nature. Nothing conscious on her part was needed to trigger this appropriate and very expected reaction.

An added note. The suite is completely shielded. So the suits couldn’t have teleported into the room anyway.

“You know who I am?”

“Yes, Senator.”

“You don’t like me very much. I have a sixth sense about that sort of thing.”

“With all due respect, Senator, I don’t know you well enough to have formed any opinion about you. I only know of you, in point of fact.”

“You may sit down.” Senator Bachmann points to the comfy chair across from hers. She’s smiling, a very friendly confident smile, but her mouth implies menace. It’s the kind of smile a seated U.S. President sports to a visiting dignitary when that high official’s country has done something that displeased the President in question.

“I’d rather stand.”

“I’d rather that you sat down.” Senator Bachmann adds needed emphasis to her request, this time. Becky capitulates.

“Thank you, Senator.” The Vampire sits down in the indicated chair.

“Would you like some milk, or would you prefer blood?”

“I’m good.”

“Now that we’ve gotten the niceties out of the way, let’s get down to business.”

Becky starts to say something, but the Senator cuts her off with a frown. The frown switches back to a smile when Becky wisely chooses to not utter another single word.

“You will do as you’re told. You will speak only when you’re supposed to. You are an attractive, well-mannered, travelling companion. Finish your current task, and then you shall be with me for a while when Congress breaks session for the summer. You may speak, now.”

“Am I to assume that I am to be shared between you and Madame Yun?”

“Yes. And I will assume that you will confirm this after I dismiss you today after this first informal orientation meeting. We will have two more informal ones this week, and then the formal ones begin next week. None of which will interfere with your graduate school classes, your security job, your current assignment for Queen Akasha, or any other aspect of your personal or public life. Capish?”

Becky says nothing. The Senator smiles broadly at this. The menace erases from her smile. She is pleased by the Lost’s reaction. So far, everything that she has heard about the Vampire has proved to be true. This is much better than she could have hoped for.

“You may speak.”

“I understand.”

“Madame Yun and I have a long-standing relationship. You will be the private, confidential secretary for both of us when we Madame Yun and I are on shared travel. You will be the private, confidential secretary for Madame Yun when you travel with her and I am not travelling with y’all. You will be my private, confidential secretary when you travel with me and Madame Yun is not travelling with us. Discretion is key. The proper clearances and the need-to-know will always apply. Madame Yun’s claims on your time will always take precedent over mine. Again. It goes without saying that. You will confirm all of this to the letter.” The Senator senses that her new resource has a question. “You may speak.”

“When you and I travel without Madame Yun, will Ms. Krige be accompanying us?”

The question makes the Senator’s heart flutter. “*This girl really is everything and the kitchen sink, too.*” the Senator thinks.

“Yes, Ms. Krige will be accompanying us in those ‘singular’ situations.”

To wit, Becky is reminded of Kevin Owen’s NXT catchphrase: “I will fight anyone and everyone, until I’m the only one. Bet against me if you want. But, it’s my turn now. I am the future.”

Episode #060

“Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things that escape those who dream only at night.”—Edgar Allan Poe

“I’m in the mood for a bit of storytelling. This fictional discourse of mine concerns a 1950s nuclear propulsion project. For other spaceflight vehicles called *Orion*, see *Orion* in astronautics factious, using search engine *Bing*. Being that this is an imaginary tale about the goings on in a totally made-up alternate universe; security clearance and need-to-know do not apply.”

The Senator’s Secret Service detail leaves the room, taking up their assigned security positions outside of the hotel suite. The last agent out the front door locks it.

Now, for the promised fable:

The USS Ascension was a massive multi-generation Orion-class starship, utilizing nuclear propulsion, which was part of the never completed Project Orion that began under the Kennedy administration.

Project Orion was a study of a spacecraft The USS Ascension intended to be directly propelled by a series of explosions of atomic bombs behind the craft (nuclear pulse propulsion). Early versions of this vehicle were proposed to take off from the ground with significant associated nuclear fallout; later versions were presented for use only in space.

The idea of rocket propulsion by combustion of explosive substance was first proposed by Russian explosives expert Nikolai Kibalchich in 1881, and in 1891 similar ideas were developed independently by German engineer Hermann Ganswindt. General proposals of nuclear propulsion were first made by Stanislaw Ulam in 1946, and preliminary calculations were made by F. Reines and Ulam in a Los Alamos memorandum dated 1947. The actual project, initiated in 1958, was led by Ted Taylor at General Atomics and physicist Freeman Dyson, who at Taylor’s request took a year away from the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton to work on the project.

The Orion concept offered high thrust and high specific impulse, or propellant efficiency, at the same time. The unprecedented extreme power requirements for doing so would be met by nuclear explosions, of such power relative to the vehicle’s mass as to be survived only by using external detonations without attempting to contain them in internal structures. As a qualitative comparison, traditional chemical rockets—such as the Saturn V that took the Apollo program to the Moon—produce high thrust with low specific impulse, whereas electric ion engines produce a small amount of thrust very efficiently. Orion would have offered performance greater than the most advanced conventional or nuclear rocket engines then under consideration. Supporters of Project Orion felt that it had potential for cheap interplanetary travel, but it lost political approval over concerns with fallout from its propulsion.

The Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 is generally acknowledged to have ended the project. However, from Project Longshot to Project Daedalus, Mini-Mag Orion, and other proposals which reach engineering analysis at the level of considering thermal power dissipation, the principle of external nuclear pulse propulsion to maximize survivable power has remained common among serious concepts for interstellar flight without external power beaming and for very high-performance interplanetary flight. Such later proposals have tended to modify the basic principle by envisioning equipment driving detonation of much smaller fission or fusion pellets, although in

contrast Project Orion's larger nuclear pulse units (nuclear bombs) were based on less speculative technology.

Reaction from the peanut gallery:

"You may speak. And, just for the record, whenever we are alone, as we are now, you can speak freely."

"An interesting story, to say the least, Senator."

The Senator sets her now empty glass upon the small table by her chair. She crosses and uncrosses her bare silky-smooth legs, flashing nothing untoward in the process. A nervous tell, that's actually a ruse which she has spent years cultivating. The Senator is a very experienced politician. So, when it comes to her body English, you only read what she wants you to read, nothing more and nothing else. And, like a lot of successful politicians and business people, she's a borderline sociopath, which compounds the difficulty on getting an accurate read of her true emotions.

By the way, it's worth noting that when it comes to legs, the Senator is genetically blessed in that area. Her gams are devoid of any hint of imperfection.

"So my fable did not bore you?" The Senator leans forward in her chair, and in doing so, she tastefully flashes a mouthwatering glimpse down her creamy expanse of C-cup cleavage.

"No it didn't, Senator."

Unsolicited, based solely on what she's gleaned from the girl's dossier, the Senator places her hand upon Becky's knee. Although this would clearly be seen as sexual harassment in the outside world; here, behind closed doors, neither woman sees it that way. It's seen by both as part of a needed feeling out process which is quite a bit more than just sexual in nature. This is about the determining the boundaries of power that will define their business relationship.

"High praise indeed. I'm flattered. I know you're a budding physicist and I was so in fear that my story would not hold your interest, especially with it not being factual and me a non-scientist making it up on the fly so-to-speak. Because it's improvised, I never end up telling it exactly the same way when I orate. Been doing the little bugger since high school."

"I must say you do it well, Senator."

The Senator wets her lips, nonchalantly.

"Do you find me physically attractive?"

"I'm straight." Becky pauses for maximum effect. "But. I'm flexible. So, yes, I do find you very attractive, Senator."

"Good to know. Good to know. I had heard that you were that way. Now I have confirmation from the horse's mouth so-to-speak. Of course, I make it no secret what my proclivities are."

But for all her renowned flexibility, as aforementioned, Becky also has that one glaring limitation. She loathes the choices that civilian life offers. The girl prefers the rigor of the military and therefore it's no surprise that she thrives in the stricture that is the closed, caste-based society of supernatural beings.

Therefore, the sternness implicit in the Senator's voice, something that she expects of an authority figure, when speaking to her heartens the girl. Oftentimes in the Politically Correct world that she has to endure, it's a quality that she finds sorely lacking in the communication of bosses.

The Senator briefly and lovingly squeezes Becky's knee, then she removes her coveting hand and leans back in her chair. Momentarily she opens her frown-of-a-mouth enough so that you can see her tongue thrashing about like a restless snake in her large, ugly maw.

Thinking, hoping, that this is all not a coincidence, that Madame Yun witnessed Count Orlok's murder, a murder Becky is investigating, and the Dragon is in cahoots with the Senator, with her Becky being shared between Madame Yun and Senator Bachmann, and on top of that the suspicion fueled by the Senator's Orion story, the Vampire goes for broke fully understanding the consequences if her hunch is wrong.

"Senator. Have you seen a movie called *The Philadelphia Experiment*?"

"It sort of sounds familiar. A brief synopsis should suffix to jog my memory."

"And I quote, Senator, from the amazon.com Web site. The origins of this story are not science-fiction – they are science-fact. In 1943 the U.S. Office of Naval Research conducted a series of tests at the Philadelphia Naval Yard to develop a sophisticated camouflage system to make ships invisible to radar. During the final test aboard the destroyer the Battleship Eldridge, something went wrong – very wrong. This film explores beyond reality to ask the question 'what if?' Two young seamen get caught in a violent tornado-like vortex and fall through a time warp to a different era – 1984. Desperately they struggle to find a way back to their own time, but their efforts become all the more vital as the rift in time threatens to suck present-day earth back to the past. Michael Pare (*Streets of Fire*, *Eddie and the Cruisers*) and Nancy Allen (*Carrie*, *Dressed to Kill*) star in this psychological sci-fi hit."

"Come to think of it, I have. I remember the original movie as being okay, a typical B-movie, and the sequel as being even more low-budget and positively dreadful."

They share a school girl's giggle.

"So, Senator, you were also there when Count Orlok was murdered?"

"No. Neither Madame Yun nor I was there physically when Count Orlok was murdered."

"But, Senator, you did witness the crime?"

"Yes, we did."

"Thank you, Senator. You have been very helpful."

"Glad to be of service."

Episode #061

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.”—*Helen Keller*

Wernher von Braun: NASA icon and former SS officer was an example of the public face of Operation Paper Clip. Used as a poster boy for the program. He was touted, by the League of Nations and later by the United Nations, as one of those “good” Nazis who wasn’t a war criminal, a brilliant scientist whose intellectual resource was being exploited for the betterment of humanity—one of the living, breathing spoils of war.

There was the obvious contradiction, of course, which von Braun and Nazi associates like Arthur Rudolph, Kurt Debus, and Hubertus Strughold exemplified.

When the then Secretary of War, Harry S. Truman, authorized the U.S. Army’s controversial Operation Paper Clip, in August 1945, he expressly ordered that anyone found “to have been a member of the Nazi party and more than a nominal participant in its activities, or an active supporter of Nazism militarism” would be excluded.

Under this criterion von Braun and Nazi scientists like himself, should have been ineligible to participate in and thus be repatriated by Operation Paper Clip. A member of numerous Nazi organizations, he also held rank in the SS. His initial intelligence file described him as “a security risk.”

In the late 1950s redacted government documents were leaked to the New York Times newspaper that alluded to collusion between Operation Paper Clip and unidentified supernatural beings. Namely, that select participants were being “sponsored” by supernaturals. The nature of the secrecy implied these sponsored individuals included alleged Nazi war criminals, maybe even some convicted ones who had been spared the gallows.

Upon that public disclosure, followers of the Humanist Movement began targeting these sponsored participants in Operation Paper Clip. First outing the participants and then harassing them, with the intent of making their life a living hell. Their motivation had nothing to do with exposing these people so that they could be brought to justice, had nothing to do with their Nazi past, let alone the war crimes that the sponsored may have or did commit. The Humanists’ beef was with the alleged involvement of supernaturals with the sponsored.

Then, in 1961, John Amos Brown and his wife Beth, members of The Habitat for Humanity, a militant splinter group of the radical wing of the Humanist Movement, so extremist in fact that the mainstream Humanists came to disavow them, took it to the next level and, following in the footsteps of militant anti-abortionists, began killing the sponsored. Six sponsored and their families were killed before the spree of John and Beth Brown was ended by one of the sponsors of the slain.

SHANGHAI (AP)—People unable to contact friends and relatives streamed into hospitals Thursday, anxious for information after a stampede during New Year’s celebrations in Shanghai’s historic waterfront area killed 36 people in the worst disaster to hit one of China’s showcase cities in recent years.

The Shanghai government said 47 others received hospital treatment, including 13 who were seriously injured, after the chaos about a half-hour before midnight. Seven of the injured people had left hospitals by Thursday afternoon.

The Shanghai government information office said one Taiwanese was among the dead, and two Taiwanese and one Malaysian were among the injured.

The deaths and injuries occurred at Chen Yi Square in Shanghai's popular riverfront Bund area, an avenue lined with art deco buildings from the 1920s and 1930s when Shanghai was home to international banks and trading houses. The area is often jammed with people during major events.

Local officials are downplaying rumors about a possible connection between a certain persona non grata and the root cause of the incident. Colloquially and collectively known as "Divine Shadow," a handful of witnesses claimed to have seen this person him/her/it in the aftermath of the stampede. Then again, it's common place, in Asia, for Shadow sightings to be associated with disasters that occur during New Year's Chinese and Western celebrations—the Chinese New Year occurs in February, the start date changing from year to year, with celebrations lasting two to three weeks. Of interesting note is that no Asian mundane ever publicly blames the Divine Shadow as villain—instead implying that it's a matter of coincidence and fate—behind closed doors, though, it's oftentimes a different matter altogether—discretion being the better part of valor, not to mention ROE, and just plain old common sense.

Danica expects the next move to come from the Gokum. She is wrong.

There are many ways to gate jump; a gate being defined as a universe. You can use a starship, a stargate, a TARDIS, a ROOM, a teleportation device, a Navigator, etc. Dragons can gate in their native Dragon form. And, then there's smoothing: the preferred gate jumping method of The Lexx aka The Amazons and their robotic avatars their living, thinking machines The Shadows.

The Shadow smoothes materializes into the living room, an intricate swirl of black smoke that coalesces into a corporeal form. The gate jump is so smooth and effortless, hence its name, that it can easily be mistaken for the mere switching off of a cloaking device.

Head down, Shadow is robed, gloved, and booted in what appears to be black rubber. Shadow's onyx, latex attire is in actuality made from human flesh—the pure black skin of the darkest Negroes. The hood of Shadow's flowing robe obscures Shadows' face. Shadow takes a few steps toward where the Gokum is in the wall, then stops as if Shadow is suddenly aware of someone or something in the room.

Head now raised, Shadow turns completely around and looks directly at where a cloaked Danica is standing. The Shadow's face is still lost in the light-devouring abyss of the hood's seemingly bottomless depths. It's as if Shadow has no head, let alone a face.

What looks like an archaic 1920s hand-held radio microphone materializes in Shadow's gloved hand. Shadow holds the device up to where Shadow's face should be. Shadows begins to speak in an androgynous voice in a language that is totally incomprehensible to Danica. As the Shadow continues to utter a bit stream of what sounds like gibberish to Danica, her translator strains to make sense of what Shadow is saying. Then, abruptly, Shadow stops "talking." Shadow's "microphone" disappears.

Another figure, dressed just like the Shadow, smoothes into the living room. The figure pulls back its flesh hood revealing the bald head of a young woman. Arrogance, loathing, and disdain paints her face—the normal expression for her cunning carnivorous cannibalistic curvaceous kind—they wouldn't know how to smile if their very life depended on it.

She is a Lexx, and they only “express” themselves in one gender—namely, female. Two-faced: A Lexx is a ravenous, flesh-eating dinosaur; a species of Raptor whose evolutionary release is as an apparent human woman form who feeds upon humans. It is in this human form that the Lexx always represents.

Egyptian hieroglyphs cover the top of the scowling alabaster's head. All Lexx are albinos, hence their alabaster complexion. All Lexx are bald with skull tattoos—their “ink” scripting their caste and name, among other things. Her tattoos which are in royal purple indicate that she is a high priestess of The Temple of Sekhmet—purple is the favorite color of her goddess Sekhmet—and that her name is Giggerota.

Alongside Ares, Sekhmet is the goddess of fire and war—a partnership that Ares wisely goes along with. She has the head of a Raptor and the body of a woman. In her former life, she was Hathor. She is married to Ptah, the god of healing. They balance each other. Her breath created the desert planets in Creation, for example, the desert planet of Dune where Spice is mined.

The Lexx priestess looks directly at Danica, then walks over to the Shadow and begins bit streaming with it, seemingly paying no mind to Danica. They converse at length. Then, for no discernable reason discernable by Danica the Lexx stops talking with the device the Shadow, and says something nonsensical in English while looking and pointing at Danica.

“For the *Haunting of Morella*, they said that they wanted ‘meat and potatoes.’ Translation: the misuse of female actors for prurient means.”

Shadow lowers Shadow's “head” and says something equally nonsensical in English.

“*Threshold* reminded me of something Norm from Cheers said in an episode: ‘It's a dog-eat-dog world and I'm wearing Milk-Bone underwear.’”

Danica abruptly shuts down. When she finally reboots it's morning, and she can hear a violent struggle in the bathroom.

Episode #062

“Mmmhmm. Fresh Meat tastes better than Frozen! You! You’re a Waste of Skin. But you, Girlfriend! Giggerota will eat first!”~Giggerota (from the 2nd LEXX Move: Supernova)

There Danica stands in stealthy, mute testament—visible to the Lexx and her avatar—cloaked and invisible to the Gokum.

As if it’s locked into the single-minded execution of its task, to the exclusion of anything and anyone else, the Gokum ignores Divine Shadow—the collaterals Giggerota and her Shadow. It also ignores the apparent interaction between Divine Shadow and someone or something that it cannot detect—the discrepancy. In other words, inexplicably as well as uncharacteristically, the Gokum deals with the collaterals and the discrepancy by simply ignoring them.

Being an XRN, in spite of the shutdown of Danica’s consciousness her ego and superego, a recording of the proceedings is being made by the passive scanners of her Id. She has been shut down, but not completely shut down like she and Walsh were in Count Orlok’s apartment. The clandestine transmissions of these scanners are being relayed to backup servers in a secure remote location and directly into Becky’s brain.

Becky remotely watches what’s going on with all the detached interest of a vile bloodsucker using her mundane BFF Stacy as bait. Discerning the nature of the Divine Shadow’s involvement in all of this never crosses her mind. She knows that whatever it is, it doesn’t matter. They are not the culprit that she seeks in connection with Count Orlok’s murder. Thanks to the Senator, she now knows who that culprit is—at least the vicinity, though not the exact address, so to speak.

How, from that scatterbrained spook’s conversation with the Senator did Becky make that discovery?

Because one thing led to another, as they tend to do in life. And as luck would have it, Becky happened to make the right choices—stringing the correct guesses together by chance. She’s always been a very lucky girl in life. Falling into to fortune by fate.

Ergo, it wasn’t from that bimbo conversation that she learned the identity, in general terms, of the culprit. It’s was from what followed it, the superseding subsequent convolution, that she did.

Let’s digress:

After the Orion story which on cursory inspection of an unknowing anyone’s “casual” eavesdropping would seem to be the wild hair that the Senator was pulling out of her tight, exceedingly fetching ass. Seemingly unconnected to anything. That “What the fuck is she bringing this Orion shit up for?” moment!

But, Becky correctly interpreted the Senator’s blatantly plagiarized *Orion* discourse as being an admission by the Senator of her witness to the murder. A hunch which the Senator confirmed with her by-the-book reaction to Becky’s properly footnoted review of *The Philadelphia Experiment*. Huh? Not huh. Classic spook spy stuff, of the U.S. Military Intelligence flavor.

Yet, there’s nothing in Becky’s military record that indicates she was ever in U.S. Military Intelligence. Just like the way she ran diagnostics on that EvR with Stacy, her performance with the Senator implies otherwise.

Once the Senator confirmed indirectly in her reaction to *The Philadelphia Experiment* that she did witness the murder, it was clear sailing. Becky was allowed, per ROE, to dispense with the obtuse and ask the Senator two direct questions concerning the murder. Taking full advantage, Becky engaged in a terse to-the-point cross-examination.

Point counterpoint. Were you there, Senator? No, we were not physically there. But you did witness the murder? Yes, we did. Becky asking about the Senator's singular involvement. The Senator always volunteering her answers in the plural, referring specifically and explicitly to Madame Yun and herself. Bare bones questions. Answers that spoke volumes. Questions and answers. An effective cross boils down to: It's all about who doing what, and, in this case, the two gals doing it were pros.

Ergo, Madame Yun and the Senator watched the murder remotely, they were together at the time, and there was no one else present with them wherever they were at the time. Becky's assumption is that the murder likely happened during a teleconference that Madame Yun and the Senator were having with Count Orlok and the utmost discretion was dictate. Becky, of course, couldn't confirm that assumption with the Senator in a follow-up. She'd already spent her two directs as her cross.

Then, Becky hit the mother lode. The Senator decided to tell for no apparent reason, although Becky's gut told her there must be a reason, some very off-color jokes about Humanists. It got even ditsier. In what turned out to be halfway through the monologue, the Senator asked Becky to contribute some appropriately inappropriate jokes of her own about the "Creation is for Humans Only" crowd. Buddy Hackett to Buddy Hackett, so to speak.

During Becky's subsequent clue-laden comedic back-n-forth with the good Senator, the Senator dropped a proverbial bombshell, telling her in so many words that militant Humanists killed Count Orlok because they thought that somehow his death would flush out the Operation Paper Clip participant that he was sponsoring. The only thing was, according to the Senator, Count Orlok was not a sponsor. The murderers got it wrong.

There is no official connection between Senator Michele Bachmann and either Operation Paper Clip or Oversight, and, yet here was the Senator divulging privileged information about an investigation being conducted by Oversight into the extent of the Humanists' penetration of Operation Paper Clip as part of its Oversight's ongoing investigation of the Humanists Movement in totality. During said investigation, quite by accident, overlap occurred between Oversight's inquiry into the Humanist Movement's penetration of Operation Paper Clip and the murder of Count Orlok. What's most telling to Becky is not just that the Senator is privy to all this, but that the Senator knows that Becky has the security clearance and the need-to-know to be briefed about the matter. Of course, Becky never scratched her itch by asking what the connection was. Smart girl, indeed.

Episode #063

“I’m so fast that last night I turned off the light switch in my hotel room and was in bed before the room was dark.”—*Muhammad Ali*

For humans, hearing is the last sense to go. The reverse is also true. Hearing is the first to return. Stacy wakes up to the worst hangover imaginable and memories of the best orgasm attainable. The fact that she regains her hearing first is lost in the tsunami of agony and echoes of ecstasy. Her world is the epitome of flash photography. Sights, sounds, tastes, and smells are a shutterbug collages as she serially regains them.

Hieroglyphs are scrolled across her forehead, but she’s too out of it to notice in the full-length mirror across from her. She vaguely remembers Danica bringing her home at Becky’s request. A lot of things are a haze at the moment. Cogitation will not be her strong suit for a while.

She rolls off the bed and ends up dumping herself unceremoniously on the floor, face down. After what seems like forever, she finally stands up on very shaky legs. That’s when her equilibrium goes kaboom.

The room begins to spin and she almost ends up dumping herself back on the bed. She lunges for the door, grabs hold for all it’s worth, and waits for the room to stop spinning. When it does stop, her stomach threatens to heave, turning inside out, figuratively not literally, of course. After a short pause, Stacy wins the battle with her stomach.

When she sufficiently regains her equilibrium, she lets go of the door and staggers into the living room. Her intended destination is the toilet in the bathroom. Focused on her task, semi-aware of her surroundings, still disoriented from the hangover that is the aftermath of having been fed upon by her favorite Vampire, Stacy does not notice a transparency manifest itself as she moves past her prized Italian-designed Sunpan Modern Bugatti couch.

The apparition is a white block of what looks like marble sitting atop a Brera Lusso coffee table. A brief manifestation, it only appears for a few seconds. Ticker taping across the cube were glyphs identical to those scripted on Stacy’s forehead. The cube is an Orphan Black and the glyphs are its passcode.

Orphan Black is a Lync-Webex device used for telecoms where discretion is utmost. Somewhere, somehow, it has become “attached” to Stacy. Of note is that there is an identical coffee table in Count Orlok’s apartment. But, there is no such device setting on top of it, or, at least none appears to be.

As if triggered by the apparition, the Gokum steps out of the wall. It will replace the girl and make it look like she just skipped out for no reason in particular. Its instability expressed in its shifting between the portrayal of its previous lie and its current one.

The game’s been afoot for a while, and, only now, with this last revelation, does Becky have all the clues that she needs to solve this conundrum.

Episode #064

“AJ Lee vs. Paige. I didn’t get Batman/Joker from their feud. I got demented quasi-lesbians that no one knew whom to cheer for. No fault to the wrestlers, it was just very poor storytelling in my opinion.”—Jay Robbins

“How’s she doing, doc?”

“She’s alive. Are you the one who fed on her?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Then you’re the only reason why she’s alive. If it weren’t for your residuals still in her system from your feeding, she’d be dead. A mortal has no business being able to survive the beating she took, otherwise.”

“Glad to hear it.”

Stacy is lying on her bed. Cleaned up, shot up with nanobotics medical nanomachines which are repairing her body much quicker and more completely than her body could do on its own. No scars or scar tissue will ensue. Healed Biblically as if she were demon, thanks to the microscopic machines swarming in her body—machines that will shut down and be disposed of by her body when their work is done.

She opens her eyes to see the EMT and Becky jaw jacking about her situation. She doesn’t bother assailing Becky for being such a cold, hard bitch about her condition or her near death experience. And, knowing her BFF so well, she wouldn’t put it past Becky having used her for bait in all this. If so, Becky will confirm it with something sassy, maybe fatback too.

Used as bait—chum for the sharks. You’d expect such calculation from Danica, being a robot and all. Becky is flesh but she does the metal one better. Even when she was human, for as long as Stacy has known her, Becky has been this ice princess, when push comes to shove.

Becky and the EMT finish their chitchat. The Vampire walks over and sits on the edge of the bed beside her friend.

“And how are we feeling? Nicely I hope,” Becky teases, fat and sassy, fit to be tied.

There it is, confirmation to Stacy that she was used, and used shamelessly. Stacy sits up and bitch-slaps Becky. Her face is flush with anger at the Lost Girl. She is genuinely mad.

“I feel much better now.”

The moment passes. They hug in the sisterly manner of two friends who are so close that they might as well have been born sisters. Stacy long ago learned that you have to take Becky at face value. Get mad at her, then get over it.

Becky is amoral, but have her for a friend and no enemy should you fear. Because if she would do this to someone she loves, imagine what she would do to someone she has no feeling for. Let alone someone she hates.

“Forgive me for using you?”

“No.”

“I’ll do better next time. Scout’s honor.”

“You were never a scout.”

“How right you are.”

The glyphs are gone from Stacy’s forehead. But Becky, being a demon, can rekall them; rekall being the literal way that demons and machines remember things. As such, they (demons) have photogenic memories and can relive an event as if they were metal, immersing themselves in the sights, sounds, smells, and touch of that which they are remembering. And, as if they are Vulcan doing a mind meld, they can share that rekall with another being supernatural or mundane, flesh or metal.

Betty places her hand on Stacy shoulder and shares what she saw remotely. In the living room, as CSI does their thing, checking the crime scene for forensics, Danica does the same with the remote server as well as sharing in on Betty’s rekall having no need for physical contact with the Vampire to do so. All the robot needs is proximity and Becky’s telepathic permission.

Episode #065

“Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake.”—*Napoléon Bonaparte*

The night auditors night managers typically handle both the duties of the front desk agent and some of the duties of the accounting department. This is necessitated by the fact that most fiscal days close at or around midnight, and the normal workday of the employees in the accounting department does not extend to cover this time of day.

In larger hotels, night auditors may work alongside other nighttime employees, such as security officers, telephone attendants, room service attendants, and bellhops. In smaller hotels and motels, the night auditor may work alone, and may even only be “on-call,” meaning that once he or she completes running the daily reports, the auditor retires to an area away from the desk while remaining available to attend to unexpected requests from guests. In the smallest hotels and some bed and breakfast establishments, the front desk may close entirely overnight. Guests in such facilities are typically given a contact number for an employee or manager, who may be sleeping on the premises or live nearby, for use in case of emergency.

Becky initiated the share (slang for rekall), therefore in rekall terms, she is the night auditor. Telepathically speaking, she is privy to all aspects of exchanges associated with the rekall. Psi Corps is openly envious of this arcane that only demons possess. But it the psionic bounty doesn’t stop there.

Being a nighter also allows her to empathically assume the perspective of all the participants in the share. In the first-person and the third-person, during and after the share, if she so chooses. Therefore, post rekall in third-person mode, she can, and often does, engage in virtual conferences with the participants one-on-one or/and with all of them at once. For example, in this instance, the practice allows her to use virtual empathic recreations of Stacy and Danica as sounding boards.

So when all is said and done, a “refreshed” Stacy is back on her feet, and the collaterals CSI, EMT’s, etc. are gone, the three girls retire to the living room for a powwow.

“Stacy, why did you ‘refer’ to the Orphan as a *device*, during the share?”

“Because that’s what it is, B.”

“And you, Danica?”

“Yes?”

“You ‘refer’ to it as an artifact, and that’s how you conceptualize it. Why?”

“Because that is what it is.”

Stacy looks lost.

“Okay, smarty pants, what is it? What am I missing that the tin head is getting?”

“Don’t get your panties in a bunch. I’ll get there.”

“Well, B,” Stacy pours herself a stiff shot of JD, and throws it down the hatch, “get there sooner.”

Then just to show what kind of girl she really is under all that crust; Stacy pours Danica a glass of Jack. Her “tin head” comment wasn’t the racial slur that the uninitiated might mistake it for. It’s her term of endearment for Danica, and the robot knows it.

Normally, the robot doesn’t eat or drink. Consumption isn’t the necessity for metal that it is for biologicals. But in social situations, she does partake. Danica understands fully what Stacy’s gesture means and accepts the adult beverage. She sips the premium Tennessee whiskey slowly, savoring every drop. It’s the way you’re supposed to consume Jack Daniel’s.

“Danica, when the arch-baroness turned you and Walsh off in Count Orlok’s apartment.”

“Technically, we don’t have an ‘on/off’ switch. We are designed to run 24x7, just like a TiVo. As such, she, technically didn’t switch us off. She placed us in standby mode. We were shutdown, yes. We were off, no.”

“And in doing so, she treated you like artifacts, which is what you are not. Therefore, when you and Walsh came back online after she had voided her glamour, you two were completely aware of what had transpired.”

“Correct.”

“You, Stacy, make a common mundane human mistake. You use device and artifact interchangeably. You think of the Orphan as some type of gizmo, which it is not. A gizmo does not become attached to a total stranger, an artifact can, and in this case did. Elders Old and Oldest supernatural beings often make the opposite mistake: as a rule, interfacing with a device as if it’s an artifact, which is what the arch-baroness did.”

“And your point, B?”

“When the Lexx shutdown Danica, that priestess treated Danica as if she were a device. As such, if Danica didn’t have backup-and-restore functionality, she would not have been privy to what happened while she was shut down in your living room and thus I would not have been privy to what transpired either.”

“I still don’t get it, B?”

“I just told you. Use your brain. You do still have one, don’t you? Or did that Gokum beat it out of you?”

“Dammit, I hate you when you’re being like this, you condescending bitch!!!” Stacy stops in mid-swear. The light comes on in her eyes, and it’s bright. Upon seeing this, Becky smiles. “Oh my God, the Lexx are supernatural, and her markings were that of an Eldest. As such she would have tainted the response to Danica. That ‘old’ girl should have channeled Danica like an artifact instead of a device. Instead, she reacted to Danica like a human would have.”

“Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule. Maybe this girl is that exception. But.”

“She didn’t expect Danica to be there. She reacted on instinct to the surprise, and reacted correctly. Odds are.”

“She’s not the exception. More than likely.”

“Someone is wearing her.”

“And that someone is human.”

Stacy and Becky exchange a hi-five. The Band is back together again!

Episode #066

“Never lose sight of the fact that all human felicity lies in man’s imagination, and that he cannot think to attain it unless he heeds all his caprices. The most fortunate of persons is he who has the most means to satisfy his vagaries.”—*Marquis de Sade*

A lithe curvy blonde with porcelain-doll features and legs for days, Margaret Teele is the very definition of angelic looking. Her character is another thing entirely. In a word, despicable. She likes to use people. And there is nothing she wouldn’t do for money. She has glamour girl looks with a black heart.

Ms. Teele is a con artist by profession, and she’s a very good one. These days her hunting ground is the guest lounge at the Beijing Hotel. It’s a bar called the Rikki Tikki. The house dick Jim Gavin, a retired cop has been paid off to look the other way, but lately he’s begun to get greedy. He’s starting to ask too much to grease the skids. She might have to get rid of him if she can’t persuade him to see reason. And. No biggie if it comes to that; meticulous to the point of being compulsive at times, she’s done murder before and gotten away with it scot-free—no forensics pointing to her as the culprit whatsoever.

She also picks up “strays” from the nearby Fairmont Hotel by way of referrals from her regulars at the Tikki.

Her current bunco is preying on well-heeled Chinese businessmen and mundane businesswomen, 456, and Dragons on holiday, portraying herself as Jojo Ladro an out of work actress doing freelance “escort work” to pay the rent who’s more famous for being a beauty queen and the first swimsuit cover girl for *Swimsuits Illustrated* magazine. The magazine is factitious, and she has half a dozen counterfeits printed up to fool the marks. She even has phony portfolios to flesh out the beauty queen and actress falsehoods of her scam. The forgeries she employs are first-rate.

It’s a very lucrative and equally dangerous con, to say the least. Anything that involves fraud and them 456 and Dragons is potentially hazardous to your health. Nope, you just can’t roll the johns and janes like a common-ass hooker at the local brand-x motel. You have to steal from them clean; making sure that they never ever find out that you’re the one who took them.

Her mentor in the business was Earnestine Hays aka Madame Bunco. Thanks to Hays’ tutelage, Teele was a full-fledged pro by the age of fifteen. She learned all the classic cons, and the best of the post-modern ones too.

No matter how much the Vice Squad leans on Hays, she won’t disclose much about her former protégée. And what little she does say is compelling. In a phrase: “That girl scares me!”

Along the way, Teele also picked up another skillset. This time it was from an extraterrestrial named Fallon “Jimmy” Noone (*no one*). Ms. Noone is a Puppet Master. She wears people!

Dyke-narssacist, she of course is in love with her flawless female form. Its reflection enraptures her.

In the corner is her custom wardrobe. It’s kept locked, when not in use, and for good reason. There is a hidden compartment built into the back of it. Within that closet within a closet are hung her favorite set of clothes. The clothes are people. Among them are a Lexx priestess and a

Unabomber lookalike named Jacob Meets. Meets is an uber-extreme anti-supernaturalist; a member of Habitat for Humanity.

There are two pieces in her collection which she does not wear. They are the Lexx's robot and the Gokum that Jacob and his half-brother Ted Kaczynski also a member of Habitat were using in their crusade to dispose of the sponsored and sponsors of Operation Paper Clip. Ted is also there, hanging right next to his sibling.

High jacked the biologicals. High jacked the robot's biokernal. If you are flesh. You never sleep. You're always conscious, when you're worn and when you're not. And when you are worn, you are aware of everything that happens—every taste, smell, touch, sound, and sight. But, you have no control. You never have any control. You're just along for the ride whether you like it or you don't. Your thoughts are transparent to the wearer and so is your soul. You feel violated. You can't forget any of it, you remember everything photographically, just like a machine or a demon does. You don't even have the refuge of insanity—that too you are robbed of. And there's absolutely nothing that you can do about it, your living hell, to suffer in silence. Boko Haram, indeed.

Outer space isn't the only place where no one can hear you scream.

Episode #067

“Where there is love there is life.”—*Mahatma Gandhi*

The Moment in Time: that unlisted destination address found nowhere within Creation, unreachable even by ROOM. This is where all of the Families of all the demon races keep their ancestral Homes in perpetuity—the oldest, and thus the most powerful, Families being Vampire by definition. Palatial homes whose unparalleled opulence puts to shame the infamous Casa Casuarina on Miami Beach’s Ocean Drive—owned by decadent fashion designer Gianni Versace himself an oldest Vampire.

The butler, Amos Cree, is a Daemon who’s pretending. As such, he resembles Ted Cassidy, the actor who portrayed Lurch the colossal butler of Gomez and Morticia Addams in the Addams Family television show. Cree leads them into the opulent sitting room, where, he dismisses himself, discreetly.

The “them” in question being Becky, Stacy, Danica, and Detectives Molly Minders and Vanessa Walsh. The Arch-Baroness Lisa Niemi is out on a patio balcony which overlooks the ocean. A perfect view of perfect waves kissing a perfect beach underneath a perfect sky of a perfect day—the fabled Shangri-La is put to shame. They join her on the patio.

“Thank you for coming so promptly when I summoned you.”

The Arch-Baroness says it as if they really had a choice. One minute they were on their Earth doing whatever they were doing. The next moment they were in the foyer of this house, facing Cree who was clearly expecting them.

“So far, Becky, you have done well with this conundrum. We Elders are pleased with your performance. Solving puzzles like this, so-called police work, suits you to a tee. Someone works you, directing your activities via hints and you take it from there, handling the tedious details and tiresome legwork. You’re used to such an arrangement having been often exploited in that fashion when you were an MP by various detectives of the DoD police, the CID, the CI, and the DCIS, etc. This is how we Elders will exploit you from time to time for the rest of your immortal existence. You will, of course, confirm all of this with the proper authorities immediately after this meeting is adjourned.”

No one else speaks. The “guests” know better than to commit that foo-pah (or faux pas): the misstep in social etiquette of speaking out of turn. If someone else gets a chance to speak, it will be Becky the only other supernatural present and that’s only after she’s been asked by the Elder Arch-Baroness Lisa Niemi to do so. There are rules, ROE, and they must be followed to the letter else the gravest consequences ensue. Supernatural society being the definition of Conservative—closed and caste-based to the nth degree.

“It was during one of our off again periods. Of course, per ROE, we as a married couple weren’t speaking directly. We communicated through agreed upon intermediaries, and only when necessity dictated such exchanges. Unbeknownst to him, his investigation and its attended revelation was going to out my sponsored. My sponsored was the dirty cop in question. The Count was a reasonable man, he loved me deeply as I loved him, and as such I’m sure that he would have withdrawn the compromise of my sponsored if the negotiations had been allowed to progress to their logical conclusion. After all, we’re just talking about Food slaughtering Food—thus nothing of any

real consequence was involved—just consumables and disposables. During that last session between the Count and my reps Madame Yun and Senator Bachmann to iron out the final details, the murder occurred. My reps watched helplessly as they killed him.”

That’s when it becomes just an Arch-Baroness and Becky affair. Stacy, Danica, and Detectives Molly Minders and Vanessa Walsh fade from view. They are gone back to where they came from—snatched from here back to there, just like they came.

“You may speak.”

“Arch-Baroness.”

“From henceforth, Becky, when you are alone as you are now with one of your female betters, you will address them in the first-person casual, without exception. You will, of course, confirm all of this with the proper authorities immediately after this meeting is adjourned. Again, as it relates to this case, what has become that very familiar affirmation? N’est-ce pa?”

Since the telecom was via an Orphan Black, rescuing the Count with a snatch-and-grab akin to how Becky et al. was summoned/dismissed here was out of the question. Even if it had not been, likely the attack would have been too swift for the effective employment of such arcane egress. Then again, why guess when you can ask in cross.

“Lisa, was the attack ‘shock and awe’ quick and decisive or was it a bushwhack?”

“A combination. And much too swift to have been thwarted by the arcane egress that brought y’all here, for example. Time, knowledge of the precise location of the target, and a total lack of interference with said target acquisition is necessary, for that.”

The Arch-Baroness’ earlier “they killed him” reference indicates that there was one than one attacker. So Becky doesn’t have to waste one of her set number of permitted questions asking if there was more than one attacker. Confirmation of their “persuasion” would be nice, though—maybe even essential to her investigation.

“Is Michel’s intel correct? Where those types of mundane Humanists culpable in the murder of the Count?”

The Elder’s answer is obtuse and direct, in a word *exclusionary*. But the intended vagueness is explained in the follow-up.

“There was another who was complicit. One who was neither a person nor alive.”

The Dead, thinking machine, etc., are people, and they are alive technically. A Gokum would fit the bill, though. There’s something else. Their snatch-and-grab came after the attack on Stacy. Becky is betting that there’s a connection.

As it pertains to every aspect of supernatural life. There are rules for these things. If you savvy the rules, you can make the right guesses nine times out of ten, in cases like this.

“Is it your impression that the murders were being directed? Ergo, technically, there is only one murderer, but using multiple extensions? Possibly a Puppet Master who is most probably mundane?”

“Yes, which is why Michel’s intel is correct and not so correct, yet not wrong either.”

The Elder smiles that smile, signaling that the meeting is over. As Becky fades from view, she hears the Elder say: “I must say, that —previous back-n-forth during the course of this case— you’ve used your allotted questions well. Applaud yourself.”

Episode #068

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”—Winston Churchill

Stacy, Danica, and Becky are not returned to Stacy’s apartment from which they were taken. They appear in an alley between the privacy fences of Pershing Avenue and the parking lot of Straub’s gourmet grocery store in the Central West End. Although Stacy and Danica left well before Becky, they arrive together.

There is a commotion, but it has nothing to do with them. No one seems to notice their arrival. The attention of the crowd is upon the naked body of a middle-aged Caucasian male, lying face-up on the asphalt. His genital has been sliced off and stuffed into his mouth. Sirens. Lights flashing. A patrol car arrives on the scene.

Becky walks toward the adjacent crime scene. They ending up here at the post of a murder can’t be a coincidence. Another hint is being ham-handed Becky. Stacy takes the lead, flashes her badge at the onsite flatfoots, getting Becky and Danica close to the action. CSI arrives.

Detectives Molly Minders and Vanessa Walsh come into sight. Having rounded the corner of Maryland Avenue and Kingshighway Boulevard. They are on foot. Attracted by the sights and sounds of a homicide’s aftermath. More flashing of badges to the patrol officers as the two detectives step up. Theirs are hanging around their necks via badge chains.

Becky knows the victim. He was Jim Gavin, a retired cop, military not civilian. Gavin was her TO (training officer) at the Military Police Academy. Like a lot of MPs he never cottoned to the civilian police force when he got out of the service. He did try being a state trooper, but got bored fast and quit. MP’s police military personnel; in other words, they police skilled, trained killers. After a gig like that, dealing with common ass thugs, gang bangers, Mafioso, and other flavors of run-of-the-mill aka ordinary career criminals pales in comparison. So, he settled on being a house dick—a nice, cushy, well-paying job with lots of fringe benefits—if you’re going to be bored, do it in style and get paid in fat stacks.

In the service he was dirty. Gavin did his job, and did it well, but he always had his hand into something black-market, and he never got caught. He received a boatload of commendations as an MP and an honorable discharge from the army. Gavin and Becky kept in touch over the years, so she doesn’t have to imagine that he mended his ways and went straight when he got out. She knows better. Most of his illicit juice came from skimming working girls who hooked at the Tikki.

Into this smorgasbord, Becky “hears” a whisper that seems only meant for her. It’s unintelligible, but momentarily beguiling, beaconing her to look skyward. Just in time she sees a fleeting translucency as it hops and skips its way into bye-bye from west to east down Maryland Avenue from the Chase Park Plaza hotel, past the Fairmont, into the Bree at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Maryland Avenue, then poof.

This world is not advanced enough to be allowed the unlimited cache of more than one ROOM. Such are the rules that govern such things. There is only the Anonymous ROOM that Becky once owned. The uncouth display indicates that she again owns the ROOM. And that tells her much.

The affectation is known to her, but the ROOM she knew would have never elicited it. ROOMs are edifices. They are also artifacts. Artifacts are people too. Even the most well-mannered person can pick up bad habits. This seems to be the case, here. In the period since her previous ownership of it, it has picked up some bad habits—namely, this unattractive outburst of erratic behavior to herald her as its new-old owner.

Then, in the middle of her gossipy muse, she realizes what it's really doing. The pieces come together like a ton of brick dropping on her head. The killer is one of the call girls that Gavin was fleecing and the round heel in question lives at the Bree.

In the case of a numbered ROOM, you can't "acquire" ownership via murder or anything nefarious. That's not the case for an anonymous one, though. Madame Yun killed Roberts so that he wouldn't be the ROOM's owner. But, for the transfer to work its way back to Becky, Madame Yun had to have been its owner before Roberts. Then Madame Yun would have had to have abdicated any claim on the ROOM, and every owner between Madame Yun and Becky would have had to have done the same thing in the exact reverse order of succession. That isn't even the stickiest part of this wicket.

Only the initial change of ownership in this reverse take ownership can be done via murder or coercion or any other nefarious means, for an anonymous. The rest of the abdications, even in the case of an anonymous, have to be completely voluntarily. That adds up to a lot of collusion.

Episode #069

“You mean you like that in 3 versions of the OSX you just can’t upgrade it anymore which forces you to upgrade? Same evil, different devil.”—Gregg Barbato from Facebook

Legend (also known as Five-Project): The holy grail of mundane molecular xenobiologists. A human being who results from the coupling of a Dragon and a human being. Because of the biological improbabilities involved, the supposed existence of such individuals is considered an urban legend, urban myth, urban tale, in other words, a contemporary legend in the form of modern folklore. If such biologically exclusions did exist, they would in effect be very advanced molecular machines capable of near superhuman feats, physically and mentally.

Why reboot Jacqueline Lee Bouvier-Ryan for a second time? Especially when the Clancy novels—the latest Ryan universe novel, *Command Authority*, became Clancy’s latest number one best-seller little more than two months after he died—have Ryan and her family moving on with their lives.

In the novels, Jackie Ryan herself is past the action hero stage. She’s again the President of the United States. The action portfolio in the family is being handled by her daughter, a finance geek with a flair for violence and just a slightly annoying streak of entitlement: Jackie Ryan, Jr. works out of a supposed investment firm that is actually an off-the-books intel/wetworks operation. The novels increasingly featuring Jackie Ryan, Jr. have all been number one bestsellers, too.

There’s something else. Something most telling about all of this. It’s obviously essential that Becky owns the anonymous ROOM. The question is why?

Supposition: the initial interest of the Dragons was their misinterpretation of him as a legend. Their presumption proving to be false, Madame Yun disposed of him to void his ownership of the anonymous ROOM.

Unlike a numbered, an anonymous can be sublet. There’s no restrictions on who or what that lessor may be—any person, place, or thing qualifies. There’s no limit on how many times that it can be subleased. It can be subleased serially and concurrently. It must be a short-term sublease. The leasee can be the owner or the ROOM itself or even a lessor. A promiscuous situation to say the least. But. The owner’s claim to the ROOM always trumps any lessor’s, including occupancy. Possession is not 9ths of the law.

Being a previous owner, the ROOM couldn’t be used by Roberts or any lessor against her. So there was no need to make Becky the ROOM’s owner so that she would be protected against it being used against her and hers. All of its previous owners from Madame Yun exclusive of Becky voluntarily gave up their ownership claims—so none of them could be presumed culpable.

Therefore, it stands to reason then, that the ROOM is being leased. That one of the lessors is culpable. And, that Becky needed to be the ROOM’s owner again, so that her claim could supersede the lessor who is that person of interest.

Supposition: The ROOM is pivotal in the downfall of the culprit. This would imply that the Elders already know how this will all end. They knew it from the git-go. Living it backwards

starting with the end while Becky et al. live it forward from the beginning making discoveries of what's-what while progressing toward that same end. Shades of the movie *Memento*. Not future casting. Not Clairvoyance. Understanding life with absolute certainty because of you an oldest thing are living it in reverse unlike everybody else who is younger. Existentially speaking. Very heady stuff indeed.

Esoteric discussions aside. Maybe, the call girl who killed Gavin, is leasing the ROOM, and is also Count Orlok's killer? And if she is the Count's killer, why did she kill him? And, just how does the Orphan Black fit into all of this? Is the OB another red herring or is it a real clue?

Episode #070

**“The society which scorns excellence in plumbing as a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy: neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.”—John William Gardner
10/8/1912 - 2/16/2002**

After Cain killed his brother Abel, God declared to Cain, “Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth” (Genesis 4:11-12). In response, Cain lamented, “My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me” (Genesis 4:13-14). God responded, “Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him” (Genesis 4:15-16).

The nature of the mark on Cain has been the subject of much debate and speculation. The Hebrew word translated “mark” is ‘owth and refers to a “mark, sign, or token.” Elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, ‘owth is used 79 times and is most frequently translated as “sign.” So, the Hebrew word does not identify the exact nature of the mark God put on Cain. Whatever it was, it was a sign/indicator that Cain was not to be killed. Some propose that the mark was a scar, or some kind of tattoo. Whatever the case, the precise nature of the mark is not the focus of the passage. The focus is that God would not allow people to exact vengeance against Cain. Whatever the mark on Cain was, it served this purpose.

In German (biblical or figuratively): Kainszeichen, the mark/brand of Cain.

A listless Margaret Teele stares at the Orphan Black. Her expression is blank. Her eyes are empty. Margaret is waiting patiently for instruction. She is not alone. All of the people she wears as clothing and keeps locked up in the closet when not being worn are likewise positioned mindlessly in the bedroom, waiting for instructions.

The OB sets atop an Anwar table. Its altar from which it begins to pontificate. Margaret turns around to face the others. Her mouth moves mechanically. Her voice. Its mind. She’s being channeled by the OB.

As the Orphan Black speaks through her, glyphs tickertape across the surface of the artifact. For the duration of its oratory, identical glyphs script themselves across the foreheads of the clothes that are people. This includes Margaret since she too is clothes.

These symbols are different than its passcode. Distinct, far more arcane, and much older, these were the markings that distinguished its original owner—the markings are a curse from that man’s god placed upon him. He was the first immortal human, and for his grievous sin he was punished to wander the Earth unmolested as a pariah.

Since that first doomed owner, it has passed through many hands, ruining the countless lives of those who have possessed it in that long passage of time. Few owners have escaped its associated misfortune. Of special note in that latter category of those who escaped completely unscathed was the pawn broker who sold it to Margaret.

Through Margaret, this OB is an artifact that is a vindictive person who is a thing wearing people who are not things. Margaret had been warned by the OB's previous owner about just how potentially dangerous this thing could be, but her arrogance got the better of her. Pride goeth before the fall.

She thought that she could easily handle it. After all, she'd mastered one of the Chinese puzzle boxes (circa 1880) made for Dragons by Malcolm Gilvary. How more devious and controlling could this thing be than a Gilvary's? She was wrong. One slipup: using the OB when she was tired late one evening and. Pow!

It exploited her carelessness, her underestimation of its power and influence over living things, and it took possession of her: mind, body, and soul. It has owned her ever since that fateful day.

Unlike the others, Margaret is herself when she's not being worn by the OB. Her conscious mind has some vague awareness of the true nature of their relationship. Her Id knows the exact details, though, for all the good that does her.

When Margaret wears the others she assumes their motivations, for kicks. Their motives are so violent and destructive. Deliciously anti-social in nature. She likes to see the world burn. So, it should come as no surprise that Margaret took much delight in seeing to it that the two brothers Jacob and Ted successfully completed their mission to kill Count Orlok.

Birds of a feather flock together. Margaret's Orphan Black also shares her tastes in clothes. It too likes to see the world burn.

Episode #071

“When you decide to attack, keep calm and dash in quickly, forestalling the enemy, attack with a feeling of constantly crushing the enemy, from first to last.”—Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings: The Classic Guide to Strategy*

Margaret’s clothes that are people are back in the closet. The OB sets atop an Anwar table, mutely. She is once more alone with her own thoughts and in total control of her mind.

The call girl locks the wardrobe and turns around upon hearing the front door buzzer. It must be her three-o’clock, Maurice Biagini, a bourgeois businessman she got on referral from a French couple, Betty and Victor.

The two roosters are itinerate con artists, operating out of a small RV, crisscrossing the country, hopping from convention to convention scamming well-heeled conventioners out of petty sums of money—petty by Margaret’s standards, although none of the take from any single scam numbers at least a handful of Benjamins five hundred dollars.

By Margaret’s way of thinking, anything less than a deuce of figure-fours a couple of grand is just not worth the trouble. Irrespective of that, the Frenches make enough from their “petty” takes to maintain a comfortable, albeit elusive, lifestyle.

Why are Frenches called roosters? Shouldn’t they just be called cowards?

Rooster, which in French is “coq,” is the national symbol of the France. The Latin word for “rooster” is “Gallus,” and the “Gaulle,” the ancestor of France, was “Gallia” in Latin.

Traditionally, the French are called this roosters, actually roostres, because they have a bad, unfair reputation of sitting on the fence, the sidelines, watching other people go to war, giving the French, branding them as cowards. They are cautious, not cowards, as anyone who has the misfortune of crossing swords with them will attest.

Margaret slips on a silk nightie and answers the door. The Frenches thought Maurice the money man for a multinational corporation to be out of their league, hence the referral.

He’s waiting with baited breath, that metal suitcase Betty and Victor told her about is chained to his wrist. There is a bulge in his pants, evidence of his anticipation of what is to ensue. The door to the bedroom has been left open, affording a straight line of sight to the OB—something Margaret did subconsciously.

She ushers him in and shuts the door, throwing the deadbolt.

He leans against the now closed, locked front door. Frenchmen are not used to fucking around when it comes to fucking around. It’s straight, no chaser. Why fuck in the bedroom when the living room will do just fine?

She grabs his crotch and massages his swollen clicker his swollen cock and balls through his pants.

He moans. His briefcase drops to the floor, easily forgotten for now.

She drops to her knees, unzips his pants, and shoves his penis into her large maw, her educated tongue dancing across the glans of his fleshy lollipop. While she deep throats him, she's milking his testicles like a cow's udder. Got milk?!

He grabs the back of her head and shoves her wanton face ever deeper into his game nethers. Nothing romantic whatever about any of this.

This is all about whore for hire with none of that pretense or foreplay that Americans are known for. The French know how to use a whore.

He ejaculates into her mouth, and she sucks even harder, never missing a beat or losing a drop of his precious salty, white nectar—semen that's salty and warm, and smelling slightly sweet as well—not bitter in taste—not tasting like thick Clorox or what he ate twelve hours before either.

For the briefest moment, it the OB wears her. It's a spur of the moment thing that it's done many time before. It likes to flitter her when she's giving head. She gives monster head.

Maurice's instructions to her beforehand were quite explicit. He only wants head, ace ducey head, nothing more, and nothing else. And, he will pay quite handsomely, in cash fat stacks for the use of her mouth for the oral perversion of Linda Lovelace known as fellatio deep (Deep Throat). The figure agreed upon was four-thousand dollars.

Four grand is a tidy sum indeed. But the always greedy Margaret thinks that much more can be had in his briefcase. She's betting his life that there is. Fuck now. Kill later. The ROOM will again prove indispensable in the discreet disposal of a dead body.

In-between fucking him and killing him, Margaret thinks that she'll wear the Froggy for kicks. Maybe she'll have him off himself while she's still wearing him. There's always a nice orgasm to be had from that. It's how she got off when she offed the hotel detective.

Frog for French? Another derogatory term for the French in Margaret's lexicon?

The French have described the English as a nation of shopkeepers and the English have described the French as a nation of frog-eaters. So, boil it down over the years and "frog-eaters" becomes frogs or froggies. N'est pas?

Episode #072

“Before becoming an Oscar-winning auteur in America, director Miloš Forman burst onto the international scene with the delightful *Loves of a Blonde*, an endearing mood-pleasing story of broken promises, shattered hearts, and the universality of love. Broken into three largely real-time segments, the film follows a night of romantic pursuits for shoe factory worker Andula, who longs to break out of her drab, provincial routine. Andula follows a piano player named Milda to his parents’ home in Prague. After having had a one-night stand with him when he came through her small working-class town on a gig, she mistakenly believed him when he invited her to meet him again. Of course, when she finally does catch up to him he is unreceptive, as are his ultra-conservative parents, who can barely survive the idea. After numerous attempts to confront him, Andula returns to her hometown and discovers how their relationship has been belittled by the boy’s description to his parents. Forman captures the sixties precisely, which makes the film a joy to watch. The anti-romantic but comic tone exemplifies the Czech New Wave movement. The effortless screenplay is penned by Milos Forman’s longtime friends Vaclav Sasek and Ivan Passer, based on a story by Jaroslav Papousek.”—*Essential Art House: Loves of a Blonde Criterion Co DVD Region 1*

Lake Avenue, off of Lindell Boulevard, is a very private street. The police patrol it to enforce the well-paid-for privacy of its wealthy residents. The body of a French mob’s bagman being dumped unceremoniously in its gated alley is most disconcerting to those selfsame residents. Not to mention the chief of police who lives on Lake Avenue.

Mo a bagman for French organized crime. He was even more out of their league than Betty and Victor ever imagined. And inside of that briefcase of his? Five million dollars: clearly not a petty sum by Margaret’s standards. By her way of thinking, she’d hit the jackpot. The windfall emboldened her to once more thread into the slaphappy criminal netherland of hooliganism. Hence the choice of another Tiffany locale when it came time to dispose of the body of her murder victim.

Sordid. Indiscreet. Public infamy. Reprehensible. Profane. Etc. For Christ’s sake, the man was obviously being worn when he offed himself! You don’t have to be an ME to see that. A blind man could see that arcane’s tell. Worse, the dumping was done in broad daylight, undetected by CCTV. Another arcane usage obviously being employed, maybe even a ROOM.

Discreet, because it went undetected. Indiscreet, because of where and how the body was dumped—(the where) a high visibility location, and (the how) no attempt made whatsoever to hide the use of arcane to use the body (wear it) and dump the body undetected. Same as with her dumping of the house dick’s body in the parking lot of Straub’s. Only in the case of Gavin’s body, the ME had to do an autopsy to determine that he was being worn at the time of his death. So this how is the worst to date.

Delusions of grandeur. Nobody can catch me. No one can stop me. I’m the greatest, best serial killer in all Creation.

The stereotype. This type of thing is expected to happen in the Gaslight Square area, where supernaturals and mundane mingle indiscriminately. The pitfalls and perils of unchecked miscegenation ensue day and night. In its Gaslight Square’s morally rarefied air, ROE is razor thin. Down there, anything and everything is the norm, and the SLPD picks up the pieces 24-7.

The reality. With the exception of the well-known and clearly designated Raspberry Pi the perils, hazards, and iffy that are germane to any Red-Light District, Gaslight Square is just as safe as Lake Avenue. You're guaranteed. ROE is ROE.

Caveats? The usual.

Whenever you go somewhere to get your monkey on with the opposite uber species, or just have some fun and games with Them, and/or everything else in-between, you know where you're supposed to be safe and you know where at any moment you could literally end up Food on the plate.

The operative word is "supposed." There's always that risk when miscegenation between supernaturals and mundane is involved, because as mundane you're always on the menu for something and/or someone.

Episode #073

“Paradox Alice on Weibo. Here is what Civilization has done to Barbarity!”—*Victor Hugo*

When it comes to supernatural beings:

ROE is ROE. No exceptions. No excuses. No mitigating circumstances. No loopholes. No one is above The Rules. They apply to everyone: equally, blindly, and justly. Even eldest gods must abide by the rules. Rules are meant to be followed. Rules are not meant to be broken. Rules must be followed to the letter of The Law. Ambiguity is slavery. Totalitarianism is freedom.

Such is the way that it has always been. Such is the way that it is. Such is the way that it will always be.

Because:

There is a time and a place for everything. The embodiment of control, society supersedes the individual. The needs of the many must always outweigh the needs of the few.

Conformity. Obedience. Courtesy. Courteous. Know your place. Assume your role. Defer to your betters in all things. Clean cut. No slang, whatsoever. A nice, well-ordered society. A closed, caste-based society. A society is the natural order of things. A society embodies the way that things ought to be.

Society?

Dictatorial. Draconian. Intolerant. Exclusive. Exclusionary. Control. Controlling. Subjugating. Strict. Severe. Straight laced. Stiff backed. Caste-based. Inequality. Rigid. Unyielding. Fascist. Racist. Conservative. Merit oriented. High-brow. Sophisticated. Posh. Opulence. Wealth. More is always better. Do what is expected of you when you're in public, whether you're alone or in the presence of others. Public conformity, even in the face of private deviancy—if you choose to waste yourself in private, we will not save you from yourself. Conform, else an unfortunate accident may befall you—an attendant consequence of ill-advised choices.

So it follows that:

Civility defines the appropriate public expression of an individual's compromise of self-expression within the proper societal context of a sufficiently civilized construct. You go along to get along. The Emily Post subtext of manners espouse the how's and why's and what for's of self-control within the context of civility—etiquette. You don't devour Food, just because it's available to be eaten, unless it's according to Hoyle. You partake only when you're supposed to. You don't kill indiscriminately just because you can, unless it's according to Hoyle. You genocide only when you're supposed to, and when you do, you destroy all forms of life for all times—total sterility—there is no possibility or probability of repopulation, via procreation, proto-resurrection, or replacement.

Predatory by nature. Genocidal by design. Rape, ravage, drain, and devour by covetous intent, but only when it's according to Hoyle. Rules are rules.

The Individual?

Subordinate. Conforming. Courteous. Polite. Clean cut. Well mannered. Well-heeled. Urbane. Sophisticated. Stylish. Gender correct. Beautiful. Beauty obsessed. Intelligent. Cultured. Intolerant. Deferring. Unequal. Competitive. Overachiever. Continuous improvement. Fascist. Racist. Conservative. Merit oriented. Free speech, freedom of choice, and their attendant consequences—you don't yell "fire" in a crowded theater. Opulent. Wealthy. You can never have enough or too much. You can never be too rich or too beautiful or too smart. Publicly I adhere to the norm, doing what is expected of me, even if I choose to foolishly deviate from it in private. Non-conformity at the potential risk of an unfortunate happenstance befalling me—I dissent at my own risk, knowing full well that there are always consequences for my actions.

Rogue(s)?

There are always deviates. But. Factions and delinquencies, notwithstanding. By and large, supernatural beings adhere strictly to ROE. Such is their nature. ROE is how they naturally are. They freely, willingly, and willfully choose ROE.

Ronin?

A society defined by Houses is the societal context within which that nature of theirs is preferably expressed. Therefore, even those who do not belong to a House Ronin associate themselves by choice sans one iota of societal coercion with a House or Houses.

Machiavellian politics between and betwixt Houses, intra House and inter House. Those Houses, the national pastime which indulges that strict politeness of their nature.

The deviates, the few who differ from the group norm, are the ones who act like human beings and other such mundane beings—as such these different ones only obey ROE when it suits them, when it's in their best interest, or when they absolutely have to—their continued existence depends on it their obedience to ROE.

So.

Human beings only obey ROE when it suits them, when it's in their best interest, or when they absolutely have to—their continued existence depends upon it. Additionally, they use it to have "protected" interactions with supernaturals. The foolish ones, the daredevils, publicly circumvent ROE every chance they get—damn the gravest consequences—openly thumbing their nose at etiquette in the most impolite fashion.

Obviously, Margaret is one such daredevil, who publicly throws caution to the wind. And in doing so, she's slipping closer and closer to that deflationary void. Already the wheels are in motion which spell her downfall. Seeds of destruction that Margaret sowed herself.

"I'm muther fuckin!"

The Vampire looks at her. Displeasure registers across the Lost's face. Not a good thing. Not a safe thing.

"Careful, Food. You dare blaspheme to your better. I am Saved."

"Fuck you bitch!"

"Enough. Shut up, before I devour you."

"In this ROOM. No one tells me what to do! Here. I'm muther fuckin God!"

Episode #074

**“Here’s a toast to nipples. Because, without them, titties would be totally meaningless.”—
*Kat Morgan Kristanna Loken in, Mercenaries***

Id, ego, and super-ego are the three parts of the psychic apparatus defined in Sigmund Freud’s structural model of the psyche; they are the three theoretical constructs in terms of whose activity and interaction our mental life is described. According to this model of the psyche, the id is the set of uncoordinated instinctual trends; the super-ego plays the critical and moralizing role; and the ego is the organized, realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego. The super-ego can stop one from doing certain things that one’s id may want to do.

Although the model is structural and makes reference to an apparatus, the id, ego and super-ego are purely symbolic concepts about the mind and do not correspond to actual (somatic) structures of the brain such as the kind dealt with by neuroscience.

Stacy, her badge hanging from a chain around her neck, does a double-take, looking back-n-forth between Becky and Mondo. Looks can be deceiving, though. And, in this case are. In spite of their striking resemblance, Stacy is not Mondo’s alternate in this world. Stacy, Margaret, and Becky are.

In this world, Mondo’s alternate is a trifurcation: Stacy (her super-ego), Becky (her ego), and Margaret (her Id). Mondo (the psyche as a whole) is quite different than these three constituent parts (of that psyche) are on their own in three different people on this Earth.

Mondo ceases feeding on Margaret and lets her limp naked body drop to the floor. Margaret only looks to be at death’s door. The call girl is still very much alive. The Vampire Mondo Kane licks her lips clean of the precious sweet nectar that fresh, warm human blood is to her kind. Margaret’s shredded clothes have been tossed in front of the wardrobe that contains the clothes who are people.

In the living room, EMTs are tending to two teachers and a group of school children from a nearby Montessori School, Washington Garden. Margaret had abducted them in broad daylight while they were on a field trip at Shaw’s Garden. She simultaneously wore fifteen people—two adults and thirteen kids, and she further brazenly dared to do so outside the auspices of her ROOM. There was no overlay of the Missouri Botanical Garden by her ROOM.

When two of Saint Louis’ finest followed her into the apartment, sidearms drawn, and engaged her. After a very brief confrontation, she wore them too. Then she killed them outright, achieving orgasm as she wore them while they expired.

As she led her newest wardrobe additions into the bedroom, she confronted Mondo. That encounter didn’t go her way. At the height of her power, in the overlay of her ROOM, this upstart Vampire proved to be her better.

“Will, I presume that I was someone’s Plan-B. Looks like everything worked out like they wanted.” Mondo quips. She realizes, intuitively, what Stacy, Margaret, and Becky represent. In time, the three women will realize the same. “I’m Mondo Kane.” Mondo extends her hand.

Without hesitation, Becky walks over and shakes Mondo’s hand.

“I’m Becky Better, and this is Stacy Keibler.”

“She looks just like the one does in my world. Is she your BFF?”

“One of them. My other BFF is a girl named Ronda Rousey, the UFC fighter. But, then, you already know this.”

“Bravo, how discerning of you. You read people well.”

“I do when they’re as intentionally transparent as you are. I bet you know a lot about me and I know nothing about you. I’m at a disadvantage.”

“In more ways than one.”

Becky starts to say something, but instead just smiles politely and lets go of Mondo’s hand. They know a lot about each other through intelligence briefings from their respective governments. This is the first time that they have met in person.

As deadly as Becky is, Becky is definitely Mondo-lite, and knows it. In her dossier, this girl Mondo is described as Death incarnate, and pure evil, and that’s the vibe that she gives off in spades. She sends shivers up and down Becky’s spine. To say that Becky an experienced operator is totally smitten by Mondo’s skills, is an understatement.

In this overlaid room, overlaid by her ROOM with the ROOM firmly on her side, Becky could have probably taken Margaret. But this isn’t Mondo’s ROOM, and the interloping Vampire took this Puppet Master with an ease that belies Margaret’s considerable prowess. A prowess that in leaps and bounds had come to rival, if not exceed, that of Ms. Noone as Puppet Master.

As if Mondo is reading Becky’s mind, she adds.

“The ROOM had come to like very much what Margaret was doing. Previously, I bet it had set a trap for you, by showing you where this one,” Mondo points at Margaret, “lived. Then when you finally came to confront her, it would have not sided with you and it would have aided her, instead. Tipping the balance in her favor.”

“Not possible. I own the ROOM. She just subleases. And I quote: ‘The claim of an owner to a ROOM always trumps any lessor’s, including occupancy. Possession is not 9ths of the law.’ End quote.”

“Nonetheless, superseding claim, notwithstanding, the ROOM would have sided with her, not you. She’s evil, you’re merely amoral. The ROOM is anonymous, hence it’s inherently evil. Therefore, when forced to choose between competing claimants, it will always side with the evilest, least good, of the two. It’s called *Lucifer’s Clause*.”

“What?!”

“It’s a wrinkle that y’all weren’t aware of, now you are.”

“Hence you, Plan-B.”

“Now aren’t you so glad that the Eldest don’t have to abide by a silly non-interference clause like Star Fleet’s?”

“Yes.”

Mondo’s perception begins to stutter. She smiles. Time to go. Mondo gives a parting shoot-out as she fades from view.

“Oh, and I’m sure you’ll find plenty of forensics in her apartment to link her to whatever crime you’re trying to pin on her. Her kind of serial killer always likes to keep trophies.”

All this build up, plethora of red herrings, and torturous convolution, and Mondo steps in to wrap it all up in one fell swoop. The villain, saving the day for the heroes.

Episode #075

“What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others is, and remains, immortal.”—*Albert Pike*

“Whatever that Vampire of yours did to her, she can’t wear anyone anymore.”

The “she” Colonel Potter is referring to is Margaret Teele, who’s trussed up in a straitjacket in a padded room in Arkum Asylum.

“So she’s normal?”

“As normal as a nut job like that gets.”

“She’s a piece of me, isn’t she? That wasn’t in my briefings on her.”

Changing subjects in midstream. The “she” Becky is now referring to is the departed Mondo Kane.

“You’re a piece of her. Knowing that was need to know, and you didn’t need to know that at the time of your briefings on her. You know how these things work. You’re not some rookie. You’re a pro.”

“Fair enough.”

“You’re just mad at yourself, because you needed a face-to-face with your alternative to figure out what should have been obvious from the briefs. You lookalike, but you’re not alternate, you’re a piece of her. You were briefed that you were lookalikes but not same-as—most likely she was told the very same thing about you. You should have filled in the blanks appropriately, and figured out the missing pieces on your own. Then again your personality and training are such that you never considered looking beyond need-to-know.”

“Until I got slammed smack dab into a brick wall.”

“Yep.”

Doctor Klebb is also in the observation room with Potter and Becky. But she’s preoccupied watching her new patient, Margaret Teele, through the one-way glass. Doctor Klebb is wet just thinking of the things that she’s gonna do to the mad girl she lusts covetously for.

“Now. To get back on point. What was Margaret’s motivation?”

“She just wanted to see the world burn. But she wasn’t very imaginative on her own. So, she let the people she was wearing script the sceneries for her. For example. Wearing the kids was just a lark, a vile sidetrack of the pedophile Jacob Meets.”

“And her OB?”

“It went along just for the ride. Because, it liked the sick, twisted kicks that she provided. Even when it wore her, and that was without her conscious knowledge by the way, her actions were still her own—she retained her free will throughout. All of her choices were of her own volition. She knows right from wrong; she just prefers the wrong, and is very proud of that preference.”

“I have a few loose ends to tidy up.”

“You always do.”

“For instance. Who has the beef with Stacy that necessitated the Lexx priestess? Was it a Lexx issue, or was the Lexx just the point of the spear? Stacy claims to have no idea what’s up with that.”

It’s how Potter voices his reply, not what he actually says, that clues Becky in on the Lexx issue.

“Yes indeed. Yes indeed.”

“So, you’re saying it’s the Dragons?”

“I didn’t say anything of the sort.” Potter winks as he coins his response.

The End

The Boppish Vampire noir of Becky Better continues in – “Dragon Tales”