

LIFE IS JUST ANOTHER ROLE TO PLAY...



CREATED BY KARACOMET

CHAPTER 1

BOYS WILL BE BOYS

The clatter of plastic against plastic echoed from Grandma Whitfield's musty old basement, where two young men sat restless on a sagging, faded old couch. Their bodies swayed and leaned in exaggerated angles as they smashed the buttons of cheap third-party Nintendo 64 controllers between grunts and jeers. The stale air polluted with the smells of moth balls, concrete, and the ghosts of cigarette smoke left behind decades ago.

A faint glow flickered across an old box CR TV atop an even older blue dresser, which cast just enough pale light to create dancing shadows beyond edge of the sofa, where a young chubby blonde man momentarily slouched next to his tall, dark-haired friend who grumpily barked out the word "fuck!" as he jerked in his seat.

A look of satisfaction spread across Jake Whitfield's chubby face as he leaned forward, brushing his blonde bangs aside and wiping the beads of sweat from his forehead. He hunched forward with his elbows on his knees, controller tight in his hands as he shouted "got you, bitch!" before loudly clacking the trigger button.

Another kill.

"Dude, you're cheating!" whined the tall Korean man next to him with a huff.

While Jake was pasty white, chubby, and a little short for a man, Daniel Park looked like he walked straight off the pages of a Manhwa. His well-kempt black hair curled a little at the top of his handsome face that somehow felt masculine despite its androgyny, while his smoldering dark eyes were pointing daggers at Jake as he took a quick sip from his energy drink.

But he only had a moment before the respawn timer was up, and Jake was already heading his way.

"Get good, scrub" Jake teased as he dropped to the floor, cross-legged, with his tongue poking out slightly from the corner of his mouth in concentration. His sweaty blonde hair stuck up in uneven tufts that wiggled slightly as he moved from side to side, immersed in the massacre of his best friend since kindergarten, who clapped back with a casual "fuck off!"

Jake wore the same gray hoodie he owned since sophomore year, the cuffs frayed thin and the fabric softened by years of use. But it kept his flabby stomach contained just above the waistband of the basketball shorts he also wore year-round. He had one look and this was it. Its sole purpose to mask the shame of his own body from the cruelty of his peers... especially his best friend.

And it wasn't like he was incredibly overweight, either. But at five-foot-seven the extra pounds around his middle only made him look softer, "pregnant" as Dan liked to tease in that way that brothers often bullied each other, especially after being schooled in the art of classic shooters.

Dan, who was a fit six-foot-two. Dan whose family had the money to buy him clothes that fit every school year... But none of that mattered now. Winning the birth lottery didn't stop him from getting sniped by Jake once-again.

"For fuck's sake!"

"If you want we can play something easier," teased Jake. "I think my aunt had Pokémon Snap or ..."

"Hey. First off, Pokémon Snap was a solid game. Second..." Dan paused to place a single bugle in his mouth, "you're playing Oddjob like a little bitch."

"Yeah, so...? It's called playing smart."

"It's called being cheap. Pick someone else if you think you're so good."

Jake sighed as he brought up the menu, taking a moment to get a handful of chips and a drink for himself. "You just can't deal with being bested by a short king..."

"Heh! Maybe in video games, dude." Dan offered as a retort, before slapping his hand on the top of Jake's head and messing his hair up even further. "Hell, I bet you're shorter than he is. Like, you're more of a short duke or some ugly-ass princess with that pretty blonde hair..."

"Cut it out," barked Jake with a subtle laugh, "and tell me who you want me to play, so you can't make any more excuses when I whoop your ass again."

Dan thought for a moment. "Well, my first thought was Jaws 'cause he's pretty tall, and it would only be fair... but then you'd just say I was cheating..."

"Any day now, Jinu," Jake said with a yawn, before stuffing his face with another handful of chips. He knew that Dan hated the K-pop Demon Hunters reference that plagued his senior year of high school. But Dan only smiled and answered with "Natalia."

"Natalia?" questioned Jake, almost forgetting she was even an option. It's not like anyone ever picked her. "Okay...?"

"Well," continued Dan, smugly, "I'm Bond, so you get to be my little bitch. Just like how it works out here in the real world."

A strange noise stopped in Jake's throat, just enough to pass as a response when combined with his "how dare you" expression, as he snatched up his controller. "That's it, I'm about to ruin your whole day."

"Please, your only skill was being too damn short to hit." Dan replied, reaching for his own controller. But Jake had no trouble backing himself up, after even letting Dan also pick the map for good measure. What followed was a massacre the likes of which haven't been seen since the late 90s.

It. Was. Brutal.

A dozen deaths over the span of twenty minutes, and only one of them was at the hands of Daniel Park. Jake absolutely mopped the floor with his friend, making no effort to hide the joy he felt in that moment. The joy of being on top for once in his life.

A joy that was short lived.

Dan leaned back, ran his fingers through his hair, and closed his eyes in an attempt to regain his composure, after casually tossing his controller at the dusty rug in front of him. But he was fuming. His long legs stretched out in front of him as he tapped one sneaker irritably against the black plastic crate he used as a table.

Even when winning, Jake couldn't help but feel jealous at the sight of his childhood friend. How his perfect black hair just fell into place without any effort. The way his shirt draped over his toned body, clinging to the six-pack he never had to work a day in his life for.

The victory felt like an incredibly shallow justice, and Jake wasn't satisfied with simply winning. He had to rub it in. This was payback for all the teasing and bullying Dan passively threw his way at school this week, and he knew just what would get under his skin.

"So, who's the bitch now, Jinu!?"

Dan's expression never changed as he coldly snapped back with "You can fuck right off with that Jinu shit," before opening his eyes and letting his anger shine through the cracks in his facade. "I'm so sick of hearing it."

"I mean, you look just like the guy." Jake offered with a shit-eating grin on his face that widened when Dan shot daggers his way. The goad was a success, and the rant that followed was exactly what Jake was hoping for.

"Dude, you always do this!" Dan began, "you act like you're some kind of tactical genius. But, in reality, you just sit here and waste your time practicing games nobody else plays anymore."

Jake laughed. "So, what you're saying is... it's a skill issue?"

Dan snorted despite himself, then yawned a little too loud for it to be entirely real. "Whatever. This is getting lame. We're probably the only guys our age playing these old-ass games, anyway. Let's go see if anyone's still at the courts."

"Basketball? Dude, it's still hot as hell out."

Dan took the opportunity to flip the moment and followed up with, "so what? Don't you think we could use the exercise?" A cruel smirk pulled at the corner of his mouth as he added "or maybe you like carrying around da baby," in condescending baby talk.

Jake's face twisted. He tried to hold on to the hollow victory, but it faded behind his insecurities as Dan tapped his pudge with the back of his hand. "You don't have to be an asshole just because you can't admit that I'm actually better at something."

Dan shrugged and picked up his can, letting his response slip out before distracting himself with a sip. "Maybe. But at least I'm good at things that actually matter."

Jake's expression completely soured as Dan continued. "Like getting laid. Hey, remember Stacy Miller... Junior year?"

Jake swallowed. "Don't..."

Dan stood up, using his height to send the point he was about to make home, as a shark smile spread across his face. "What? I'm just saying... I mean, sure. Maybe you're better at some ancient video game, but at least I got to fuck Stacy Miller."

"Dude, come on..."

"Multiple times, actually. Twice in my car. Once in her bedroom while her parents were downstairs watching some movie... did you know that she made these little sounds when—"

"I don't want... care... I..."

"I'm just saying," Dan said coolly, a smug expression forming on his face as he looked up from his drink. He knew he was being a sore loser, but Jake's attitude really pissed him off. They've known each other for so long that they often behaved like brothers, and once Dan saw the smile fall from his friend's face, he felt satisfied enough to change the direction of conversation.

"Why don't you focus more on improving things that actually matter?"

But he went too far. Heat flooded Jake's face, anger and shame twisted together in his gut as he was reminded of Dan's "accomplishments": Emily Chen. Sarah Rodriguez. Every girl Jake had ever liked, Dan always ended up with. And every time, he made sure Jake knew it.

"You're such a fucking asshole," Jake shouted, his voice shaking as he stood. All five-foot-seven-inches of him attempted to threaten his significantly taller and far more athletic so-called best friend. "Shut the fuck up!"

Dan feigned a concerned shock, his expression a little too over-the-top in defense, as he softly claimed "hey, don't blame me just because I put in the work..."

Jake had it. Without warning he shoved Dan hard enough to make him stumble a few steps. "Work!? Please!" he spat, "you never had to do anything. It's all just genetics and luck."

Dan didn't immediately know how to respond. They've never truly fought like this... not physically, not really. But Jake's claim that he never had to work for anything was about as tired as whatever K-pop related nickname he came up with. If this was how it was going down, he simply wasn't having it anymore.

"Just because you were born ugly and short doesn't mean I somehow don't put any effort in, Jacob." His name emphasized like Dan was calling him a slur.

That did it.

Jake spit out a jumble of cuss words as he rushed to tackle Dan to the ground, shouting "I'm sick of you treating me like shit!" But Dan was ready.

Without much effort he dodged Jake's feral lunge and made no attempt to stop him from skidding across the basement floor, skinning his knee in the process. But that only fueled his rage even more.

"You think you're so much better than me!" he seethed, more statement than question, as he got back to his feet, and put his hands up ready to swing. "Why do you even stick around, huh?" He swung wide, only catching air. "So you can figure out what girl to take from me next!?"

Dan's face darkened, a momentary twinge of guilt flooded him before the anger drowned it out. Jake wasn't wrong; Dan knew what he was doing when he hooked up with Stacy and the others. And like brothers, Jake wasn't just his friend, he was THE male rival in his life. Competition, even if it wasn't a fair one... it's just how men are.

He caught Jake's arm during one of his mindless swings and pinned him against the wall. All six-foot-two of Daniel's frame held Jake in place as he squirmed violently and spit a mix of cuss words and the occasional demand to be let go, but Dan refused to let up.

"You think you ever had a chance with Stacy? Please," Dan spat, "the only reason she even knew who you were was because I let you hang with me."

Jake's conviction faded as he fought back tears brought on by Dan's brutal honesty. His friend knew exactly how to get to him, it's one reason he fought so hard for those shallow victories. His voice cracked as he replied, "that doesn't give you the right--"

"It gives me every right," Dan interrupted. "Nothing stopped you from playing basketball with me and the guys. Nothing stopped you from trying to better yourself..."

Dan let Jake go with a shove to the side, putting some distance between them as they glared at each other through heavy breaths.

"Don't blame being a loser on me."

Then they stood there, allowing their breathing to slow as they considered where to go from here. The tension between them thick in the air as Jake opened his mouth to say something, closed it, and then opened it again. But the only thing that came out was a startled grunt, before something strange began to happen.

The ground shook with an odd vibration that rattled everything around them with an odd rhythm that felt like they were in a car with the bass all the way up. But there wasn't any sound, just pressure, sudden and intense, that made their hands go to their ears in response to a painful pop.

They both looked up simultaneously at the bare bulbs that dangled from the ceiling, which started to glow and flicker to the rhythm of the pressure. The television, too. The landing screen of Goldeneye 64 was frozen and pulsed with a static glitch that traveled through the image like a boombox display.

Grievances on hold, they turned to each other with a look of concern on their faces as Dan shouted "what the fuck!?"

Or, at least, he tried to shout. His voice was never heard. Nothing could be heard except the intense ringing in both of their ears. Dan pulled one hand away and noticed that his ears were lightly bleeding, the sight of which made him weak and nauseous, and he fell to the ground as the world around him shook with chaotic vibrations.

He noticed that Jake's ears were bleeding as well, but Jake seemed too distracted by the surrounding chaos to react. Somehow, he stayed on his feet, analyzing the scene. In a lull between the vibrations Jake extended his hand to Dan to help him off the ground, a mix of pain and concern on his face as he mouthed the word "earthquake?"

Dan was barely to his feet when light started to pour in from seemingly everywhere, with no discernable source. Pale green seeping from every crack in the wall to the static of the TV screen, all over with no rhyme or reason to how it was happening. It made his hair stand on end... but not just his body hair. The hair on their head started floating upward like they were falling, and the sensation in his gut followed that notion long before their feet started slowly leaving the ground.

He screamed, almost loud enough to be heard over the intense ringing, and he could see that Jake was shouting, too. Fear dominated both of their faces as they reached out to grip each other into a frightened embrace before squeezing their eyes shut to the unbearable level of light that flooded the room.

Unable to see, unable to hear, neither of the two young men could tell if they were falling or flying as the light fully illuminated the inside of their eyelids. Yet it never got hot, and they never collided with anything, and just as quickly as it ramped up, it faded. A mercy as gravity returned and the light began to dissipate. Yet, even before sound and vision had a chance to catch up, they could tell that something was wrong.

Something was horribly wrong.

CHAPTER 2

THE UNEXPECTED

Jake opened his eyes very slowly, afraid of what he might see in the aftermath of whatever cataclysm had just occurred. He felt surprised to be alive more than anything, as he imagined nuclear bombs and other doomsday scenarios that often peeked out from the back of his mind at inopportune times.

“Fuck!” he spat as the sudden pain in his funny bone confirmed that he was truly alive. Jake’s elbow had collided with something hard with an echoing “*dunggg*”, but even with his eyes open it took a little too long for his vision to adjust to see what it was.

He was somewhere dim. Not dark, there were lights coming from somewhere around him, but it was incredibly different from the blinding radiance from moments ago. Ignorantly grateful, he felt the rest of his senses returning. He could almost hear himself cuss over the fading ring in his ears, and something was coming into focus a short distance in front of him. Glass...?

A strange thumping sound coming from somewhere close by drew his attention to the left, and he turned to see... “Dan!?”

Jake shouted in his direction, and concern married confusion as shapes began to come into focus. He was prepared to face some sort of rubble, imagining his grandmother’s house collapsed in around him after some intense disaster, and that he was in some safe pocket or something... but he wasn’t ready for what he saw.

In front of him was what appeared to be a large, curved, thick pane glass. He couldn’t tell if it was naturally green or if the dim green lights beyond it were giving it that color, but as he examined it further he began to panic.

The glass surrounded him, barely wide enough to move around in, and with no obvious exit that he could see in the dim light. Dan stood a few feet away in his own small cylinder, a soft light with no discernable source highlighting his face as he repeatedly slapped the transparent wall in front of him. The two boys looked at each other in terror.

“Jake!? Jake, what the hell is going on!?” shouted Dan between panicked breaths, his voice slightly muffled by the glass.

“I don’t know!”

“Where the hell are we!?”

“I don’t know!” Jake replied again, a little louder as his heart threatened to beat out of his chest.

Even though none of this made any sense, seeing a familiar face provided some level of comfort to an otherwise horrific situation. But it wasn’t enough to calm Jake down as he began shouting for help. Dan joined in, and together they screamed hopelessly for someone, anyone, who could explain where they were and free them from this sudden captivity.

Nothing responded.

Jake gave up after a few minutes even though Dan relented, and he tried to make sense of whatever else he could see beyond his confines. It was hard to make out, even though the glass itself was impossibly clear. Not a single smudge or fingerprint was left behind from their touch, not even fog from their breath, but beyond it stretched some sort of strange dark room.

Shapes with no discernable purpose seemed to throb or shift. They glowed with a soft, greenish light from somewhere within, pulsing slowly in a pattern that looked closer to speech than rhythm. Everything looked somewhat metallic, like polished chrome, yet as Jake observed the structures he could see, they seemed to stretch and contract like some sort of living organ.

Some curved upward into darkness where they vanished. If there was any sort of ceiling, it was either too high or too dark for him to make out. He could see a thick network of cables that stretched like veins, which were lightly illuminated by the soft beads of light that traveled through them every-so-often, but it was impossible to make out any further details. Almost like something was casting a shadow over the surrounding room.

"Aliens" Jake mumbled with no emotion, too quiet for Dan to hear.

"What?"

"Aliens!" he shouted, making sure his friend heard him this time. "I... I think we, uh, were abducted by... by f-FUCKING ALIENS!"

Dan had no response as he pressed his forehead against the glass, hoping to see whatever Jake saw, when a sharp squeal from his side made him jump and almost scream. He turned slowly to see something move behind their cylinders. Impossibly tall, at least eight or nine feet, and shaped oddly like... not an insect, but some insect's shadow that swallowed string lights.

When it suddenly reappeared, he threw himself back so hard he smacked his head on the glass. But he held his breath through the pain, like a child trying to hide from the monster under the bed. Dan wasn't thinking clearly; he wasn't being rational; he was confused and terrified. His eyes never left the figure as it moved around like water, and he mumbled something Jake couldn't quite catch.

"What is it?" Jake asked as he followed Dan's gaze beyond the glass and gasped.

The shape glided beyond their cells without sound, an amorphous silhouette against the dim throbs of green light. He couldn't make out any real details. Nothing about this creature made sense. But then another one followed, and then a third, all moving with that same fluid motion that made Jake's skin crawl.

"Oh God," he whispered, stumbling backward into the glass like a cornered animal. His legs gave out and he slid down the glass a few inches before he realized he was holding his breath. He exhaled in short panicked bursts that made his lungs ache.

"Oh God, they're real! They're watching us..."

Jake jumped when Dan started pounding again, harder this time. "Hey! Hey, this must be some mistake! Let me out! You hear me? Let me the fuck out right now!"

His voice cracked on the last word, but he kept going, face red with fury. "LET ME OUT!"

"Dude," Jake said just loud enough for Dan to hear. "Stop. They're not listening. They probably don't even understand what you're saying. And w-what if this is the only thing protecting us from them, man!?"

Dan slammed his hands painfully against the glass one last time and then sagged against the cylinder much like Jake had and, for a moment, Jake appreciated his short stature. He realized that, as uncomfortable as this was, it was probably even worse for someone as tall as Dan.

"Fuck." The word came out broken. "Fuck, man, what are they gonna do to us?"

Jake didn't answer right away. His attention drawn to one of the tall creatures that had paused just beyond Dan's cell. It stood perfectly still except for the strange appendages that tilted as if heads were examining them. Then it moved on to his cell for a moment before disappearing into the shadows.

"I don't know..." he replied, even though he had some ideas. Jake had watched enough movies to suspect why they were here and his voice was distant when he eventually shared them with Dan. "Dissect us, maybe? Probe us...?"

"You don't think... I mean, that stuff's not real."

"This feels very real," Jake offered in that same empty tone, "and look at where we are. How they're keeping us... This isn't going to be ..."

He trailed off, leaving the eerie silence between them heavy with dread, save for the strange infrequent sounds from whatever existed beyond their vision. Then Dan took a deep breath and cleared his throat.

"You know," he said suddenly, "if... if we're gonna die here, there's, uh, some shit I think I need to get off my chest."

Jake looked skeptically at him but Dan wasn't meeting his eyes. Instead he stared pensively at his own reflection in the glass, like he was working up the courage to continue. Jake closed his eyes in an attempt to suppress the overwhelming anxiety and sighed. "Like what...?"

"Like... yeah, okay. Maybe a part of me kept you around because you made me look good, man." Dan's voice was low, almost ashamed. "And the girls... they always noticed me more when we were together because, well..."

"Because I'm fat? Ugly...?" Jake offered, accepting this awkward moment as a distraction from the terror that spread through his chest.

Dan snorted and looked over at his friend with that charming, disarming smirk. "Not threatening is what I was going for, but... yeah."

"Dude, fuck you!" Jake returned with a nervous chuckle as Dan continued: "But you're still, like, my friend, man. I don't mind hanging with you, even if you're a bit of a dweeb."

Jake's expression wasn't what he had expected during this heartfelt moment. One blonde eyebrow raised and a skeptical look on his face. "What? What's that look for?"

"That's a real shit apology, dude." Stated Jake, matter-of-factly.

"I... What? I wasn't; I was just clearing the air between us before..."

There was an awkward pause before Jake replied with a quivering frown. "And you don't even feel bad?"

"Feel bad about what?" Dan responded with a furrowed brow, "Bro, I carried you through middle school and you know it. I saved your ass from getting stuck at the losers table, you should be grateful."

The two guys shared a short laugh before their faces fell again, unable to keep the weight of their situation from the forefront of their minds for very long. The silence that followed only made it worse as Jake tried his best to see what was happening around him.

"Yeah..." Dan said a little quieter than before, "And I hooked up with those girls because I could. I knew how you felt and I just... I wanted you to keep looking up to me. It made me feel important and I... I was probably just being an asshole."

Jake felt the words land like the punch he'd been waiting for in the basement. It was obvious, of course, but he always made excuses for the way things turned out due to his own insecurities. But to hear it from Dan's own lips would've absolutely ruined Jake's life, if more dire circumstances weren't already making him fear for it.

"I knew," he said quietly. "I always knew. But... what could I even do about it? It's not like I ever really had a chance with any of them. And even though you're an asshole, you're my only real friend. So..."

Dan didn't say anything in response and they both sat with that for a few minutes. They watched the tall shapes move in the background like ghosts, waiting for whatever it is these things were planning, until it was interrupted by a dry chuckle from Jake's cell.

"You want to know something really messed up...?" Jake asked, his eyes not rising to meet his friend's as he fidgeted with the hem of his hoodie.

"What's that?"

"I used to think a lot about you and Stacy after you hooked up with her," Jake admitted, "imagining it was me instead. Hating you and wanting to be you at the same time... Pretty fucked up, right?"

Dan huffed and let out a small chuckle. "We're literally in some alien jail waiting for them to end our lives in some horrifying way. I'm pretty sure we're way past fucked up at this point." His voice growing softer and somber after a nervous chuckle. "I'm really scared, man..."

Jake nodded, unsure of what to say, when something made the hair on the back of his neck stand up. He subconsciously began rubbing his neck as he looked around for the source of the sudden echoing vibration. It started low, almost sub-audible, but it made his teeth ache. Then more sounds, like the clicking and buzzing of insects deep inside his ears.

He tried to cover them in response, but the sound was internal and relentless. Gritting his teeth, he looked over helplessly to Dan who was apparently suffering a similar experience, and he yelled "what the fuck is that!?"

Luckily, the sensation didn't last too long as the sounds continuously warped. They became something a little different each time, clearer and surprisingly familiar, until they heard a word in the English language spoken directly into their ears.

"Awwh!" declared a breathy feminine voice, in that cute but condescending tone, like she was speaking to her favorite pet. Yet the emotion felt wrong... fake. "Like, don't be scared. The pain response was totally studied and it won't happen unless it, like, serves a necessary purpose."

Both of them exchanged the same look of mortified confusion, almost daring the other to make the first reply. Jake swallowed hard and Dan began to slowly nod, giving him the courage to say "w-what do you plan to do to us...?"

No reply came.

"Hello...? I-is somebody out there...?"

A different female voice replied: "Pain will *totally* not happen unless it, like, has to, 'kay?"

"What the fuck does that mean!?" shouted Dan, followed by a squeak in Jake's voice as he asked "i-is that a threat!?"

"Why the hell did you abduct us!?"

The voice didn't respond directly. Instead, sections of their glass cylinders began to light up with animated images, like tiny screens appearing in the glass in front of them. Images that were incredibly confusing.

Videos of people filled the displays. Mostly women, but not the kind you see in day-to-day life... no. They were all some sort of fantasy, ranging from glammed-up TV housewives to last generation's porn stars with their massive breasts straining against skin-tight clothing, while others had asses so full and round they flirted with gravity itself.

The boys exchanged glances. "Yo, what the fuck?"

Half of it was purely porn that crossed into fetish material. There was a close-up of huge fake tits bouncing in bridal lingerie, next to a romantic scene from some sleazy early 2000s rom-com that didn't age well, placed only an inch above the Bundy family having a conversation in their pretend living room.

Reality TV shows from the 90s mixed with a variety of late-night adult entertainment, hip hop music videos, and hallmark movies. Most of which were unfamiliar to a couple of guys born

in the early 2000s; even the porn looked antiquated. Absolutely none of this made sense, but Jake couldn't look away. His face burned hot with shame and arousal blending together like water and oil. Despite the gripping fear he felt, he was starting to get hard in his basketball shorts, and he tried to hide the shame as Dan shouted "the fuck...!?"

Jake glanced over to see his friend apparently not struggling with the same problem he was currently facing. Dan simply looked bewildered as he tried to peek around the images to whatever creatures were keeping them prisoner. "Hey, what the hell is this!? It doesn't explain anything!"

Jake tried to slowly shift his body away before his friend spotted the tent he was pitching. He even closed his eyes and tried to remind himself of the horrors that were probably ahead, but they immediately flew back open when his cell started vibrating.

The feeling was intense. It resonated through the glass and into their bodies, making Jake's head hum to a chaotic pulsating rhythm. Spots popped into his vision and everything grew blurry as waves of sudden dizziness made it harder to think clearly.

"Dan," he slurred. "Some... t(h)ing's... wro(ng)..."

Dan's response was thick and slow as he begged: "take... him... not... me..." But Jake was too exhausted to realize what he was saying.

He watched in dizzy terror the blurry alien shapes moved closer. He could barely see them gathering beyond the vibrating glass as the sensation became overwhelming and his knees buckled. The last thing Jake heard before the darkness took him was a third woman's voice, kind and maternal in that uncanny valley sort of way, that repeated their statement one last time, as everything faded to black.

"The pain will not happen."

CHAPTER 3

CROWNED CONSTERNATION

Consciousness returned in a way that felt like beads of light bubbling through a viscous syrup. Jake felt groggy and confused when his eyes opened cautiously to a bright light in an empty sterile white room, but there was some primal instinct telling him that something was deeply wrong.

What a strange dream... But was he in the hospital, and why did it look like he was sitting upright?

The memories of a conversation with Dan in some strange tank felt so real, but then he also remembered the earthquake in his grandma's basement and that odd green light. Anxiety and dread swiftly sobered him up the rest of the way.

He could feel nothing below his neck, but what he could feel felt wrong, like heavy worms were slowly writhing against his Adam's apple from the inside, and a strange pressure throbbed at the base of his skull like some foreign musical score. As he opened his mouth, Jake dragged his tongue heavily against his teeth to try and remove whatever that strange metallic taste was, then yelled for help.

Or, at least, he attempted to... but nothing came out. Nothing at all: no sound, not even the familiar rush of air. Jake came to the conclusion that he was holding his breath, and tried to take a deep inhale, but nothing happened except for the flexing of his cheeks.

He wasn't breathing!

Panic took over and he thrashed around trying to wake the rest of his body up. His head rocked and jerked aggressively, but the rest of him didn't even budge. It felt like his body from the jaw down was a statue. Tears began spilling down cheeks he couldn't move to wipe... and then he saw Dan.

Across the room, mounted on a sleek pedestal that rose from the floor like an odd podium comprised of whatever the room was made out of and some sort of gelatinous metal, Dan's head stared back at him. Just his head. His eyes were bulging and his mouth was open in a soundless shriek in Jake's direction.

Mortified, Jake's gaze dropped lower, hoping... praying. But all he could see was the room in front of him. His body completely absent, Jake looked back up at his friend's head with a mix of terror and confusion, and saw Dan's lips moving frantically.

Jake could read them clear as day: "WHAT THE FUCK!? WHAT THE FUCK, JAKE!?"

He tried to answer. His own mouth shaped breathless words he couldn't hear: "Gone... How are we...?"

They continued to exchange silent panic as Jake realized, far too slow, that he wasn't dreaming. They were still in alien captivity, and were experiencing the obvious result of one of

their terrifying experiments. Yet they had been true to their word. Jake was feeling a lot of things, but there wasn't any pain at all.

Being coherent and unable to breathe, however, was well beyond the realm of discomfort. Even if it didn't appear to be necessary any longer it was absolutely maddening, and Jake could feel his mind buckling under the weight of it all. He had no arms to hug himself, no legs to run, no lungs to scream... but he still had his other senses. He could taste and feel something cold and metallic on his tongue, smell the odd mix of sulfurous and floral scents, and hear the endless throbbing hums from the plain white walls that seemingly surrounded them.

Who knew how long they were left like this, before the wall in front of them irised open with an odd metallic squelch, and a strange spiral shape dilated to reveal a glimpse of a blinding green light from beyond, which sealed shortly after two figures stepped into the room.

Neither Jake nor Dan could believe what they were looking at. The two visitors looked like strippers pretending to be nurses. Human women that seemed a little too tall, even though it was difficult to gauge without a body. Both had the same platinum blonde updos beneath matching costume nurse hats, and tight plastic-looking nurse costumes stretched tight against enormous breasts. Yet something about them made both men incredibly uneasy.

It wasn't the fact that they were completely identical, or that they looked like they walked off of the cover of an old Blink 182 poster, no. There was something uncanny valley about them. Their skin a little too smooth, with big brown eyes that never seemed to blink. Their hair and breasts were as static as the smile on their sensual red lips, never seeming to bounce or move as they walked silently toward the two defenseless heads.

One stopped directly in front of Jake, the other in front of Dan, at the exact same pace in the exact same stance. Jake was beyond creeped out as the one near him leaned down, brushing her very real-feeling breasts gently against his face as she examined whatever his neck was attached to.

As she moved he felt a sickening pressure, like the nurse was adjusting his spinal cord. He tried to ignore it by focusing on the odd sound that echoed from her chest. It was similar to some of the ones he heard outside his previous prison, but he didn't have very long to listen to it before something odd happened to his face.

It startled him when his jaw suddenly opened entirely on its own, stretching uncomfortably wide as he fought and failed an attempt to close it. His eyes went wide, thankfully still his to control, as she fidgeted with other things beyond his view. Her squishy breast pressed into his cheek as his jaw began to wiggle from side to side, before his tongue stretched to its limit.

The anxiety and dread that flooded his mind grew more pronounced as Jake realized that he couldn't seem to stop his tongue from dancing in his mouth like a worm, and he tried to glance over at Dan who was experiencing a similar ordeal at the hands of the other nurse. It wasn't until after his mouth finally closed and began sucking on nothing for a few moments, like he was sipping through some imaginary straw, that control finally returned to them.

Both boys looked mortified and disgruntled as they flexed their jaws to alleviate the strain, while their eyes followed the nurses as they casually walked toward the wall closest to Jake. He glanced over at Dan for answers he knew his friend didn't have, and noticed that he was mouthing something furiously toward his nurse, who ignored him completely as she stopped shortly behind her twin. Something like a melodic cough came from one of them, even though neither of their mouths dropped that creepy smile, and a rectangular section of wall in front of them flickered and then vanished like something out of a video game, revealing a small alcove.

Inside stood a body. A tall, headless, black man's body.

It was at least a foot taller than the nurses even without his head, with deep rich ebony skin and muscles cut like they were shaped for some 80s action movie. Broad shoulders tapered to a narrow waist with chiseled abs and bulging, veiny muscles. Glowing halos surrounded his wrists and ankles, seemingly suspending the body in place, with a large ghostly glow around the stump of his neck.

And between his legs...

Jake couldn't stop staring. The cock looked massive, even while soft, like a baby's arm clutching a plum. Dan's eyes were locked on it, too. A blend of disgust and confusion wrested with the overwhelming paranoia that had dominated his mind. He silently prayed for some return to normalcy when one of the nurses turned back, but she paid him no mind as she crossed the room and carefully lifted Jake's head from its pedestal with a strange wobbly sound as the metallic surface momentarily jiggled like Jello.

The feeling was nauseating and Jake's expression became one of sheer terror as she carried him back toward the body. His eyes began flooding with tears as he looked helplessly toward Dan, who could only watch in suspense as the nurse positioned Jake's head atop the body and lowered it slowly into the ghostly light with a series of crunchy, juicy pops that would've made Dan vomit, had he still had a digestive tract.

Jake, however, was having a completely different experience. His vision blurred from the sudden lack of oxygen for only a brief moment, before air —wonderful air— rushed into a pair of powerful lungs that he didn't have moments ago. He gasped and exhaled a handful of times, having nearly forgotten what breathing felt like. With each deep breath came pins and needles that spread from his neck and through the body below him, paving the way for the return of feelings both familiar and alien to him.

After just a few seconds he could feel the warm air of the room against his skin and the calm beat of a heart that paid no mind to his own emotions, as it pumped blood through the dense muscles that flexed passively as he instinctively felt for them. He had a body again, a real body... the one he was just observing moments ago. He glanced down.

His voice, when it finally came, was deep and smooth, completely different from the reedy tenor he and Dan were used to. "Holy shit," he said aloud, "holy fucking shit!" Followed by a deep cough in response to the unfamiliar bass that tickled his throat.

"Please step forward" instructed the nearest nurse, and without any consideration of his own, his body immediately took one calm step forward, and then another. He simply passed through the cords of light that were restraining this body in the alcove as if they were made of warm water. As he moved, Jake could feel every sensation of the massive body as if it were his own, from the cool hard floor beneath his massive bare feet, to the unfamiliar weight between his legs that swung like a metronome as he moved.

"You can talk..." he asked the nurse distractedly. His attention focused more on the feeling of an entirely new body than any of his previous concerns. He felt amazing... powerful. He glanced over to Dan, almost as an afterthought, who was staring at him in wide-eyed disbelief. Jake attempted to walk over to him, but he simply didn't. He just stood in place, unable to move any part of his body below the neck, even though he could feel his new muscles twinge in response to each failed attempt.

Jake looked down at the nearest nurse. "Hey, I think something's wrong. I can't move."

She looked back up at him with that smile that never left her face and simply stated "yes" in response.

"I don't understand..." he replied, his gaze dropping away from her creepy smile to her much more appealing breasts that he reminisced about having pressed against his face. He felt himself grow hard almost immediately, as an intense arousal claimed his entire existence, and he shamefully looked away from Dan almost as quickly as they made eye contact. But Dan's look of shock never left his face, and who could blame him? Jake was currently wearing a stranger's body that now sported a massive, throbbing erection. One that he fiercely desired to do something with as he snuck another peek at the buxom fantasy before him.

Jake never had a drive like this in his life, and his mind was struggling to process the sudden shift in priorities as a gasp escaped his lips in response to, possibly, the greatest sensation he had ever felt. He looked down to discover one of the nurse's gloved hands firmly wrapped around the monster between his legs, and he couldn't help but bite his lip and lean his head back in a breathy response, as she began stroking it sensually.

God, it felt so good!

The pleasure was overwhelming. Her gloves felt like they were made of the softest satin and he throbbed hard in her grip, while she continued to pump the massive black cock that had been made a defining part of him mere moments ago. And, even though his body still wouldn't move to his whim, he could feel his hips buck to meet her rhythm, while the rest of him just stood there like a statue as he was jerked off in front of his best friend's head.

He briefly glanced down in response to a sudden cold sensation only to discover that the other nurse had pressed the opening of a clear crystal cylinder gently against his sensitive tip. It was all too much too sudden, and Jake's deep voice cracked as he let out a deep throaty moan.

"Oh... FUCK!"

He came so hard that it sounded like his jizz was going to shatter the container, as erotic pleasure crashed through him in waves stronger than anything he'd ever felt before, and his head flailed wildly atop a body that refused to join the momentum. This was both the most terrifying and sexiest thing Jake had ever experienced in his life.

He barely even had a moment to recover from the orgasm, to briefly acknowledge the look of disbelief on Dan's face from across the room, before they started milking him again for another sample. To his surprise he felt ready to give one. Within minutes the room echoed with another heavy slap of cum against crystal, and then shortly after, it happened again.

All the while Dan's head, still mounted and bodiless, could only watch the scene with the same morose interest one would give a car accident. It was terrible, but he couldn't will himself to look away. Instead, he watched as Jake's chubby white face and messy blonde hair sat atop a hulking, muscular black man's body that was just jerked off three times in a row by twin stripper nurses. He had absolutely no idea what was going on or why this was happening, as one of the nurses walked back to the alcove to deposit the container of jizz in a place neither of them could see.

Jake's blurry eyes found Dan, who mouthed a dramatic "Dude... what the fuck...?" that brought back the fear and confusion that had been suppressed in his ecstasy. As he came down from the unexpected erotic experience, he broke eye contact with his friend again and sheepishly replied "I... I don't know!" Even then, his new tone carried a trace of confidence that felt slightly intimidating to Dan, as he watched the nurse nearest to Jake look up at him with intent.

"You may now sit," she informed him, like it was the end of some standard medical examination. He only had time to respond with a jumble of sounds as his body turned smoothly and strutted over to the other side of the room, beyond where his head had been positioned. During the stroll he tried to adjust his course, but his body felt locked up like he was trying to move from within a dream.

He could feel those powerful muscles engage as his arms and legs bent and moved, yet they did so entirely on their own. The sensation amplified the returning concerns he felt through the relaxing post-nut clarity he had been awarded, and he began shouting as he approached a chair that simply grew from the floor for him.

Something obviously wasn't working as it should be.

"Hey! I can't control myself! It's doing this on its own! Hello!? This body isn't working right! I..."

The rest of his words became bassy hums, as his jaw clenched shut and his tongue pressed firmly against the roof of his mouth in response to a shushing sound made by both the nurses in unison. They completely ignored him as he took his seat, and he could only watch them catwalk over to the wall nearest to Dan, where they opened another alcove Jake couldn't see into this one from his position, but Dan certainly could, after he stopped trying to twist his head to see where Jake went and turned toward the nurses. His mouth fell open as he tried to process what he was looking at.

The second body was very different.

It was small compared to the two women, with pale and creamy skin that almost had a glow to it. But where it lacked in stature it most certainly made up for in curves. Every inch below the ghostly green collar around its neck looked like it was drawn by a teenage boy with a hentai addiction: Wide hips with a tapered waist, thick thighs, and a firm ass with cheeks the size of soccer balls.

Dan was looking at a profoundly female body with tiny delicate hands and feet, and tits the size of the his own head, that drooped perfectly above the curve of her overly wide hips. They looked natural, yet impossibly large somehow, with pinky-tip-sized nipples poking out of their puffy areolas.

He was momentarily lost in admiration before one of the nurses started walking his way, and then the reality of the situation clicked. A realization that had him screaming in silent terror once more as the nurse reached forward to scoop up his head.

If that body was for Jake, then this one...

“Oh, no...! Oh, God, no!”

Splorp

A haze began to tint both his vision and his thoughts as multiple things hastily disconnected somewhere below his jaw, and the world around him started spinning as he wiggled and silently screamed the entire way to the alcove. He exhausted the remaining oxygen in his brain so quickly that he momentarily forgot why he was freaking out in the first place, as the nurse held him out just in front of her boobs (heh, boobs) and rotated him to face her.

He felt higher than that one time he ate a brownie at what’s-his-name’s house party, when he spotted Jake’s blur in the back of the room. The concern on his friend’s face reminded him of why he was freaking out, and in his last moment of clarity he tried biting the thumb of the nurse that was deftly lowering his head into something warm and wet. But Dan’s bite never made contact. Instead his face spasmed in response to the queer chain of connections he felt just below his jaw, and within moments the darkness that nearly claimed him was dispelled, as his brain was tethered to something new and terrifying.

Click.

Crack.

Squelch.