

## Journal

I was the first. That is, I think I was the first. I'm fairly certain. The only way that anyone else could have been before me is if they were lost before they were even noticed.

Already into the first paragraph and I'm getting ahead of myself. I should explain why I'm writing in the first place.

I'm writing because it's getting riskier every day and I realised that if something happens to me, whether by accident or whether –God forbid– I get discovered, then everything I have seen and everything I know will be lost. It's not like I know the cure for cancer or anything, but with some of my know-how, someone in the same situation as I am, who happens to come across this journal, could make good use of it. In any case, it should be at least interesting.

Not interesting in the way that the journal of your great, great grandfather might be interesting if you are researching your genealogy and enjoy finding out why he migrated to this country and what the sea voyage was like, but it should be interesting for people who are not even related to me, because my story is pretty unique. I can't say that with absolute authority, because maybe what is happening in my life happens all the time. Maybe by now, this journal is one in a thousand telling the same story. It could be. Who knows? Not me.

I'm sorry if my writing is not very poetic. I'm not a writer by profession and I'm certainly not wasting any unused talent by not being a writer. I know lots of good slang expressions but that's about it. I've been reading a lot recently and have made notes how real writers write so that I can avoid mistakes in my journal, and make it easier to read. Thanks to Dan Brown I now think I know the difference between 'who' and 'whom'.

There I go again, completely off topic. Regardless of how much grammar I've learnt I still can't stay on topic. I'm sorry if I digress a bit every now and then.

And I'm sorry if I keep apologising for things. People used to tell me off for it all the time.

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I'm sorry for breaking off abruptly like that. The time just crept up on me and before I knew it I had to hide.

I use the same hiding spot – I've always used the same hiding spot. It's good because it's got a lot of colours and patterns and a human body blends right in. It's natural camouflage. Also it's in a very obvious place and is well-lit, which might seem like a bad thing, but it means that it is always overlooked because at first glance it appears to be a very poor hiding place.

I was about to tell you where my hiding spot is, but you must understand that it is such a good spot that I can't give it away, just in case my journal is found ...before I am.

Oh... I forgot to mention, today is the 4<sup>th</sup> of February. I will begin putting the date on every page so you know what day I am writing this on.

4<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

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5<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

It is now the 5<sup>th</sup>. It took me so long to decide whether to write 'Feb.' or 'February' (also I spent a few minutes remembering how to spell it), that she appeared unexpectedly and I had to scramble for cover in my hiding place.

I've already wasted two days on these first few paragraphs and I haven't even introduced myself, let alone got into my story.

My name is Dave. Dave Jamieson. If you live in my area you might remember me because I might have been your electrician. One of my mates in my electrician's course at TAFE was called Alec, and he copped a lot of jokes with people asking him if his last name was 'Trishan'. It wasn't though. It was Jones. Also I think he liked to be called 'Alex' anyway.

I'm probably more famous for disappearing though. I disappeared on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2004. I've been gone for almost two years now. Normally people who are stranded or locked away in prison keep a record by scratching notches into a wall, but I don't have to do that because there's a daily calendar only a few hundred metres away. It would make notches fairly pointless. I make notches for other reasons, but I guess I'll explain that a bit later.

My disappearance wasn't in the papers or anything but I think it created a lot of local gossip. It hadn't appeared to be anything special; anything extraterrestrial or a kidnapping or something – it just looked like I had run away. That's why only locals knew and talked about it. The fact that everyone thinks I ran away makes it very dangerous for me now, but I don't think I've told you enough to understand why. I'll get to that later too.

There are so many things I have to 'get to later'. I hope I have enough space in this book, because I don't think I'll get the chance to find another one anytime soon. I found it in a bus that got stranded here. The people on it got captured, though they could have escaped. If they had have had this journal, for example, they would have had a good chance. That's one of the reasons I'm writing it.

Getting captured isn't so bad though. Then again, I wouldn't know. I'm the only survivor who hasn't even been noticed let alone captured. I can tell you though that it's not like it's an instant death sentence to be caught. Most people have a relatively comfy but confined life if they behave themselves. It's only if they're–

Oh my God, there it was!

3:23pm, 5<sup>th</sup> of Feb.

Now that I have this book and pen, I can make a note of when it happens! That's what one set of my notches is for; keeping a record of how many times it happens. Now I can also write down *when*. I call it 'The Sparkle' because I don't have a very good vocabulary and I can't think of a better word. It's a bit of a sissy-sounding word for something that is so amazing ...and dangerous.

It's not dangerous itself I guess. Just the consequences. Anyway I'm not going to continue writing now because I'm going to climb up and get a view, so I can see who or what has come through.

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6<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

A bit of excitement last night! They escaped but she will know they're here soon. Today is going to be an interesting day, and it could even get dangerous for me too.

It was four young men. They arrived in a station wagon, which is still sitting there. They were quite lucky to have had such a long time to deal with The Shock. That's what I call the first moments.

It's the same for everybody who appears when she's not around.

They stay completely still for a few minutes. They are wondering if they are dreaming. Then they move a bit. They don't pinch their arms or anything – that's only in movies. If they are in cars then they get out and slowly look around. Then they are struck by the strange sight before them... it's hard to explain but it seems as if the surroundings are fixed in place and even if you change your perspective by walking a few paces, nothing seems to move. It's because of the distance.

It's at this point that sometimes people faint (and not just ladies either; grown men faint all the time). If they don't faint then they are running back and forth, trying to change their perspective more. The further you run, the better an idea you get of the size. More faint now because now they are out of breath.

That's The Shock. After comes The Panic, but I'll get to that later. I guess I must have been the same when it happened to me, but I don't remember, because I was too shocked. That's why I call it The Shock.

Anyway, these four guys went through The Shock. To their credit they coped with it a lot quicker than most people, but then again I've noticed people cope better when other people are around. Then they did something unusual. They didn't begin panicking; they made a plan. I don't quite know what on Earth they aimed to achieve, but they talked amongst themselves for a few minutes before dividing into two pairs.

Each pair walked in the opposite direction. I guess their goal was simply a bit of reconnaissance. I watched the pair that walked towards me because the other pair went out of sight behind a tub of Nivea. They looked to be in their early twenties... about her age. They reached the edge quite quickly, and even from where I sat I could see the looks of awe on their faces as they peered out over the edge. That's because it's an awe-inspiring sight.

It didn't take long for them to notice the lamp cord and they took immediate interest in it. I don't know why they wanted to make it to the ground. I guess it is because your first instinct in an unfamiliar situation is to get your footing on solid ground, literally.

They went back to their station wagon and soon the other pair arrived back as well. I could see that the first pair was pointing out the cord to the other pair because they were pointing at it. They were clearly undecided. One of them was making such a fuss and throwing his arms up while he argued with the others.

The three others began walking toward the cord, and the lone young man trotted back to the car. I know exactly what he would have been arguing. He would have been saying something like this:

*"There's no use trying to make it for the floor! Why do you want to hide anyway? If we stay with the car then we'll have more chance of getting seen and rescued."*

He was right, but the flaw in his argument was that he was assuming that they would be rescued if they were seen. It depends how you define 'rescue'. I certainly wouldn't want to be 'rescued', but my situation is different. For them it wouldn't be so bad.

Descending the cord is easy. I have done it a thousand times. The first three did it in a few minutes. It was barely minutes after I watched them reach the floor that she came in. She must have been do-

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Sorry about that. By ridiculous coincidence, she came in again just now just as I was writing about her coming in earlier. I often wonder about coincidences. That is, whether things happen by chance or for a reason.

Anyway, that is a different topic. I was up to the part where she came in. She was wearing her knee-length black skirt from Sportsgirl and her white shirt with the loose, open neck, and a jacket, because it had been a chilly afternoon, especially for spring. I ducked out of sight.

She threw her handbag onto the floor and it made a thump that would have shaken those young blokes off their feet. I must admit it's a bit mean but I somehow quite enjoy watching newbies getting thrown around in their new world a bit. I've been through it all. I guess I just want to see other people going through it too.

I watched from my safe vantage point as she undertook a few routine things. I never get the chance to speak to another human being, so I must admit I often speak to myself. In this case I quietly uttered a few words as I watched her. Even though this happened the night before last, I can tell you exactly what I said because it never changes; it's her routine.

“Drop the handbag... take off your jacket... toss the jacket on the bed... sit on the bed, pull your hair over your left shoulder and let it hang over your chest... lean down and take off your shoes.”

She makes the most graceful motions a mortal man could ever look upon, even though she is performing the most mundane and perfectly predictable actions. I happened to notice that one of the men is making a daring move and edging slowly out from underneath the cover of the bed. Not a smart move.

Oh – just to remind you. Since I last wrote, three men scaled the lamp cord down to the floor, while the fourth remained in the car as he had argued.

I was right about it not being a smart move. She lifted her leg and as soon as her shoe slipped from her foot it crashed heavily beside the young man. Just the thump alone sent him flying and he landed on his back. When she lowered her foot again he was right in between her stockinged feet, which rested flat on the carpet.

“He's right below you, Karen,” I said out loud to nobody who could possibly hear me, “bend over; look between your feet.”

You probably think I'm insane for saying something like that. Being sort of... well, ‘on her side’, I mean. I can't say for certain that I'm not insane. Who knows? You could be too. It even depends how you define it. All I can say is that there are other things to take into account that you don't know yet... but I want to get to that later.

I guess I'd better get back to the story. She didn't bend over like I had inaudibly advised. I watched tensely as the young lad got to his feet and sprung with all his might back towards the cover of the bed. Just as he did, she shifted and slid her foot over the carpet

to one side, missing the bloke by the thickness of her stocking. He was bloody lucky. He would have been smeared over the carpet.

I know why he made it. His veins were bursting with adrenaline; fear-induced adrenaline. I know the feeling. I know it very well. I call it The Boost. I like giving things names. It gives you a burst of energy that on more than one occasion has saved my life.

The reason why she had shifted was to reach down beside the bed and grab her handbag. In it is her mobile telephone. She checks it because she doesn't have a hands-free device to let her use it in the car, and instead she puts the phone on silent so she doesn't feel the temptation to answer it if someone happened to ring, which is a sensible idea. If it rang and she answered it she would probably have a car accident. She is very absent-minded and a bit clumsy.

These are not terrible traits to have. In my opinion they make her in a way quite lovable, although in her case it can sometimes have very bad consequences for other people. That's one of the things I record with my notches.

Aha! She glances to her side and has seen it. After she checks her mobile phone she always checks the spot on the shelf. I can almost see the excitement rising in her. I think she revels in this extraordinary... what could you call it? 'Gift' perhaps, or even better; 'phenomenon'. She has been endowed, for whatever reason, with this strange, basically supernatural effect, and I think she feels it's as if they –we– belong to her. Her possessions, her responsibilities, her subjects – she is queen and goddess. That's me being as poetic as I can be. Anyway, she has seen it and knows that she has just received more 'worshippers' if you want to put it like that.

I see movement at the car – the man has got out. He waves wildly to bring her attention to his plight. This happens sometimes. I know what he is thinking... rescue, she will see him and despite her stunned shock she will save him, report him to the authorities... he will be a sensation, and scientists will work hard to put him back to normal. It's a fairly logical train of thought but he is out of luck.

The phone is tossed to her side and she twists her body up onto the bed in order to face the shelf. I see her profile from my safe perch and watch as her sweet smile broadens as she leans forward. The man is enthusiastic and runs forward to meet her descending face. He still waves wildly beneath her sparkling eyes. I bet he is wondering why she isn't stunned or fainting from shock.

She leans back and lifts her arms. With her left hand she takes the car and her right hand descends with outstretched fingers towards the young man. With a practised motion that I've watched a thousand times, she presses her forefinger onto his chest to steady him, while his arms drop to his sides in terror (this must be an overwhelming and frightening experience), and her thumb and middle finger delicately clutch together behind his back, bunching the material of his jacket together so she can grasp it, dragging his arms up helplessly and tightening the jacket over his chest. She lifts him into the air effortlessly.

I can only imagine what it must be like to be dangled before her face and bathed in her gaze; above you her beautiful eyes and below her wide smile and glistening lips. She is nice. No... that word isn't enough. She is lovely – divine. He is basked in her benevolence (a bit more poetry for you there). She is mean to no-one, even though she could so easily be. Wait, no, there have been a couple of incidents, but they were understandable from her point of view. Plus accidental things. I will get to them later. Right now she is speaking to him; very softly, as she knows it must be scary. She likes watching his face to see his expression while she speaks to him. She likes it every time – I think it's like telling people a big surprise and enjoying watching their expression. It's always enjoyable.

“...be calm, everything's alright. I will take care of you...” I have heard this speech so many times. However I fear that if or when she finds me, I don't think I'd get the same kind speech.

She rotates back to a sitting position; one leg tucked under the other, which hangs over the edge of the bed. Suddenly I hear a muffled noise from outside the room. She has heard it too, and her hand lowers towards her lap while she pauses to listen. She brings the station wagon behind her thigh to conceal it just in case. Now footsteps are audible and a muffled voice is heard.

“Karen!”

She is used to hiding things quickly. With a quick movement she tucks her hand under the skirt spanning her thighs, and when it emerges the man is no longer between her fingers. She quickly tugs the skirt further over her legs and with her other hand grasps the mobile phone, and by the time the door swings open she is tapping away on it innocently.

“Oh, you're home,” beams her mother. Gee she is a beauty. It is clear where Karen got her looks. She towers in the doorway and her words don't even register to me as I admire her.

Soon –too soon for me– she is gone and the flat white door fills the space where her magical figure had stood. I glance back to her daughter, who has tugged her skirt up her thighs to fish the hastily-concealed young man out of her lap. It reminds me of romantic comedy movies about teenagers where the girl has to hide the bloke in the wardrobe to escape the unexpected return of her parents. However those films wouldn't be as funny if the girls could hide boys as easily as Karen can. Also, this analogy with the wardrobe is close to the truth, but I have plenty of time to get to that later.

Actually as it turns out I will be getting to it sooner than I thought. Her hand emerges from her lap with the man cupped in her palm, attempting to stand but tumbling with her movement. She stands and goes straight to the wardrobe, opening it wider and shifting the scarf to reveal the keypad. I'm sure this is going to sound like something from

Mission Impossible or something, but then again, if you are reading this then most likely you've already seen it or are about to, so you shouldn't have trouble believing me.

I'm certain she didn't construct this by herself. She's not good with mechanical things, and certainly not with electronics. I bet that back when she was in school when The Sparkle first began occurring frequently, she convinced some geeky kid who was in love with her (like most of them probably were, and probably still are) to build it for her, telling him it was for a theatre play or God-knows-what. First let me describe what it does. It opens and closes a curtain-like thing that she made. She is very clever and I'm very proud of her; she sewed together bits of old clothes to make a curtain that when it's pulled shut, it looks exactly like a messy pile of clothes. Behind it is where she keeps them. I told you I like making up names; at first I called them 'The Pens' (as in 'pig pen', not as in biros), but that sounds too negative, as if she is holding people against their will and is farming them to eat or something. What a horrible thought. Well, she is kind of holding them against their will, but it's for their own good, and also for hers. That is, if the secret ever got out... well I don't want to digress. Back to the name: I now call all of the habitats together 'The Retreat'. I had to decide between 'haven', 'refuge', 'sanctuary' and 'shelter', and now that I think about it, 'habitat' isn't too bad itself. However 'The Retreat' is nice and makes it sound like a holiday resort.

Back to the description of the curtains. The curtains conceal The Retreat and make it appear as if the bottom three shelves of the wardrobe are simply filled with piled-up clothes. Ingenious. She is wonderfully clever – except with electronics and things, as I mentioned. What the electronics and keypad do is the following: when she taps in her code, the curtains open. That way The Retreat can bask in sunlight all day long while she is away. However, when the door to the room is opened, for example by her mother entering unexpectedly, a couple of little motors automatically pull the curtains shut. Very clever, though it means she has to regularly tap in the code if she comes in and out a lot. I remember finding a clever little voice-recognition unit in an electronics store once (remember I was an electrician). That would have been more convenient.

She taps in the code and the curtains draw back to reveal The Retreat at her knees. Before she built them –the three habitats, that is– back when The Sparkle had just begun occurring, she didn't know what to do, and she hid people in her clothes drawers. That was a reasonable idea, but it wasn't a permanent solution. She had to pick people off her clothes each time she got changed –which invaded her privacy a bit too much– and was a great risk because a few times she missed people or was in too much of a hurry, and went out into the world with people clinging to her clothes here and there, or trapped in awkward places, and of course there was a real risk that they could have been noticed. Furthermore, she made the mistake of putting the smallest people–

Oh, I completely forgot to mention that she always separates people by size. You can't have the smallest people running around with the largest people. There would be too many problems.

Anyway, she used to put the smallest people in her underwear drawer. That is fairly logical because they are the smallest clothes. Also they are the lightest and usually brightest, so tiny figures should be easy to find. However tiny figures get around. I saw her discover plenty of people in embarrassing places, and often a tad too late. I told you she is a bit clumsy, and despite being also very clever, she can be a bit ditsy. I guess she might learn better if the consequences were just as consequential to her as they are to the people, but they simply aren't.

Meanwhile she compares him to the notches on the wall that show how big the people in each habitat are, and decides on the middle one. I would belong in the top habitat where the smallest people live. Her arms disappear for a couple of moments while she opens it and places him inside. Soon he will be greeted and find out the nature of his new world.

I don't know yet whether she has considered if he were alone or not. She straightens and turns to glance around the room – obviously she has considered this possibility.

“Under the bed!” I shout into the void between me and her giant, beautiful figure. Sometimes I long to be heard – even if my shouts are just a squeak. Her gaze passes over me and I feel a thrill rise at the thought that she heard me, but of course she is just scanning the room. She knows the bed is the most obvious place to hide, and drops to her knees. Her backside rises high into the air as she lowers her face to the carpet, and remains so for a few moments. Suddenly I see movement between her calves. It's one of the young men!

Cheeky little bastard! I like him already. Though it wasn't a clever move. He ran out right beneath her and between her knees, coming into my view from behind the lowest folds of her skirt. What a thrill that must have been for him if he had have looked up, which I'm certain he would have. He stumbles a lot but has bought himself some time as I see her body shifting in order to slide her arm under the bed. She has found her prey and withdraws her hand with her trophy.

Why run? I guess the men haven't yet accepted that they are helpless.

I know she enjoys the hunt. It is like a game of hide and seek – I guess it would be a lot of fun. Since she is intelligent, it must be deliberate that she leaves so many potential hiding spots open. For example, she could easily block the space under the bedside table, or under the dresser, or simply not toss her clothes all over the floor for fit, fleeing young men to dive into and conceal themselves under. However she enjoys hunting them down, flushing them out, trapping them and capturing them. That's why she leaves so many potential hiding spots.

Ha! Speak of the devil. That little guy has turned towards a pair of underwear that she tossed on the floor yesterday and still hasn't picked up. Almost there. She's still busy looking. You don't have much time, little fella! Almost there... she could look up and turn around any moment. He's reached it. On his knees – he dives, and pop! He's gone. Vanished. And she's none the wiser ...for long, that is.

Aha. Look... his mate's had the same idea. She's just lifted one of the shoes that she had slipped off and almost knocked down one of the young guys with, and there he is, clinging to the heel! It's a thin heel and his arms can wrap around it, but he still must be a strong young lad to be able to clutch onto that. He might be a good player for the footy matches that she lets them play on the weekends when nobody is around to unexpectedly intrude. I enjoy watching those.

She has her hands full, and I know what she's going to do with the other man.

She's very carefree – unabashed. Certainly not shy. She leans back up onto her knees, taking her elbows off the ground. The little lad is sting clinging for dear life as she lifts the shoe high into the air at her face height. Her other hand, with a man already in it, descends towards her chest, and with a skilled flick he disappears into the convenient pouch that all girls with a decent-sized chest have. I can imagine he'll be enjoying that, despite the rough tumble. With her now free hand she closes her fist gently around the man dangling from the end of the high heel on her shoe and carefully tugs him off. From the little yank of her fist I can tell he must have been holding on pretty tightly. It's The Boost again.

After tossing the shoe away so that some other soul can conceal himself in it some other time, she doesn't even bother looking down her top when she retrieves the young chap; her fingers just find him pretty easily as her hand delves into her cleavage. I guess there's just nowhere to go, even if he wanted to.

She assumes that there were no other new arrivals in that station wagon; the two young men end up in the The Retreat, and soon she is changing clothes.

She changes into a tight, attractive skirt and top, and I know she is going out. The high-heels that she chooses match her outfit; they are shiny and eye-catching. She steps away from the wardrobe to admire herself in the mirror, and I watch as she plants her foot right on top of the strewn pair of panties – the ones the young man hid in. I grimace and cringe. Only a few folds of fabric protrude from under the toes of her shoe. She glances down to see what she has trodden on. I doubt she would have felt him. Completely unaware, she kicks the panties away with a jab of her foot.

I shake my head and mark up a notch.

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7<sup>th</sup> February 2006

She comes home in the early morning and I'm relieved. Naturally I'm woken by her arrival but I don't mind. I will write a few paragraphs and get back to sleep.

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Well I didn't need to write anything in the end; I got back to sleep straight away. It's daytime now and she's out and since not much is happening I thought I'd write down a few stories.

In particular I want to explain some of the notches I've had to make. It's not the most pleasant topic, but the thing is, she's completely innocent and if this whole story ever comes out, I don't want her to be accused of malice or wrongdoing. That's why, as potentially the only eyewitness, I *have* to tell these things I've seen. If you don't wish to read it then you can skip ahead I guess.

So here I go...

Let's see what I can remember. The first notch is clear in my mind since of course it made an impression.

It must have been in 2004 when I first arrived. Did I mention that I was the first? Of course I did. Somehow I think that might be connected to how it works – how it happens. It might not be a natural phenomenon; she might have something to do with it.

But I'm getting way ahead of myself and digressing into the bargain. I'm sorry if I ramble a bit; I tend to write what's in my head at the time.

It was in 2004 and she wasn't yet aware of The Sparkle. She had found my car on the shelf and tossed it away, thinking it was a misplaced toy. This quick story is about the next arrival, which in a way was kind of lucky for her because it eased her into the shock of The Sparkle and helped her realise what was going on.

It was a livestock truck. It had a load of cattle. The driver left his vehicle just as I had done, but wasn't as lucky as I was.

It must have been a weekend and it must have been spring since she put a skirt on (later in the story). I should mention that there was a very long interval between my arrival and the next Sparkle. Then the interval before the next was a bit shorter and then a bit shorter after that, until it's almost become regular now. Anyway it was a morning on the weekend, and she must have been out of her room but still in her pyjamas for a very long time, because in that time the driver had been through The Shock, left his truck, and was on her bed after having climbed down the lamp cord. He hadn't even seen her yet and didn't know what he was in for, but it was still not a very good decision on his part. If he wanted to be seen then the bed is the worst place – the pattern on the covers conceals little figures (it's happened too often) and nobody looks at a bed anyway. Back before I was here I once accidentally sat on a pin-cushion that was camouflaged on a bedspread. What a stupid place to leave a pin-cushion. Gee that was painful.

She came back from the lounge room in her pyjamas –I guess she had been watching tele all morning– no, wait, it wasn't pyjamas. She only wears pyjamas on cold winter nights.

Oh, of course. I remember the details now. She had bare legs; she wore just a T-shirt and a pair of white underwear.

I remember I shouted as loud as I could to warn her – or to warn *him*. But naturally I couldn't do anything. I've gradually learned to accept my helplessness. She strode through the door and into the room – thump, thump, thump. She was heading for the bed. I shouted and shouted but could only watch as she turned her back to the bed and sat down in almost slow motion. She wouldn't have felt a thing – maybe only a wiggle or a tickle.

The bed covers must have softened her weight because he was still OK. She stood up a few minutes later and I saw him caught in the ruffled folds on her backside. She is very shapely. I could see him wiggling to get free – I assume his foot was caught in the thread – but he soon realised his plight and hung on. It must have been a frightening sight from where he was, looking down the back of her bare legs so far to the floor. He was low on her backside; not on vertical fabric but suspended in the kind of overhang where her cheeks curve in. He had to hold on tight, dangling there. Then – and I can see this in slow motion even as I remember – she reached behind her back and did that quick little manoeuvre that girls do to adjust their panties or bikini bottom – you know the one. With both hands they tuck their fingers under the seam behind their legs, lift the fabric out and then let it snap back in a more comfortable position. She did that, and the poor man was flung about and thrown back up violently into her cheek. He's lucky her finger didn't loosen him and let him fall to the ground.

Hang on – that's a stupid statement since he wasn't lucky at all in the end.

She strode to her wardrobe (back when it was a wardrobe and not a Retreat) and got out a skirt. It was brown. I watched helplessly and in horror as she pulled it up her legs. It reached the bottom of her backside. It was tight enough that it clung to her legs while she adjusted her grip to pull it up. The upper seam began sliding up and over her backside as she pulled. It reached the man. She tugged again, and the seam dragged him all the way up her backside – I could see his limbs protruding from under the seam until it finally overtook him when he was half-way up. She adjusted it, tugging it left and right, and admired herself in the mirror. Gee she's a beauty.

I don't know if that was his end or if he was OK until she maybe sat down later, but by that evening I had marked my first notch.

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Now I should get back to how she discovered The Sparkle. I mentioned that this second arrival was a livestock truck. Well she found it of course. In fact I think it was the very next day.

I watched her become startled as she noticed it, and clearly it must have reminded her of the discovery of my car there a couple of months earlier. She was very puzzled. She

picked up the truck in one hand and sat down to look at it, and when she looked closely she saw the cattle. Lucky for them that she was calm. Her eyes went wide as she saw them moving and struggling against the motions of the truck in her palm. I won't go into a detailed description of the next day but as you can imagine she went through a very tense time with a lot of worry and indecision. The unknown is very scary.

In the end she resolved on a very noble course. I told you she is kind and gentle. I saw her take the truck out of the room, then moments later her figure appeared outside her window. She stooped to the ground and out of my view for a few minutes then rose and looked down at her feet for a long time. She had released them into the grass. I admire her greatly for her kindness.

This gave her a preview to what was about to occur more and more often, and it was only by chance that it was with those little cows and not with real humans, which would have shocked her too much. This way she was coaxed gently into it – first a car, then a truck, then cows. Who knows what her actions might have been if she had suddenly discovered a busload of tiny tourists or something out of the blue.

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The next notch was a few months and a couple of Sparkles later. This was pretty awful so it's lucky that she never knew.

It was a pair of businessmen – probably car-pooling on their way to work. One panicked and ran but the other stayed in his car, so obviously she thought she didn't have to look for a second man since the first should have been alone as most people are on their way to work. It's a terrible waste of petrol. Sometimes I think the more people end up here, the better off the environment would be, since we don't require even the barest amount of food and energy.

This is a good point to mention because it brings me to how he got his notch. He did fairly well and had hung on for about two days, getting about the room almost as easily as I can. Well he must have been getting hungry since he went for the desk where she put her meal while she was doing homework. I can't recall if it was schoolwork or for her first year of uni. It was stupid to go for food while she was still here – he should have waited for the food that she forgets. She accidentally leaves food in her room frequently enough for me to get by very comfortably.

By chance I was on the desk too, hiding in the paper tray where I had an eagle-eye view of the whole thing. She had brought her dessert (if that's a dry place with heaps of sand then I meant 'desert'. Can never remember which is which) into her room so she could keep working. It was some kind of tart because it had custard on it. She loves custard. If the businessman had have known that he might have thought twice.

She left to start making coffee so it would be ready when she finished eating. He thought she was gone and he took his chances and bolted for it. I guess you already know what's

going to happen but I'll still tell you how I watched in dread as he made it up onto the plate and stumbled into the custard. Get out, you fool. He flailed about for a bit before she returned. He must have been scared to death of her and of getting captured because instead of trying to get her attention, he stayed still and even tried to immerse himself and not be noticed. How stupid. How absolutely stupid.

She got stuck into the tart. She mustn't have eaten slowly or casually while doing her work, because if she had have looked away he could have escaped. He must have been lying there in the custard, only his face exposed (that's all I could see of him), looking up at her beautiful face with her hair flowing down towards him on either side, her sparkling eyes staring right at him. He would have watched in terror as the spoon descended and struck time and time again, then watched it rise up to her wide-open lips, and he would have peered up into her mouth to see it full of the same custard that he was trapped in. What a feeling that must have been. I'm sorry if I'm getting a bit poetic and descriptive again. You can skip this bit if you like but I want to try and tell –no, 'convey' is the word I'm after. I want to try and convey this to you for the sake of posterity. She is awe-inspiring and beautiful. I don't know what he was thinking – whether he was shuddering with fear or admiring the sight of her beautiful face looming above him. I was mesmerised by her smacking lips and almost missed seeing her scoop him up. She didn't look at the spoon full of custard; her eyes glanced by some twist of fate directly towards me and I froze in fright. Her mouth opened and there was deep blackness inside. The spoon went in and I saw the man stand in panic, his yellow-covered body contrasting with the blackness behind. Then he went dark as he passed under her teeth. Her lips came down onto the spoon and swiped cleanly over it as she pulled it out. The spoon descended away. Tiny amounts of custard seeped out from between her lips as they slapped together but no businessman. If it had have been any other type of food she would have chewed, but she didn't. Her massive glistening tongue appeared and swiped over her top lip from one side to the other and it shined with wetness. Her throat shifted as she swallowed and by the time her mouth widened again for the next spoonful it was all over. I'm glad she never knew.

\*

8<sup>th</sup> February 2006

I spent so much time choosing fancy words for that last bit that I had to finish for the day. Nothing eventful happened yesterday. No new arrivals. She was out for the evening, but not *out out* – I mean at a friend's or something. Since nothing much is going on I'll continue with listing the notches.

If I remember rightly which one the third notch was, then it was actually Karen's mother who was responsible (but not at fault – not in the least bit). Yes, that makes sense; this would have been in the early days before Karen convinced her mother not to enter her room by conceding to do the vacuuming and chores herself. It was only afterwards that her room began becoming strewn with clothes that she just tossed on the floor.

She –Karen’s mother, that is– had come back from her part-time job and hadn’t yet changed out of her respectable skirt and blouse before beginning a few chores. She’s a bit forgetful – maybe that’s where Karen gets her absentmindedness. I must first mention a couple of coincidences that led to this point. This was also a really close call for me – let me explain.

It was when Karen was still storing people in her clothes drawers, and this man was particularly small, so he had ended up in her undergarments drawer. I don’t know whether he had meant to escape or not, but I realised his position a day earlier while I had been on the shelf for whatever reason. Karen had just put on her bra and underwear and needed deodorant from a shelf up high. She had approached the shelves and I ducked behind a photo with a fancy frame with plastic flowers on it that camouflaged me. It is always awe-inspiring and frightening when she comes close. In this case she loomed up above me and filled my entire vision. I was at her chest height, and as she reached up high her chest loomed closer and closer as she stretched. It was terrifying and indescribable. You can’t imagine how immense she was (or still *is* of course). The bra she had donned was white with lace. I remember this clearly because as I stared up in terror I caught a glimpse of a flash of colour about two stories above me. It was an arm protruding through the lace. A leg was just below it. It was the man; very small. So small that Karen didn’t notice him against her skin. I didn’t have time to stare because at that moment she must have jumped to reach the deodorant up high. I can remember this in slow motion. Her breast began to rise and then more momentarily that you can even imagine, it descended again and with its massive bounce it struck the photo frame.

It almost knocked me out. I lost all sense of orientation and my vision went black for a moment. I found myself tangled in the plastic flowers. She had picked up the photo. I was scared stiff, I can tell you that. Geez it was terrifying. She glanced at it only for a moment but I was terrified down there directly in her gaze. She must have rubbed it with her thumb because I remember a massive shadowy form sweeping over me and back. Then with a huge thud it was over and I watched her towering body thumping away to her wardrobe. What a beauty.

Anyway the man was trapped. That night she flicked the bra on her floor as she usually does, and the rest of the story takes place the next day when her mum comes in to clean up.

As I said, she came in wearing the skirt and blouse, which I remember because I admire it so much. She is ravishing. She hauled the vacuum cleaner behind her and grumbled as she saw Karen’s clothes lying everywhere. She picked them all up and tossed them into the dirty-clothes-basket but the man had escaped from the bra. Now I don’t know how she could have seen him when he was so small and so far away at her feet, but while she was vacuuming I guess she was just looking at the floor with unusual concentration and she spotted him.

I was breathless. At that stage I hadn’t yet decided whether it would be good or bad if Karen’s mother found out.

She stepped over the vacuum and looked directly down at his figure between her feet before crouching down towards him. Without hesitation she pinched him between her thumb and forefinger. I don't know whether he was frozen with fright, whether she had knocked him unconscious, or whether he couldn't move any of his limbs due to her thumb covering his entire body, but in any case he didn't move enough for her to think he was anything but maybe a toy figure from a model train. She never throws things out that she finds in Karen's room. She walked to the desk, probably to leave him there for Karen, but as she extended her hand I saw her grimace. She is beautiful even when frowning. I looked at her hand and I grimaced too when I saw red between her thumb and forefinger. I dared not even look. She exclaimed something along the lines of 'oh what an awful little thing' and smeared him off her fingers and onto the desk. She hadn't known, as Karen knew from the beginning, how delicately the people have to be handled. She left and a moment later returned with a paper towel, and after a quick swipe all evidence of the man was wiped from existence.

I'm really sorry to describe all this. I've just re-read it and it is very awful and gory but I must explain these things to clear Karen and her mother's names. Maybe someday my journal will be in a museum and it will be informative and useful despite being disgusting.

In fact I will give you a break from reading the awful bits in order to describe the good bits, I mean, how Karen is kind and takes care of all the people.

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I guess you must be wondering about the practicalities. Like for example how they (I say 'they' because they live together in The Retreat and I don't) eat and sleep and shower, and what the habitats are like and that kind of thing.

When I say the three habitats I mean the three large bottom shelves of her wardrobe, and together they are The Retreat. Each habitat has houses in it; houses from model train sets. They are very practical because they come in different scales, so on the top shelf where the smallest people live she has a very small scale, and so forth. Lucky there aren't that many big people (they don't come through The Sparkle much) because the houses take up a lot of space. She installed lights in the shelves that the people can turn on and off with sensitive little switches, and towards the front is where she puts food and water on small saucers. She can't let them escape though. She has clear plastic panels with air holes up high, that she clicks into place for when she isn't around, and the curtains draw closed just in front of these. Not even the biggest people could hammer their way through it.

Karen takes the population of each of the habitats to wash when her mother is at her part-time job on a Saturday. I think she quite enjoys it (I mean Karen bathing the people, not her mother with the job). I have seen it once or twice by making a trip to the bathroom – I might describe how I get about later.

She takes one habitat at a time so the different sized people don't mix. The big ones first. Big people fit snugly in her hand – if she closes her fist their heads and feet protrude but they are helpless. They are big enough to be left alone in the water so she runs the bath for only a few moments so the water's up to their waists. She takes all seven of them by hand; usually she slides a couple into each pocket of the comfy loose tracksuit pants she often wears around the house, and if she's got a breast pocket another person will be snugly popped in there, then carries the rest just in one hand so she's got the other free. She'll leave them there for a few minutes while she gets changed – she wears a swimsuit while bathing the people so that it doesn't get *too* personal.

I'm laughing out loud right now as I write this because she is so lovably forgetful. She'll go back to the bathroom in her swimsuit to collect the people, and in all the dozens of times she's bathed them she forgets every single time that she doesn't have any pockets. And I know she forgets because every single time she groans and I hear her from the bathroom; sometimes she nags at herself to remember. Oh, it really makes me laugh. Depending on what bathing suit she wears, those that don't fit in her hands are tucked in various spots. She has a black bikini with a wide band around the hips (as opposed to a string) and if she's wearing that, she often comes back into her room with two men tucked up to their arms under the band on her hip. It reminds me of how a gunslinger carries his pistols. It looks a treat. Their arms hang forward, and since the material covers from their chest to their waist, their legs dangle down her hip as she strides through the room. She always crouches down towards The Retreat before remembering to take them out and if one of them is too far forward, closer to her belly, he has a really painful time as he becomes doubled over by her thigh bending his legs up.

Sometimes these things are a bit hard to describe. I hope I'm understandable and also not being overly elaborate. I guess I just want to share my knowledge. In any case I'm going to keep describing this bit because it makes me laugh.

Where was I? Oh yes, I've covered the black bikini. She has a red-and-white-striped string bikini, but she can't tuck anyone under that because the string would probably cut them in half. Instead she pushes one or two chaps down the front of the bikini even though it's a bit personal. I know she doesn't like it because she always retrieves them as soon as she can, by sliding her fingers from the side of the bikini and then over the men (I guess it's so she doesn't lift open the elastic and let them slip down further), before dragging them up her abdomen until she can get a better grip.

Oh! Once she even had a chap in her mouth! She held him like you see someone biting a rose in a romantic movie, but she wasn't biting him; she had him between her lips and I think was just sucking to hold him in place. His arm was flailing and I don't think he was too rapt.

I think she's a tad lazy sometimes because honestly it would be easier to make two trips, although then she'd have to open and shut the plastic on the habitat twice, which is a pain.

What else does she have – ah yes, the one-piece bathing suit. Usually she comes back into her room with a couple of blokes riding grandly in her cleavage like sailors in a crow's nest. They must love it. I've already mentioned that she doesn't mind that too much either. Maybe it's even a thrill.

For the next two habitats she has a clever little thing she made. She can be wonderfully clever sometimes. It is a wooden photo frame but without glass or backing, and she stapled flywire (that not even the smallest people can fall through) to fill the entire frame. She puts it in the water floating with the flywire-side down, so the people have basically a floating swimming pool, with the bonus of the wide wooden frame being like a deck for them to lie out on. It's just like a pontoon. She is so clever. If they dare they can hop off it and swim in open water with nothing beneath them but her body submerged far below–

Oh, did I mention yet that she goes in with them? That's why she wears the swimsuit. She hops in, leaving the bathing-pool-photo-frame (that really needs a name. I think I'll call it The Pontoon for now) on a stool beside the bath. All the people are already in it of course and she just lifts it carefully and places it in the water in front of her and lies back to relax. With the middle-habitat-people she can close her eyes because they're always big enough to notice and to swim to her if they need help, but she needs to keep watch on the littlest people from the top habitat. They could get lost so easily; even with a splash or a wave from her movement they can be washed off the deck, and even if they can swim to her it's unlikely she'd notice them. That's why she takes the smallest people in second; she watches them carefully for a while before taking them out and bringing the middle-sized people in so she can relax the most at the end of the routine. Often they can be in the bath for up to half an hour with her.

It just struck me that I haven't even mentioned why people are different sizes. I'm sorry but I'll have to digress for a moment.

People are different sizes depending on the temperature when they get 'Sparkled'. The colder it is, the smaller they are. I arrived in June – middle of winter. That's why I am really small. In winter they are always small. That doesn't mean that all arrivals in summer are big though; they often arrive at night which means they can still be small even in summer. That's why there are so many more little people than big people, which I guess is convenient because otherwise they'd take up too much room.

With that explained, I'll get back to the bathing ritual. I've only seen it a few times because it's a great hassle or is very dangerous to make my way from her room to the bathroom. Either I walk at night and stick close to the wall where I can crouch behind carpet strands to hide if need be, which takes ages, or I can hitch a ride, for example on her clothes or a towel. That is exceedingly risky. I don't do that often.

The first time I saw the Saturday bathing was when I took a split-second opportunity to dive into her hair and get taken to the bathroom. I only realised when it was too late that

if she combed her hair or something I would be done for, but luckily she doesn't bathe herself, only the people. She has showers separately.

From her hair I was able to get wet and have a daring swim behind her shoulder, but when my courage had run out I climbed back up and watched the scene. As I mentioned the littlest people are first. Even as I watched she moved her arm and washed a few guys off the edge of The Pontoon. She had to lift her palm gently up through the water to catch them and let them climb back on. It was a mighty view from where I was, just above her shoulder. Try and imagine a young lady's figure viewed from that angle and from my size. Whew. Indescribable. At one point I was startled to see a hill rising from the water far away from me, but of course it was just her knee. It was spectacular to see her lift her leg right out and stretch it upwards towards the ceiling, water cascading down it. You can't even imagine how high it towered. Very awe-inspiring from my point of view.

I didn't have a chance to escape before she took the small people back and got the middle-sized people, so I saw that too. That's when she can relax and tilt her head back and close her eyes. While I sat there I saw these two cheeky buggers. They were obviously mates and pretty daring – they swam from The Pontoon towards her. That day she was in her one-piece bathing suit and the seam stretched across her chest and formed a large triangular pool in her cleavage. The cheeky bastards reached her chest and clung onto her bathers for a moment before heaving themselves up and over into the pool. I bet it was a dare. They made it, but only just. They hadn't realised that with the elastic of her bathers slanting in over her cleavage they wouldn't be able to get out as easily as in. Luckily for them her chest moved with her steady breathing, and as it sunk one boosted the other up and onto the seam. They made it back to The Pontoon easily and just before she opened her eyes and looked up. If she had have discovered them she would have been angry. You don't want to make her angry.

\*

9<sup>th</sup> February 2006

Another uneventful day. I finished the last paragraph saying that you don't want to make her angry. I must clarify since I don't want to make her sound mean or malicious. She is kind and benevolent.

However you can make anyone angry. She can get just as pissed off as anyone. The difference is that she has unlimited power over the people that can potentially piss her off.

The things she doesn't like are to do with trust and respect. What I mean is that she needs the people to trust and respect her. The two young lads climbing into her bathing suit would have annoyed her because they would be betraying her trust and also disrespecting her. I'll try and think of some more examples. Oh – escaping too. She doesn't like people trying to escape. That's also partly out of kindness; she knows that they are safer with her than on the floor or out in the big world. Her punishments aren't bad either; a few hours

zipped up in her pocket ('solitary confinement'), or a quick upside-down dangle and a shake. A couple of times she'll just hold one of the bigger people in her fist with just their head protruding by her thumb, because I guess it's pretty unpleasant to not be able to move at all. Once when she had a man like that she even raised her hand and put his head in her mouth with her lips pressed over him, if you can imagine that (like someone breathing warmth into their fist on a cold day). That must have been terrifying. I don't know what she was thinking but she only did it for a moment because it must have been unpleasant to her as well. It just occurred to me but maybe she heard him screaming from inside her own mouth, like the way you hear yourself chewing.

What I've noticed is that she only punishes people out of sight from the others. That is a good idea. People get scared and are repulsed when they see their government or ruler punishing people harshly. It would breed mistrust. I'm certain they look up to her though.

I mentioned she doesn't like people escaping. It's quite a treat to watch her hunting them down. She goes through phases; at first she's silent while she searches on hands and knees, then she starts talking sweetly to tempt them out, then finally she'll get annoyed after a while and threaten them. Her threats never work; they're all hollow but I'm certain they must scare the escapees to the bone. It might go something like this, but over fifteen minutes:

"Come out, come out, wherever you are,"

"Come on. I'm not going to hurt you,"

"You know I won't hurt you. Please come out,"

Then she begins to get annoyed.

"Just come out – you know I'll find you,"

"If you don't show yourself soon I'll punish you when I find you,"

"I'm getting impatient! Do you really want to make me mad?"

"I don't get it how a guy smaller than my little finger can think he can stand up to me!"

Then the threats. Please don't think that she is serious though; she's just frustrated and says things without thinking.

"Seriously. When I find you I'm going to eat you."

"OK. I can either find you now, or discover you later on the bottom of my shoe."

"You know the phrase that a woman can bite your head off if she's mad? Well I can make that real if you like! You're well on the way!"

She can rant a bit too when she gets ideas in her head.

"Ever heard of a woman being a man-eater? You want me to be the first to take it literally?" [unfortunately for her, she doesn't know it but she already has. That second notch...]

When she does finally find them (and she always does) she usually just puts them back in The Retreat in a huff and leaves to calm herself down.

\*

Almost all of the inhabitants here are blokes. That's why I think The Sparkle has something to do with her and not just a natural phenomenon, because otherwise there

would be equal numbers. I'm certain that the people aren't random either. I knew her before I came through The Sparkle, but I'm not ready to tell you that story yet.

She has her favourites too. One of the big chaps takes her fancy I think; she handles him a lot and makes giggly comments while she holds him. I think she almost considers some of the bigger people as a small group of friends; she'll have four or five of them out while the others are tucked away in The Retreat, and will chat idly to them like you chat to pets, and ask them how she looks before going out; "how does this look? Arms up for good, arms down for bad!". They're friends that she has at her whim. She can take them out and put them back like toys.

She likes all the tiniest people – probably because they're the cutest. Also, even if she didn't like one or two she would rarely be able to tell the difference without her magnifying glass, which she uses to look at us closely (well, not at *me*. The others though).

Oh – I should talk about entertainment for a bit. The people don't live boring lives as captives; she provides for them as if she is the Minister for Culture (ha! That is a good analogy). I told you she is a benevolent 'queen'. I mentioned the footy matches. When it's safe she'll have sport days. Various sport equipment has been brought through The Sparkle on various occasions; a soccer-ball that suites the tiniest people, a good Sherrin footy for the middle-sized. Did I mention that the cars still work for a while? They don't run on normal-sized petrol though; they can only work on the petrol that's left in their tanks. She's let a couple of them have races around the smooth family-room floor once, though that finished when one of them tried to escape and ended up with the front of his car firmly crushed to a tack beneath her toes.

What else... let me think. Oh yes, she prints important newspaper articles at the finest print the printer can manage and sticks them to the ceiling of the habitats, and pins books to the walls with their covers stretched wide open so the people can trot over to the corner of the page and drag it across to the other side to turn it. For a while the big blokes had a Gameboy and each one hammered away on his own button. It was impressive how coordinated they became with just verbal commands to each other, but after a while it caused a few fights and she took it back.

I must say that while I'm writing this I'm getting very sentimental. This place –her room I mean– is home to me. I've got so many memories here. Perhaps this is a good time to explain–

No, not yet. I'm not up to writing about it yet.

\*

Sorry for being a bit mysterious there. I was in the middle of saying how I've got plenty of good memories too. I'm certain the other little people do too. And more than that. I mean... it's hard to describe.

Well, I'll try and explain.

She's beautiful. She's about the best girl imaginable, with the nicest and kindest heart and warmest personality you can imagine. Sorry for my clumsy words. I'm just not good at expressing myself and I'm having trouble. Try and imagine that you are one of us, and that you are literally bathed in this wonderful girl's presence for your entire life. Furthermore, you belong to her. You're hers. I guess for most of the little guys it's like being married to a dream girl. They would never meet such a wonderful girl in real life, let alone get to spend their lives with her.

Sure the conversations are only one-way and it's certainly no equal, fair relationship, but also consider that these guys are relieved of all worries they could ever have (apart from being stepped on or something), and are cradled and nurtured by this wonderful giant girl. They must adore her. They must worship her. I do.

However they get to be handled by her, they get her attention and affection. I don't. I haven't yet explained why I can't. Why I can't join them. Maybe it's time to now.

\*

10<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

Something major has happened. I'm trembling with excitement as I write. But I need to get this down – before I attempt to... well, before she gets back.

I've just seen the sparkle.

Eager to see the new arrival I began making my way to the shelf. She is out early – getting milk since they have run out. She'll be home soon. She will have breakfast and then come into her room. I was looking forward to seeing her discover the new arrivals.

The room was dim since the curtains were closed, but something caught my eye about the car that had come through. I could just see the occupant getting out while he underwent The Shock. I looked at the car and as my eyes adjusted to the light behind the bright lamp I saw it clearly.

I froze with shock. I knew the car.

It was unique – not a car like it in the world. A Sandman with a very unique custom paint job; a real bloke's car. A mate's car.

Johnno.

I had to get to him. I had to get him before she did, because after that I wouldn't get another chance. And I couldn't even stand the thought of him doing something stupid like

trying to make it to the floor and ending up a spot under her shoe or a mess in her underwear like that poor chap a couple of days ago.

\*

Oh God. Oh God oh God oh God.

Where do I start. I am trembling. I have just had the worst ordeal... the closest shave. I can't believe I'm alive. She got Johnno though.

He's alright. I'm sure of that. But I have to start where I left off. My story has to be told.

I have had to breathe to calm myself down. Nice and slow now. Let me start at the beginning.

It was just this morning that I saw the Sparkle and hurriedly wrote that last bit, before stashing my book and shooting down the lamp cord to the shelf below where Johnno and the Sandman were stranded. I guess I was panicked so much that I wasn't thinking – he thought I was dead or disappeared, so not only was he trying to come to terms with his new surroundings, but then I caused another shock by running towards him yelling. As soon as he recognised me he swaggered and had to lean on his car.

I kept the pleasantries to a minimum. I told him I couldn't explain and that he had to trust me, and he's cool in a tough situation; he knew instantly that something beyond his understanding was going on. Trusting me was his only option.

However even with his new unbelievable circumstances he still hesitated when I told him we had to push his Sandman off the shelf. A love like his for a car like that doesn't die easily. Nevertheless I urged him and we steered it for the edge and watched it tumble, spinning, in free-fall before striking Karen's pillow with a small huff and a splash of shadow as it made an indentation. It looked so small; to us the full-sized car that we had just been touching and pushing... now just a dark dot sunk into her pillow. Johnno was struck with awe and I had to pull him away. At least it reminded him of his situation. At least it bought us some time.

Time was what we didn't have. That instant she walked in the door; brilliant hair flowing, trailing behind her in slow motion as her body bounced gently with each of her marvellous strides. She had never looked so majestic and awesome as in this moment where she was the most dangerous, devastating and deadly creature in the whole world, with two tiny men's fates utterly dependent on something even as trivial as a mere glance in our direction.

I watched Johnno's face and waited for his reaction. His eyes went wide as he recognised her and he turned to face me, mouth agape and met my grim expression. I saw his eyes glaze over as he fathomed that something even more complex was going on here.

We didn't have time for it. I grabbed his shirt and tugged him away, out of sight, and it dawned on him that Karen wasn't necessarily going to be our friend.

It's a bad shelf. There's nothing really concealing to hide behind. You need camouflage. You need complicated shapes that you'll blend into. On this shelf are just tubs, makeup, books, a diary. We ducked behind a tub of Nivea –the closest shelter– and peeked out, curiosity too hard to stifle.

As soon as we turned around we saw that she had seen it. Her gaze was on the pillow and her face lit up. She strode twice and stooped.

When her face rose back into view her expression had turned.

Her eyes were wide and her mouth slowly fell open. Over the edge of the shelf we could just see the Sandman between her fingers, the focus of her attention. Of course she recognised it. There was no mistaking it. This was proof that the things, the people she kept for herself, were real. Not only real, but she *knew* them.

The shock stayed on her face for thirty long seconds, then she blinked. Immediately her gaze shot downwards, looking for the car's owner. Her head and shoulders disappeared downwards out of view as she dropped to her knees on her bed, scrounging around for a man that she was sure was there. My plan to push the car over had worked – we had bought time, but there weren't many places to go. To leave the shelf we had to go into the open and make it to the lamp cord.

This was my split-second decision. I dragged Johnno and we bolted. I can see it in slow-motion in my head; Running out into the open, the smooth white veneer under my feet, the sound of my mate's footsteps close behind me. The short white horizon bobbed in my vision, the lamp cord seeming endlessly far – everything else a blur. A tall shape loomed up; mascara or lipstick or God-knows-what. I ran in front of it, since that was closer to the cord. Johnno's footsteps disappeared – he had run round the back. Suddenly an enormous mass rose to my side, like a mountain rising out of the sea. She ascended higher and higher – she had never seemed bigger. I dared not to look, but dread made me turn my head, causing me to stumble. I fell on the smooth surface and rolled onto my back and stared directly into her gaze. She must have been standing on the bed, or maybe I was so terrified that she simply looked impossibly monstrous. Her face loomed high above me –I was not even at her chest height– and her beautiful eyes were fixed on me. I was frozen with terror. I think I was scrambling backwards. Her hand appeared. I had never been so close and only now understood the fear of a person about to fall into her grasp. Her fingers, each the size of a bus, descended with frightening momentum... such massive things coming down at you. However her clumsy grasp hit the mascara bottle and I was granted a fraction of a second's reprieve. Somehow I found Johnno beside me and we darted underneath her giant, looming hand, narrowly avoiding death as her fingers swiped the mascara bottle away. It hurtled momentarily to our side and struck the wall behind with a deafening blow. Instinct made Johnno go for cover, but I am stubborn and stupidly went for the lamp cord. When her hand rose, flooding the shelf with light, he

was already behind a row of books that stood on the shelf behind the lamp cord, and I was almost in front of them when I realised my mistake. I looked up into her gaze and screamed with terror as I turned. I can't believe I survived. Her fingers fell from the sky and slammed into the shelf all around me – was she trying to kill me? However they were cupped together and I was thrown to the ground in the utter darkness, trapped on the shelf under her hand, until she tried to clasp her fingers together to grasp me. Light washed in as the massive forms around me rose, curling, and between her fingers was enough of a gap for me to dart out of. I can barely remember the terrifying scene, but all I know is that the narrow crevice behind the books rose into my view as I ran in panic, and that I dived into it a fraction of a second before the giant fingers slammed onto the shelf behind me, too large to enter the narrow gap between the books and wall, and we were slammed by a wall of rushing air and shaken by the massive trembling of the shelf slapped by her palm. She would have crushed me to a red smear with that slap.

Almost immediately, the first book vanished. We found ourselves darting and clambering through the narrow crevice. If she had have pushed the books against the wall instead of pulling them away she would have simply crushed two men to death. I heard a second being whisked away and perceived the dim cavern brightening. There were too few books. We reached the other side and the sheer edge of the shelf in only a few seconds and it appeared our time was soon going to be up.

However there was a long pause... too long required simply to tear the books out one-by-one. Desperate to know the situation and utterly without options, we ran beside the cover of the final book, along the edge of the shelf, until we reached the corner of the book and could see out into the room.

Karen dominated the view as always. There was a different expression on her face – she was smug, content, superior. Always beautiful. She knew she would get us since there was nowhere to run.

Try and imagine what we were feeling at that moment – visualise the sweetest, gentlest, most radiant and beautiful girl you know, and then imagine her hunting you down. Imagine diving to escape those whopping slaps of her soft hand; blows that would crush you to a smear, but which to her were clumsy, inadvertent little slaps.

It was that kind of awe that we were feeling while we looked out upon her. We realised the reason for the pause; she was being thorough. She was carefully checking each book that she removed. I know her – I know her so well. I knew that she would get impatient, and she did.

After the third book that she checked, she huffed and stood back. We threw ourselves back against the outside cover, the sheer drop on the side edge of the shelf before us. If she had have leaned to her side slightly she would have seen us.

However, she didn't. Instead she must have struck on what she thought was a brilliant idea. It probably was, but it also gave us our one chance at escape. She had seen

something on the dresser, and hopped quickly over the room to get it; a hairdryer. She was going to blow us out of the cavity behind the books. Her leaving to get the hairdryer wasn't our opportunity though – it was when she stooped to the ground to plug it in. She was directly below us. It was a split second chance and I knew there would be no other. I clutched Johnno's collar and tore him with me as I toppled off.

We struck hair; her long, luscious, wavy, sweet-smelling hair. We didn't even need to hold on; our little limbs got tangled instantly. I was separated from Johnno by the sickening swaying as she stood up, and spent the next moments righting myself while the hairdryer began roaring.

I couldn't tell you how long she must have been trying to blow us out between those books for but I'm bloody thankful that we got out. I think if we weren't shot out into the room we would have been roasted.

After a while the hairdryer roar cut out and we heard her mumble a curse and I guess she realised we had escaped. She spent a long time looking around the shelves and over the room, before her impatience got to her again and she gave up. She left the room – I guess she wanted to begin her day and would get back to us later. This was verified as when she was in the hall she bobbed down and we looked up into the ceiling for a while as she messed about with something, and when she turned and walked away down the hall leaving her room behind her we could see that she had stuffed a towel across the slit under the door. She wasn't going to let the tiny escapees out of her grasp.

Anyway this is where it got hairy. I didn't mean that as a pun but it's not bad anyway.

I don't have time to read back to see if I mentioned what she was wearing. She had put on very casual clothes; a pretty standard brassiere and a top that she often wore just around the house. I definitely must have mentioned before that she is very voluptuous. The top has a wide open neck; wide enough that in my opinion it wouldn't be decent to answer the door in. But then again I am so tiny that even just her cleavage is probably five times my height – everything is big to me.

After dawdling a bit she went to the bathroom. Remember that Johnno and I are stranded helpless in her hair somewhere about her shoulder height. Her hair is high-maintenance. Her morning routine, which she started while we were trapped in it, begins with pulling her hair into a bunch and bringing it over one shoulder to her front, where she can see it in the mirror. We would have been suspended in her locks directly above her chest. She'll then run her fingers through it over and over again before combing it. We were lucky that she didn't even get to the combing stage because she would have torn us both limb from limb.

Instead her fingers whooshed by and loosened her hair, crushing me each time I was between them. It would have been the same for Johnno. I don't know which of us fell first, but all I remember was that I was struck over and over by each wave of her fingers

passing through the jungle of hairs around me, until finally I was caught full-on and pulled painfully through the tangle and flung out into mid air.

This view was both terrifying and breathtaking. I can describe the sight but I can't describe the feeling. I was tossed into mid air directly above her chest. Imagine a girl's cleavage, but you're not looking at it from the safety of standing next to her with a beer glass in your hand – you're looking down at it, and it's immense enough to swallow you whole, and you're plummeting helplessly towards it from a dizzying height. I screamed aloud. I used to scream when jumping off a pier into the water. This was ten times higher.

I honestly don't know whether she heard my scream or felt me strike her skin. I certainly felt it. I hit her breast on its inner slope (I feel like I'm using words to describe a mountain. Remember that to me, it is a mountain) and even though it was the softest flesh on a girl's body, the impact was enough to blacken my vision. I felt more solid hits and when I could see again I was looking up at another unique sight. This one won't be as easy to imagine unless you stick a camera down a voluptuous girl's top (of if you are one of us and can experience this for yourself). It was dim down there. Try and imagine two giant globes pressed together above you, with a tunnel formed by stretching a massive sheet of fabric across them. It makes a triangle shape, but it curves up and through her breasts so that you don't get a clear line of sight through it but it lets light wash in. The undersides of these globes –her breasts I should say– were clad in massive decorative swirls of lace. This was her brassiere. I wondered where I was, if I wasn't in it, but realised quickly that I was lying not in her bra but in her top where it clings up and under her chest.

I heard yelling; my name being called out. It was Johnno, and though I couldn't see him properly in the dimness I could make out some shadows playing through the lace in that little bit of a bra that joins the two cups – I guess I'll call it the 'bridge'. Well he was perched up in that, pinned by it against her skin between her giant breasts.

I was just about to try to get to him when I noticed the eerie lack of movement, and didn't even have a chance to debate what it meant before the entire cavern was shaken with movement. From above us plunged two massive forms; her thumb and forefinger, groping blindly and momentarily into her cleavage, at the bottom of which we were stranded helplessly. For a torturous amount of time the light above washed about in waves as she delved, her massive digits penetrating lower and lower and my terror getting higher and higher. I scrambled as her finger slammed down into the fabric that held me up, but I was thrown down into the depression it made and struck the hard side of her fingernail painfully. Thankfully she mustn't have felt it since this gigantic, deadly thumb and forefinger finally lifted and let our cavern resume its natural shape for a moment before two fingers pierced her giant cleavage and spread apart to widen it. Suddenly I was looking directly up through her breasts into her face; well, not her whole face but her downturned chin and mouth puckering in concentration, and her eyes almost forming slits as she cast her gaze directly down her cleavage to where I lay helpless.

This lasted only a moment. She had seen us. The dreaded thumb and forefinger returned, the cavern shook with their entry, and they delved straight for the bra bridge where Johnno was stranded. I hate to think how he would have been crushed as she plucked him out, but after a few digging scrapes her fingers ascended and I made out his flailing limbs from behind the shape of her thumbnail.

I waited in agony and suspense, expecting only capture and judgement, but neither came.

Then, in perfect clarity, I recalled the entire chase; the hunt. In the entire ordeal, she had only ever seen one of us at a time.

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The next few minutes are a bit of a blur – once I was safe (well, relatively safe) I think the adrenaline drained away and I was left exhausted and ruined. I seem to remember plotting to escape down her tummy and through her shorts or something of the kind, but I guess I realised that since I was just a speck trapped on her body and any minor movement of any part of her could crush me to death, my destiny was not really in my hands anymore.

So I stayed put, until some time later there was a colossal movement and I was very suddenly whipped from my lying position on the inside fabric of her top, in the cavern underneath her cleavage. I clung to the big strands of cotton and screamed as the two giant globes rushed downwards around me – she was pulling her top off and I was being dragged upwards between her breasts. Soon her chest became giant inverted mountains falling down away from me, and as the burst into light far down below, I was dragged up into her face. The top clung over her features as she pulled it up over her head and I was pummelled up her chin, slammed into her soft lips and almost collided with her nose. Her eyelashes whipped me and suddenly I was free. My world span painfully as the top was turned inside out while she tried to pass the collar over her hair, and the room became a violent spinning rainbow.

My eyes were clamped shut as I hurtled through the air, clinging to the threads of the top as she tossed it to the ground; untidy as usual.

After the whopping collision with the ground that was luckily softened by the huge garment, I opened my eyes in panic and looked straight up her majestic body, towering higher than anything you can imagine. From between her feet her curves formed a landscape prettier than a mountain range. Her hands were on her hips; she was taking her shorts off. One of her legs raised high in the air and I found myself staring into the sole of her bare foot, preparing myself for the event that when she tugged her shorts off over it and stamped it back to the ground, I might be underneath it. There was nowhere to run because everywhere had the same chance of me being crushed to a smear. Therefore I

just admired her beautiful, goddess-like form and resolved to the thought that if she did plant her foot on me at least my last sight would be this awe-inspiring one.

When her foot finally hurtled downwards it struck with an almighty force that rumbled and shook me to the bone. I was tossed upwards into the air and plunged back into the cushion of the top only moments before her second foot rose and came crashing down just as momentarily. I was thrown again, and when I righted myself I saw her towering figure gliding overhead, clad only in her underwear, shaking me with every step as she went for the door, where she stopped and surveyed the room suspiciously, her omnipotent gaze falling on but passing straight over me.

Suddenly her giant figure was gone –most likely to the shower– and I was left to rebuild my strength and escape back to my refuge.

\*

Something catastrophic has happened. Something big... very big. This could be my last chapter. However I must finish it because I haven't told you the important bit. I haven't told *her* the important bit. Now is the time. I can't put it off.

She must have put Johnno in with the other tiny people. During the night after I finished the last chapter I thought things might be back to normal. I might be able to go back to my sneaking, hiding life. Now I won't.

I was awake earlier than she was as usual. I was on the dresser where I can see the wardrobe with the Habitats in them. When she awoke she went straight to it; still in her nightie. Maybe she had been thinking during the night what to do. Don't forget that she recognised the Sandman. She *knows* Johnno.

And Johnno knows her.

And he had been thinking during the night too; but not just thinking. Doing.

She opened the wardrobe and keyed in her code. Her body blocked the view into the Habitats from where I stood but I knew something was wrong. She stooped and lowered herself down to where she kept all the smallest people and stayed frozen. Her nightie draped over the ground and her hair flowed in cascades over her back. What was it? What was she looking at?

Slowly she raised until she stood at full height. From under her nightie and between her legs I could see the small people. Something was strange. They were doing something – had done something. Something that had affected her badly. She stepped backwards as if scared – in fright, or shock. She approached me where I was perched on the dresser – her backside grew larger and larger in my view until she bumped the dresser and I was thrown back. I didn't hide though – I had to see. She stood there so long, worsening my

suspense. Finally she turned and darted away in a huge movement that left the air whooshing around me like a hurricane, and I saw it.

Peering straight down into the Habitat, I saw the smallest people lying all over the ground; scattered not at random but stretched out at right angles in patterns. Some were beginning to get up and spoil the pattern, but nonetheless the words that they had formed with their bodies was clear and it sent a chill down my spine.

## YOUR DAD'S HERE

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This is where I explain. You have probably guessed already though. I always planned to tell you, in fact I wanted to write it down just like in Star Wars. I am Karen's father.

If you are Karen, then I want you to read this. I wrote this whole thing for you. I wanted you to know that this has gone irreversibly far simply because I am a coward. Even now, writing with a pen on this scrap of paper that might never be read, I'm not even strong enough to tell you that I love you and that I'm sorry for my failings. But I hope you know.

If you are reading this and you are not Karen then you will think this is all bullshit. You probably are thinking 'why would this guy hide like a rat in his own daughter's room – why wouldn't he go to her for help?'

Whether I am writing this to you Karen, or to a total stranger, you need to know what happened.

It started out with the worst type of stupid misunderstanding. Karen's mother is a very loving but very jealous wife, and I am –or was– a sociable and amiable chap. Also I am very weak. I let things die down instead of confronting and solving them. When Karen's mother began suspecting me of developing a too-intimate relationship with the secretary at a company I had an extended job with, I tried to let it slide and let her get over it. There was no way in hell that I would ever have cheated on her, but it seemed like she wanted to suspect me. It hurt that she never trusted me as wholly as I trusted her, but that was how she was. I loved her anyway and still do even though I can't be with her as I ought to be.

The problem was that the secretary disappeared at the same time that I did.

I honestly don't know where or how. She just did. And this coincidence was the key catalyst that made my life how it is now.

I don't know how many days pass while you go through the Sparkle but I suspect that it is not instant –perhaps a week– because the very day I arrived I witnessed a chilling scene between Karen and her mother, one that should never occur and was deeply

troubling to watch. They sat on the edge of Karen's bed as I stood at their feet, waving desperately up at the huge faces of the two women I loved most in the world, and seeing Karen's beautiful eyes fill with tears as she gazed absently at the carpet between her feet and right through me. I became more and more still as I listened to her mother informing her that her father had run off with another woman. Finally it was my cowardly fear that made me run through her feet and under the bed. Maybe it was confusion. I mean... how were they meant to react at such a horrible and emotional time, if they saw their husband and father only a centimetre or so tall?

The anger in Karen afterwards solidified my fears and I hid away like a coward. In my defence, there wasn't much I could do; the time for my salvation was nearly over. If I had have thought about it, I would have realised that she might have been relieved to discover her father, even if he was only the width of her finger. Even if she had have crushed me then and there at least she would have known that I never did and never would have done that awful thing to her and her mother. I hope you know now.

In any case I never showed myself again and my destiny became set. Even when she had assumed a normal life I could not bring myself to risk her wrath. What a coward.

This is why I am telling you now of my decision to yield myself to her. Maybe she will understand, maybe she will want me back.

Or maybe she is still angry. Maybe she will be more angry that I watched her go through the ordeal without having the guts to end her misery of thinking I had abandoned her.

The answer may depend on whether I am able to write one more chapter. I will now hide this book somewhere safe and show myself to her.

If there is no final chapter, it could mean that I have met an appropriate and just punishment for my cowardice. Or it could mean that I don't need to write one because I have already written all I need to write, since this whole thing was for you anyway, Karen.

I do love you.