

Darkness Risen

-The Torchier-



Richard Shekari

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-The Torcher-

By

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Ayiwulu Alaku

Peter Barwa

George Shekari

Dedication
For the Surmounters

Chapter One: Ablaze

“Well, what do we have here?” whispered Jeffery, closing his left eye as he tried to maintain his gaze with the right eye through the microscope. He adjusted the small fine focus knob until the specimen was clearly in focus. He then set the diaphragm to get the best lighting.

“Boo!” yelled a loud female voice from behind him.

“Jesus, Karen!” said Jeffery, “You scared the bit jeez out’o me.”

“We come in peace!” hissing, she grabbed him gently by the neck, “I told you I’ll get you someday.” She ran her finger through his hair. “Whatchu got in there?”

“Uh, nothing.” he answered, smiling. “Just this tissue Doctor Melanie wanted me to analyse. It’s unlike anything I’ve ever seen. Hmm! Weird!” he picked a small book and scribbled some lines.

“Thanks for the dinner the other day!” she said.

“Oh, it was nothing!” he said.

“No, really!” she added, “It was wonderful. I had fun that night, I haven’t gone out like that in ages!”

“You deserve better than that,” he responded. Wearing a great smile, he lifted his head. “You look great!”

“Thank you!” she said, “Guess what?”

“I’m all ears!”

“I got promoted yesterday,” she added, excitedly.

“Oh my God,” Jeffery said, Standing up. “Congratulations. Wow!” He gave her a warm hug, “Wow! I mean, this is super awesome, girl!”

“I know, right?” her dimples deepened, admiring his strong look and good skin, “I didn’t wanna text you. Wanted to tell you in person!”

She stood 5’7” before him, just about four inches short of his height.

“Wow, finally.” he said, sitting back. “I’m truly happy for you. How many years you’ve waited like two and a half years or so?”

“Four long years!” she said. “Hey Jef.” She stood there akimbo, “There’s something you must see!” She slipped her left hand down into the pocket of her lab coat and gripped a red pen tightly in her right fist.

“What is it?” he asked, out of curiosity.

“Let’s go to L6!” she added.

“Now?” asked Jeffery, taking off his glasses. “I’ve been onto this since 3:00am. Maybe when I’m done with...”

“You slept here?” she asked.

“Sort of,” he replied, “Closed 9:15pm; Went out for dinner, had a little nap and rolled back into the lab 2:40am.”

“Jeez, Jef!” she said, “Don’t overwork yourself!”

“I need to get this done before 10:00am,” he said, “Doctor Melanie said she’d...”

“I’ve got this thing I wanna show you!” Karen interjected, gazing into his eyes. “You’ve really got to see this. Trust me when I say; you wouldn’t miss it for the world!”

“Could you please give me twenty minutes!” he pleaded, “Is it another...”

“Nope!” she interposed, “This is unlike anything you’ve ever seen in your wildest imagination!”

“Oookay!” he responded, lustfully. Staring at her thick, glossy lips, “What is it?”

“Come with me!” she said.

Jeffery closed the book on his desk, placing his glasses on it as he loathly followed her.

“You smell good too,” he said with a smile on his face.

“Thank you, Jef!” she sighed, “It’s the same perfume I wear every day.” She turned and winked as she chewed her bubble-gum. “Thanks for noticing...today! Smelling nice yourself!”

He smiled and turned his eyes away from her gaze.

“Jef! Jef! Jef!” she hollered. “Always diffident when complimented!” she teased, “So, how’s your girlfriend?”

“I can’t remember ever telling anyone I’ve got a girl...friend” he replied, meekly.

“Hmm!” she responded, “Am I intruding or are you in denial?” She pressed down the hall button of an elevator.

“I’m not dating anyone.” Jeffery said. He smiled back at her, “For now, that is!”

Jeffery stood behind her as they await the elevator cab to descend.

“I know,” she said. “Work! Work! Work! That’s all you know.” Karen shook her head, “Veronica has been trying to get your attention lately...And so does Chloe!”

With her hands in the pockets of her lab coat, still chewing her gum, she left her hips exposed to the delight of his sight.

Jeffery stole some moments to admire her body.

“Observing anything, handsome?” she said as she caught his eyes staring at her hips, “Do you need a microscope, Jef?” she teased, as she smiled seductively.

He sighed.

“You don’t ever part with that necklace, do you?” she remarked, turning her face away from him.

“It’s a gift from my mum,” he said, “It was given to her by an old friend during her trip to Africa in the ’80s. She handed it to me about a month before she passed on!”

“You must’ve missed her!” she said.

“A lot!” he responded, “She meant the world to me!” his face gleamed with a smile.

“Hmm! Good morning!” she said.

“What?”

“We forgot to say ‘good morning’ this morning!” she said, “So I say good morning!”

“Oh, yeah!” he grinned, “Good morning!”

“The day’s still young!” Karen said, looking at her wristwatch, “Urgh! 9:06am! Really?”

“What’s up?” he asked.

“Anytime you’ve got a beautiful plan for the evening, the day walks like a turtle with a giant hippo on its back!” She said.

“Hmm!” he responded, “We’ve got plan for the evening I see!” clearing his throat, “A date, I presumed?”

“Nope!” She said, “G.N.O. Homie; Girls night out!” flicking her fingers as she threw her tongue out.

“This is cool.” He said, “One of a kind!”

“What’s cool?” She asked, “My nails or the tongue?”

“The glass elevator shaft doors!” He replied, “Even though it’s scary sometimes!”

“You remember the sightings of that humanoid thingy in the east that was said to have something like fire burning within its torso?” Karen said.

“Yeah!” He responded, “The footage went viral on YouTube, ya?”

“Yup!” She exclaimed, “Thanks to camera phones, right?”

“Doctor Melanie’s daughter claimed she always sees it in her dream?” Jeffery added, “Also, I heard that the person who uploaded it online was found dead. Burnt to ashes in his apartment, on his own bed yet, not even a touch of fire on the bed sheet!”

“Hmm!” she sighed, “Weird huh? Might be SHC... Spontaneous human combustion?”

“Someone said it’s probably one of those biblical end of time stuff?” he said.

“Yeah, the biblical stories...” she snorted, “God and Satan, angels and demons, heaven and hell etcetera! Gimme a break, Jef. You don’t believe in that crap, do you?”

The doors came open.

“Well, if you’d asked me that say, three years back, I’d laugh at you and the entire tale!”

“What about now?” She asked, as she led him into the elevator.

“I do not only believe that God exists, Karen,” he said, “I believe...in God!”

“Mm hmm?” She responded, “Don’t we all, Jef?” Snapping her chewing gum, “Well, if you say so! Anyways,

back to our discussion; would you believe me, if I'd told you that something similar to one of those things from that YouTube sensational video has been discovered?" Karen swiped her keycard on a small screen, turning to Jeffery.

"Uh, what do you mean?" he said, "I get uncomfortable when you wear that look."

"*Welcome Dr Keaton.*" said the computer voice in a masculine tone, "*Destination?*"

"Level 6!" she said.

"*Level 6 Clearance-Access Granted.*" said the computer.

"I thought they said they'd changed it to a female's voice?" Jeffery said.

"Oh! You're a feminist now?" Karen remarked.

"Well, uh...!" responded Jeffery, "It's just that it's you know...Peachy and cherubic!"

"Well, I'm flattered and I've got to say..." She turned to him, "On behalf of all the women in the whole wide world, permit me to say; thank you, Jeffery Bopson!" She snapped her gum again, "By the way, you wanted to say something when we had dinner the other night. You said when we meet next you'd tell me."

“Well, I meant...I’ll surely um...” He shook his head embarrassingly, “I’ll tell you but, you know, some things are best uttered at the right time...right moment, right?”

“Right!” She said, as she turned her head away. “If you say so!” She smiled.

“Would you like me to play a love song while we descend?” The computer asked.

“No!” Karen and Jeffery said in accord.

“Command Granted!” The computer said.

Minutes later, they got off the lift and headed to the research laboratory. Karen used her access keycard once more to open its steel doors.

As they walked into the facility, Jeffery sighted a dark figure like a naked man on his feet inside an enclosure made of thick glass walls. Many electrical wires and tubes were connected to the base of the big glass box, situated in the middle of the installation.

“Is that a statue?” Jeffery asked.

“No, Jef!” she answered, “Put this on!” She handed safety goggles to him and wore one herself. Karen then

switched of the lights with a remote control, leaving them in the dark. “Let there be light!”

“Seriously?” Jeffery said. He turned to her, “You should leave this job and venture into the world of Stand-up comedy!”

“Don’t look at me, Jef. Check this out!” came her reply, pointing her finger at the dark figure in the big glass box.

As Jeffery turned, he saw fire burning on the part that seemed like the chest region of what he thought was a statue.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” he said. Jeffery walked towards the glass box and placed his hands on it, “This cannot be!”

“It’s not a statue,” Karen said. “This is a living organism, Jef! Though the team hasn’t figured out a name for it yet, as for now, we all call it, ‘CD.’ As in, Charles Darwin!”

“How do you mean?” He asked. Jeffery took his time to observe the figure; he noticed how the fire that was in form of a human heart began to spread slowly through what looked like the arterial blood vessels of this entity that stood before him. The fire spread like hot lava across what appeared to be its arteries and veins, even its capillaries and lymphatic vessel

were seeable, and it stood illuminated before them. Jeffery wanted to say something but paused.

“The way you look at it, like you’ve seen it before.” She said, “Are you okay?”

Jeffery turned to Karen and opened his mouth to talk when all of a sudden, the beast grunted. Jumping from its position, it landed right in front of Jeffery with its eyes closed. The floor vibrated beneath their feet.

“Whoa!” He exclaimed and shifted back, “This thing...is alive!

“Impossible!” came her reluctant response, taking her goggles off. “But I’ve never seen it behave in such a way!” fear gripped them both.

As the beast stood tall before Jeffery, something like branchial arches came open beneath its ears and a hot steam gushed out. Jeffery observed how it slowly widened its nostrils as though perceiving something in the air around it. Its red fiery eyes became visible to them, setting its stare direfully into Jeffery’s soul. The dark beast fumed and began hitting its head repeatedly against the thick glass, trying to break free from the box as the fire in its visible heart

continued to burn and glow. It would run back and leap violently towards Jeffery.

Jeffery fell to the floor out of fear as he tried to grasp his breath.

“What the hell!” Jeffery said, his heart pounded. “This isn’t really happening?”

“Ha-Ha!” Karen laughed, walking towards the glass box, “You look scared like a little cat. It can’t get through,” she hit the glass twice with her knuckle. “See, it’s bulletproof or should I say, blast-proof! A glass wall, five inches thick. Courtesy of The Homeland Security and Tech guys!”

“Are you sure it’s blast-resistant?” He asked.

“Uh huh!” She responded, “If you’re on the other side, this baby’s thick enough to stop a woman’s feelings from getting across to you. Know what I mean?” She smiled.

“Uh, sure!” He said, shaking his head gently.

“It remained calm and quiet since they brought it here, until now!” Karen said.

“What is that...Thing!?” Jeffery asked, still panicked and on the floor.

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