

ZOMBIES AND ALIENS

(Book Four)

By

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Notice** Portions of this story may prove too graphic, sexually explicit, or violent for sensitive readers. This novel is intended for mature readers.

I dedicate this book to all of my wonderful readers who keep my creative juices flowing with their much appreciated support.

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“You’re looking lovelier with every day that passes,” Arthur said as he stood behind Alice and admired her reflection in the mirror. “Are you still creeped out by my fiancé?”

She took one last look at the few wrinkles that remained on her face before turning to speak with Arthur. “I feel stupid for saying it, but, in a small way, I still am.”

Arthur shook his head. “That’s gratitude for you.”

“It’s not that I’m not grateful!” Alice quickly explained. “It’s just that... well, I was raised to think that magic and the like was either fake or evil. It’s difficult to shake the programming. She and her family believes in multiple gods and all. That alone was ground for execution on the surface. Add spells and magic to the mix and it’s a wonder they’re alive.”

“They were a few out of many to live,” Arthur said with a slow shake of his head.

“Kendra was just an infant when her parents were massacred, right?” Alice asked.

Arthur nodded. “There were three toddlers and Olga left after the village was raided and burned to the ground. The residents were either massacred or taken as alien captives. Kendra, Felix, and Rupert were all about the same age too. I can only imagine what the task of keeping them safe and raising them must have been like.”

“I admire her for that,” Alice said with sincerity.

Arthur heaved a sigh. “You think that the formula Olga created to make the cream you put on your face daily is of magic? What happened to science?”

“I’m not talking about the cream or any of the other scientific things that she does,” Alice explained. “It’s the other stuff. She’s been teaching

Kendra some of her spells for when we go to the surface. I watched Kendra levitate a few rocks the other day. It was a bit unnerving.”

“I prefer the term alchemy over spell,” he said. “If I understand correctly, she didn’t tap into that part of her wisdom cupboard until recently. Mainly because they led a quiet and secluded life that didn’t deem it necessary. Kendra didn’t even know Olga could manage such things, which is why she’s only just learning. Anyway. Whatever you call it... it makes me feel safe,” he grumbled as he walked outside onto the porch. “Knowing that two of the bravest women I’ve ever encountered are armed to the teeth with tricks that could be what makes the difference of whether I live or die is incredibly comforting. You need to change your perspective.”

Alice followed him onto the porch and stood next to him as they looked out onto the peaceful countryside. “I’m working on it.”

“Work harder. Will you please?” he insisted. “Those women have been nothing but good to you since they met you. Lesser people would have held what happened to Ari against you and you know it. After all, it’s no secret that you’ve liked Felix from day one and we only have your word what happened that day.”

Alice’s eyes grew wide with surprise and she sucked in air. “I can’t believe you’re saying that.”

“I believe that what you said happened really did happen,” he said in a steady tone. “I’m just pointing out that people of a lesser caliber might question things. You do these women an injustice when they have been nothing but fair and supportive of you.”

Alice scuffed the toe of her boot along the porch floor. “You’re right.” Filling her lungs with air until they could hold no more, she let it out slowly before adding, “You’re always right.”

“Not always,” he chuckled, “just in this case.”

She grinned and lightly caressed her cheek with the tips of her fingers. "What that woman of yours has done for me is nothing short of a miracle."

"Was the peel that you had to do at the start of the treatment painful?" he asked with concern.

Alice shrugged. "It was a necessary evil. The results made it worthwhile. I'm glad that I saw instant results or I might not have continued. Thank goodness there are no more in my future, though."

"What about your body?" Arthur asked.

"It's not as bad as my face was," Alice replied. "She thinks it will improve by at least fifty percent with the cream. I can live with that." Then, with hesitancy, she added, "If I ever get a lover, he'll just have to be okay with my body as it is. I don't think any man is worth the pain of a body peel."

"I know that you felt hindered with the skin condition that you had on your face," Arthur said, "but I have to say this. If the man is worth his salt, he'd look past that at the beauty beneath. I did. I saw your soul. Not your wrinkles."

"You saw my soul, but you didn't fall in love with me," she said with a sad tone.

He reached over and placed his hand over hers as it rested on the porch rail. "Don't take it personally. It had nothing to do with you or what you looked like. It wouldn't have mattered who the woman was. I gave my heart to Olga long before the war and I just didn't have anything left for you or any other woman."

"What if you'd never reunited with her?" Alice asked.

He shrugged. "I'd have died a sad and lonely bachelor who was sustained by his memories."

"Wow," Alice said with admiration. "That's real love."

"What's real love?" Olga asked as she stepped onto the porch.

“Where’d you come from?” Arthur chuckled as he opened his arm wide for her to walk into.

Olga pointed to the field behind the house. “I was searching for some herbs. Kendra and Rex went into those trees to search for forest plants. Did they return yet?”

“You’re the first,” he said as he kissed her temple.

“Where’s Felix?” she asked as she looked around.

Alice looked at her hands as she said, “I think he’s out back in the rocking chair. He tends to go there quite a bit.”

“He’s still processing,” Olga assured her.

“He’ll have to come to grips with things soon,” Arthur said with a tone that sounded firm, but sympathetic. “It’s been months since Ari died. At some point he’ll have to join the living again. We’ll be heading for the surface soon. Won’t we?”

“I want to talk to everyone about that,” Olga said. “We need to finalize our game plan. Felix feels guilty over what happened with Ari. I can understand it, which is why I’ve allowed him his grief. After all, everyone grieves and heals differently. But, you’re right. It’s time for him to buckle up and move forward. Kendra is ready enough with what she’s learned and Rex is hot to get back to the surface. He’s never been comfortable here.”

“That’s a shame,” Arthur mused. “It will make things difficult when it’s time to return.”

“How so?” Alice asked.

Olga and Arthur looked at each other with saddened faces before Arthur explained, “Olga will be forced to choose between them and me.”

Alice cocked her head. “Didn’t you come here from the surface?” When he nodded, she said. “You lived most of your life there... longer than I am old, I think. You never know, my friend. You might just decide to stay there.”

Olga raised a brow at Alice's wisdom, but didn't express the fact that she hoped that would be the case. Instead, she smiled to herself and headed around the outside of the house to the back porch where Felix occupied a very comfortable rocking chair.

Rex rolled onto his back and stared up through the canopy of leaves overhead. Forest debris dug into his exposed flesh, but he didn't mind. He'd just been taken to the heavens and back, several times, while making love to his beautiful wife in the great outdoors. The cool, soft air caressed his flesh in such a sultry way that it nearly brought him to the ready for yet another session of passion. If it wasn't for the fact that they'd been gone much longer than anticipated -or deemed wise by the group's general consensus- and the others would soon be alarmed and out searching for them, he could have happily pulled her back into his arms.

Kendra would have loved nothing more than to revel in the delights of her naked body being exposed to the soothing elements of nature after being made love to in such a thoroughly delightful manner, but, like her husband, she was aware of the time that had passed since they set out in search of the medicine that nature provided in the forest. After all that she and her family had been through, the last thing that she wanted was to cause undue concern. So, she reluctantly lept to her feet and pulled on her clothes.

"Don't be a slug, husband," she teased.

"Slug, you say?" he chuckled. "Was it a slug that you thought of when my lips were traveling your body?"

"Oh, well, you did a mighty fine job of that," she said with a grin. "Perhaps too well? You're a good deal older than me, after all. Maybe you wore yourself out to the point you can't get dressed? Should I help you?"

"Come near me and I'll toss you back down and show you just how much I have left in me," he jokingly growled.

Giggling like a young schoolgirl, she picked up the basket containing the herbs, moss, and leaves that they'd collected at the request of her aunt.

“Hurry, old man. We’ve been gone far too long. We’ll probably meet up with a search party on our way back.”

Rex quickly pulled on and fastened his pants. As he struggled to hurry his tee shirt over his head, he peeked his face through the neck hole and teased, “If we do, and they ask what happened to us, I’m going to tell them that you seduced me.... Multiple times.”

“You would, wouldn’t you?” she giggled before sticking out her tongue and skipping off toward the trail they’d followed during their search.

“Don’t go so fast,” he called out as he struggled to put his boots on. “Wait for me.”

“Catch me if you can, old man,” she tossed over her shoulder as she hurried off.

“Kendra,” he called out in a worried tone, “I’m not joking now. It’s not a good idea to split up.”

“Then, move that cute butt of yours,” she bantered back while not slowing down.

With his boots finally on, he tucked the laces inside the flaps, rather than taking the time to tie them, and took off at a jog after his wife. He was still a good distance from her when the sound of human growling caught his attention.

“Kendra!” he shouted as he pushed his legs out of a jog and into a dead run. “Look out!”

She turned just in time to see three amazon zombies coming out of a thick grove of trees. Her heart lurched at the sight of their once beautiful faces turned gruesome. Wasting no time, her body reacted as if on autopilot. Pulling an arrow from her quiver, she secured it in her bow and let it loose. It landed in the stomach of the nearest zombie, but did nothing to stop her slow, but steady approach.

Kendra repeated the process multiple times as she backed away to keep as much space between them and her as she could. Her efforts slowed

down the walking dead giants, but did not entirely stop them. It wasn't until Rex had caught up with her and they were able to attack with their blades that the horrific looking creatures went down.

"I put so many arrows into them and they just kept coming," Kendra said with concern as she pulled the shafts from the lifeless corpses and inspected their tips to see which ones were still salvageable.

"It was a terrifying sight," he said as he drove his blade through one of the zombie's temples for good measure.

"I recognize this one," Kendra muttered with dismay as she watched Rex sink his blade into its rapidly rotting flesh. "It's Trudy."

"Trudy?" Rex said with recognition. "The one who coerced us into going to the Amazons to begin with." Looking down at the deceitful amazon, he snarled with satisfaction, "Karma's a bitch, isn't it, Trudy?"

"Is it me, or do they look more frightening than the human ones?" she asked as she stood looking down at them.

"The human ones are pretty damned gruesome looking," he replied. "There are a few differences, though. These guy's faces actually changed shape just a bit and their flesh looks like it has an accelerated rate of rotting. Maybe it's from the alteration of the virus. Or, maybe it's because you knew them when they were normal looking so the change is more pronounced."

Just then, the zombie, whose temple Rex had yet to ram his blade into, sat up and snarled. As it did, its dog teeth grew into long fangs on either side of its mouth before their very eyes. Kendra immediately thought of a sabre tooth tiger.

Taken aback by what she'd just witnessed, she was slow to react enough to put sufficient space between her and the ugly thing. Before she realized what was happening, the zombie sank those newly formed fangs into Kendra's forearm.

Screaming from shock, fear, and pain, she struggled to free her arm. Taken by surprise, Rex wrestled for a few seconds to gather his wits. When

he did, he wasted no time in leaping forward and driving his blade into the zombie's temple. With its powerful fangs embedded into Kendra's arm, when it slumped to the ground, the abomination took his wife down with it.

"My arm," Kendra wailed as she fell to her knees. "Those fangs are stuck in my arm. I think they're in the bone!"

Rex gripped her forearm with one hand and the hair of the zombie with the other as he pulled to separate them. All he managed to do was pull a fist full of the corpse's hair out. After a few more unsuccessful tries, he cut off the zombie's head.

Scooping his traumatized wife into his arms, he carried her -with the head still attached to her forearm via the fangs- back to the house. Between the adrenaline flowing through his body from the battle that had just ensued and the surge of supernatural strength that he'd pulled upon, he made it home within a matter of a few minutes.

It was Alice who saw them coming and alerted Olga and Arthur. Still on the back porch doing her best to bring Felix back to life, Olga abandoned her mission and hurried to the porch as fast as she could. She reached it at the same time as Rex did.

A loud simultaneous gasp could be heard by Olga, Alice, and Arthur at the sight of a zombie head biting into Kendra's forearm. Thick, dark blood dripped from its neck, forming an ever growing pool at their feet.

"We killed three of them," Rex said over the effort his lungs were making to normalize his breathing. "Before I could put the blade into its head, it sat up and bit her."

"It has fangs," Arthur said with shock. "Fangs?"

"I tried to pull it out, but we think they're embedded in the bone. I didn't know what to do, so I did this," Rex explained.

"Get her into the house and put her on the counter," Olga ordered as she raced ahead to gather the items that she'd need to surgically remove the fangs from her niece's arm."

“Goddess, Diana!” Felix roared as he stepped onto the porch in time to see Rex carrying Kendra with the zombie head stuck to her arm into the house. “What happened?”

“They grow fangs if you don’t kill the brain right away,” Arthur said in a shocked monotone.

“So, they’ve found their way here, have they?” Felix mused.

Arthur looked at him as if he’d just tossed a bucket of ice water on him. “You’re right. I was so shocked by what happened to Kendra that it didn’t register that they’re on our doorstep.” He turned to Alice. “You need to warn the village council members about this.”

Felix looked at Alice as if seeing her for the first time. He’d been in such a daze since he’d learned of his wife’s horrific demise that he’d only held onto the edge of reality. He’d talked to her when she approached him about something with a type of automated response. He never really noticed her. “Your face,” he said in a soft whisper that told of his surprise. “It’s... you’re... you’re lovely.”

Alice blushed as a smile formed on her face, but she said nothing as she hurried off to warn the council members of the zombie threat.