

The reader closed the book he was reading and returned it to the bookshelf. Sandy Winstrom fell asleep. It was actually more than sleep, it was suspended animation. The next time the reader picked the book off the shelf Sandy's day begun. The clock radio sounded at 10AM, blaring rock music. Sandy stretched under the covers; spreading her toes and fingers like a cat and opened her mouth wide yawning. She rolled in the bed as she reached to turn the radio off. She had slept soundly in spite of the disturbing dreams she'd been having since her breakup with the last man in a long line of abusive relationships. She hated her waitress job but it paid the bills. Another uneventful day at a dead end job, pretending that what the same old losers said to her was clever or interesting. Hustling tips and avoiding another no good man that would start out passionate and end in demeaning words, bruises, and heartache from unfaithfulness; Bitterness had replaced all hope for a loving relationship, revenge had become the prize of her desire. The reader found something he could indulge in, he closed the book returned it to the shelf and pondered with excitement; Restraining his outward appearance against casual glances. He knew he would have to pay a visit to the 3rd dimension. Neither Sandy nor anyone else in her world could tell when the book was closed and their lives stood still in suspended animation. Until the reader pulled the book off the shelf, the story of Sandy's life was un-lived. The first customer to sit in Sandy's section that day was a man. He wore a white Panama straw hat and a white cotton shirt with no collar. The shirt buttoned down the front and matched his white cotton slacks. He sat with his legs crossed, one hand on the table, the other resting in his lap. He didn't look around with impatience instead he sat looking forward. Expectation was the air about him. Nothing rude, or obnoxious, it was more of a position of power. Sandy greeted him with a menu in her hand and welcomed him to the restaurant with the rehearsed script all of the waitresses were taught. Without looking at her he raised a hand and said "Thank you but the menu will not be necessary I'll have today's special, Sandy". His eyes shifted to see her reaction to his calling her by name. She wrote TS on the order pad and the price, then told him ". Thank you sir" then turned to walk away. While turning in his order it dawned on her "how did he know my name?" She checked her blouse and found she wasn't wearing her name tag, "So how did he know my name?" He read her hesitation and grinned. Sandy watched him through the portal in the swinging doors to the kitchen she tried to remember it he had ever been there before. Could he have heard someone call my name? Was he stalking me? He sat motionless awaiting his order although he was sitting by the window he didn't look out, his stillness went beyond calm or cool it was more like cold calculation. Sandy brought his order and said "Enjoy your meal". The strange man looked at her with cold calculating eyes and asked "Wouldn't you enjoy serving cold retribution even more?" The question stunned her she stammered "N-no!" and then hurried away. She felt violated, as if he could look inside her darkest desires. The feeling of being exposed turned into indignation. "How dare he get so personal with me!" He doesn't know me! She raved in her mind. She turned around to go back and scold him only to find he was gone. The food had been eaten; money for the check was on the table plus tip. That she saw business card. She was afraid to touch it because it was standing on edge. She could see a horned goats head inside of a triangle inside of a circle, the horns extended outside the boundaries of the triangle, giving it the look of coming out of the card. She picked up the money, the check, the tip, then hesitated before picking up the card. She put the card in the front pocket of her apron with the tip, process the check and money at the cash register. The manager walked up quickly to Sandy his face red with anger and said, "Company policy states that hourly employees are not to clock in earlier than 5 min. till starting time or clock out later than 5 min. after the end of their shift, "Why are you still here"? Confused Sandy said "I have been here longer than you. I know what policy states. That was my first customer of my shift! The managers

anger was replaced by a look of concern "are you feeling well"? Its 45 minutes past your shift. Sandy looked at the clock, the manager was right. She thought "Where did the time go"? "I'm sorry I didn't know how this happened". She took her tip from the apron and the strange business card and went home. She still didn't like the way her boss had talked to her, yelling like she was his child. She promised herself the next time he disrespected her he'll regret it. She pulled out the strange card to take a closer look. The wording on the front was simply "Children of Ashtoreth" with address under that and phone number. Suddenly her mind was bombarded with disjointed images of different men in agony, gaping wounds, severed limbs, gushing blood. The horrible images stopped flashing in her mind when she released the card. A knock came at the door; it was strange because she wasn't seeing anyone and she didn't have any friends, who could be knocking? She opened the door to her apartment. What she saw was beyond her understanding, instead of the wall across from the door that was hallway between apartments, there was a dark walkway straight ahead. Sparsely lit by huge goblets made of glass; filled with dancing flames. The walkway seemed to go on forever; the glow of the flames dimmed and became smaller, the further she looked down the path. She slammed the door, locked it and walked like a zombie to her couch and curled into a fetal position; it had been a crazy day. The reader closed the book and returned it to the bookshelf. Sandy's day had ended with a twist. Letting his fingers graze the book-bindings as he walked, as if touching his children as they slept. The reader left the library of the 4th kind; a repository for the billions of lives in the third dimension. Each life unknowingly waited for a reader to open their book, so that more blank pages would be filled with the continuing story of the choices that they make, and the paths that they take that made up their reality in the 3rd dimension. The inhabitants of the 3rd dimension knew nothing of what went on in the 4th dimension, the readers, or the library. But the origin of the mysteries left behind by ancient civilizations lie with the readers, also the grooming of the world's most prolific serial killers. Sandy may join the ranks of those irretrievably changed by an evil reader, if she accepts what the reader offers her. The reader pulled the book "Sandy Winstrom" off the shelf and opened it. Sandy rolled over as she stretched to turn off the blaring radio alarm clock. It was 10 AM. She was off work, so while she made breakfast, she thought about what she wanted to do. Memories of the strange events surfaced; mixed with rage and fear, but she pushed them to the back of her mind in hopes of having an enjoyable day. But questions about the odd man and his purpose for leaving that strange business card, the horrible images that flashed in her mind when she picked it up at home, and the endless walkway at her door; kept chewing their way back into the foreground of her thoughts. Giving in to her curiosity, she looked at the card on the coffee table where she had dropped it the night before. The address on the card was not far away from her apartment, so she decided to find out what was happening to her. She opened the door and there was the walkway again. Although it was morning and the sun was shining brightly outside, the path that seemed to lead to forever was dark except for the flaming goblets. As she walked into the darkness a voice said "Your inner rage attracted me, and your desire for revenge gave me purpose." Sandy stopped at the ominous sound of his voice as her skin tightened with fear. Straining to see through the darkness as the flames did not illuminate she asked "Who are you, what do you want? "Time and space are limitations in your dimension, thought and will dominate mine. Your bitterness and thirst for revenge intrigues me. I have been reading the story of your life as you lived it. I can help you write the pages of your future and fill them with the images of revenge that your heart yearns for." "Come out so I can see you." "I am shapeless; I can cast any image if it will help you to decide." "Can you change my image?" "Through molecular manipulation, I can change it too." "Show yourself as a handsome bodybuilder." Tiny dots of light began to move in the darkness, like a

swarm of miniature fireflies. An outline of a man began to form, and then fill in. The image was fuzzy and golden, as the image sharpened; muscle definition and features took their places. Standing before Sandy was exactly what she had in mind, the very image. The image blurred slightly as the bodybuilder aged. Skin sagged, hair fell out, posture weekend, then the image accelerated in the other direction; from old to fit, to the teen, to toddler. "Make me beautiful!" "It will be painful to have your molecules rearranged, are you sure?" "Positive." The image of the toddler dispersed like a soundless explosion and enveloped Sandy with the tiny dots of light. Sandy felt the tingle at first, then pain like she couldn't imagine. Her cellular cohesion stretched to the point that she was shapeless, a lump of clay to be formed. Feeling every push compress and every pull extend, her awareness of groups of molecules being molded was both painful and exciting. Each pain in another spot brought a picture of an ex-lover to her mind; A rogue's gallery to be captured and punished. The reader closed the book and put it on the shelf. Sand gone to sleep, she had taken the first step down the path that would make her legendary. The next pages she writes in the book of her life will determine the nature of her legend. The beauty that the reader bestowed upon her could give her fame and fortune, but he knew that was not her motivation. 'The radio alarm woke Sandy at 10 AM as usual when the reader opened the book. She stretched and rolled over to turn off the blaring noise of the newscaster saying "The serial killer" Was cut off when she hit the switch. She realized with sudden alarm, that her body had changed, her new attributes caused her to leap from the bed and run to the full length mirror. Amazed by what she saw; Tears of joy streamed down her face, and laughter filled the room. Then a sinister look overshadowed her beauty as the wheels of revenge turned in her head. The strange encounter had given her the tools she had only dreamed of, now she could return the pain that she had endured. Now the heartless men that beat her and broke her heart would experience devious retribution. Her new shape made her shop for new clothes; she had to be alluring in every way. Her first victim was a salesman in the ladies department at a name brand store. Dexter Schmidt had dumped her five years ago after she told him she loved him. She recognized him, but he had no idea who she was, with her new look. Dexter was a wolf in the hen house. Working in the ladies department kept him supplied with ladies that he ran through like a track star. He surreptitiously watched Sandy to see what style of clothes she browsed through. He knew from experience that the wilder the style, the better his chances would be. Sandy could feel his excitement as she looked at see-through blouses and short skirts. He thought; Jackpot! As he zealously offered his assistance "Would you like to try those on?" he almost panted. "The dressing room is right over there." He purposely pointed with his middle finger, with a smile that fit an alligator. She gave him a disinterested look and politely said "Thank you" Then proceeded to twist her way to the dressing room. His eyes moved with every sway, as if he were watching a Ping-Pong match. Anticipation had put a thin layer of sweat across his forehead that made his face shine. He heard the curtain slide open and Sandy stepped out to look at herself in the three-way mirror. "WOW!" Was all he could croak from his suddenly dry throat, as his eyes devoured her. Although her appearance had changed, her feelings had not, she felt violated by his lascivious look; which fueled the fire of revenge. She looked him up and down then said "So you like what you see?" He mistakenly took the sparkle in her eyes as lust. After a hard swallow he answered "Very much" In a raspy voice. "If you buy me a matching bra and panty set, I'll let you take me out tonight." His words log-jammed in his throat, so he shook his head yes and tripped going to the lingerie section and almost knocked a rack of clothes over. His awkwardness over her made him angry; he had never acted so foolishly before. But he was determined to have his way with her. "What time do you get off work? I'll come back, and we can take it from here." "I've got three hours left." Sandy checked the time, smiled at him and seductively walked away, then stopped

and looked back over her shoulder at his puppy-dog expression, winked and then continued on her way. Sandy showed up before quitting time to give him the idea that she was anxious, which she was, but not in the way he thought. Her provocative attire added rocket fuel to the fire that was already burning inside of Dexter. When she bent over to fasten the above the ankle strap on her high heeled shoe, he almost lost it. "Are you ready hot stuff?" "I'm as ready as a triple crown winner at the Kentucky Derby!" She took his arm and listened to him lie about the restaurant he was taking her to. It turned out to be the place she worked. Far from the four star establishment he pumped it up to be. She momentarily forgot that she would not be recognized and hesitated, then caught herself and relaxed. He cornered her in a booth, and she repeatedly had to slap his wandering hand away. She couldn't wait to get him home, so she could turn him down and put him out. When she did just that, he slapped her so hard her ears rang. She looked up at him from the floor with hate in her eyes. He was in the act of continuing his assault but stopped short. "What the hell is that?" He hollered as tiny dots of light swarmed around Sandy. Dexter ran for the door but it was gone. Not even a window was available to jump out of, he was trapped. His back to her, he could hear Sandy making strange sounds; moans and some slimy, sticky sounds. When he turned around to look at her, his skin crawled with fear. He recognized her face as the girl he dumped years ago, but did not have the time to wonder where she came from because the creature that the face was attached to was unlike anything he had ever seen. The reader had indulged himself by transforming Sandy into a semi-transparent jelly- fish looking thing that stood almost six feet tall. Iridescent colored ripples ran up and down its form as it stood looking at Dexter; thin tendrils gracefully waved in the air as if it were submerged in the sea. Dexter was too petrified to notice that a liquid substance had leaked from beneath the legless creature and was spreading toward him. Shock had taken all inner conversation from Dexter; all he could do was watch in terror as the creature slid on the liquid toward him. Dexter snapped out of his transfixion because of the danger of the creature's approach. Instinct made him try to put some distance between him and the creature, but it was too late. He slipped in the liquid that had surrounded his feet and fell to the floor. The creature with his ex-girlfriend's face slid on top of him and encased him in jell. His screams were muffled by the thick substance that burned like acid. His face bubbled and popped like bacon frying. The voice of his ex-girlfriend came from the once recognizable face, now contorted into a mask of evil joy said "In return for the love you never gave me, I give you the hate that's been eating its way out of me and now eats you." Flesh fell off his bones in chunks and sizzled on the floor. The reader closed the book with satisfaction; his plan of evil had hatched, it could only flourish now. He trembled with excitement as he put the book on the shelf. As he walked away from the bookshelf, he pondered Sandy's mixed emotions; she was horrified by the thing she had been transformed into, but thrilled by the sheer terror that Dexter experienced. The next time she wakes up will tell the tale; if she seeks out another ex-lover she'll be the vessel of evil that the reader hoped for, if not he'll have to make some adjustments. Anticipating what she'd choose, the reader drifted off on an evil voyage through his mind, envisioning the future horrors he would mold her into. The reader cleaned up the goop that was Dexter's remains in the same manner he changed Sandy into the grotesque jellyfish creature; molecular manipulation, the alchemy of the 4th kind. After-all, he couldn't let the star of his next masterpiece of the macabre go to jail. At 10:00 AM the newscaster was blaring "The Mangler has struck again." As Sandy stretched her aching body and rolled over to turn off the alarm. Why am I so sore? I feel like I've been beat up. The thought of being beaten caused her mind to flash scenes from the night before. She tried to dash out of the bed to clean up the mess on the floor, but her sore body refused to move fast. Relieved that the horrible mess was somehow gone, her mind turned to the being that turned her into a stunning beauty and into a hideous

creature. She wondered if he or it was going to contact her again. If he did, she was going to tell him about himself; turning her into a monster was not in the bargain! Even-though the taste of revenge was sweet, that was too unexpected. The reader's eyes gleamed as he read her thoughts that materialized on the blank page. Her ability to accept the reality of transformation and the lack of remorse for Dexter's grizzly murder revealed that a new Sandy Winstrom was emerging. Sandy would become the substance that nightmares were made of. Sandy took a long hot bath to relax her muscles and thought about how she could contact her benefactor. Maybe that strange business card can somehow make a connection with him! The last time I held it, the dark pathway was at my door. I doubt if the phone number on the card would call the 4th dimension. That would be one hell of a long distance charge. She chuckled at the thought. Satisfied that she could make contact, her mind grew dark. Her thoughts turned to; who would be the next victim and how she would look. Since she surely couldn't be the same woman that was seen with Dexter... The only ex-lover she could think of worked at the Good Samaritan hospital downtown. He played the sensitive, shoulder to cry-on role until he got comfortable. After he felt that he was in control, the dog came out; lazy, lying, cheating, and abusive all at the same time. Sandy had put her trust in him and he came home drunk one night, smelling of another woman. When she confronted him about it he lied and flopped down in a chair, grabbed the remote and turned the television up loud. Sandy didn't stop there; she called him a liar and asked him where he had been. He told her "Shut-up BITCH! And get me a beer" the words slurred out of his mouth. When she didn't move fast enough; he jumped up and slapped her down and kicked her. "I said get your funny looking ass up and get me a damn beer!" Sandy held the sobs in, but the tears overflowed from her heart and ran down her cheeks. She got his beer and brought pretzels too, then quietly went to bed. The shock of the sudden change in Daniel numbed her body, but her feelings were still fragile at that time in her life; she was still new at the abuse game. Daniel came into the bedroom an hour later and tried to call out to Sandy in an apologetic tone and sweet words. She didn't respond not because she was sleep; her pain had turned into anger. But she had enough sense to know he was drunker than when he slapped and kicked her. He undressed and slid in the bed, pushed up close and put his arm around her waist. "Sandy?" She didn't speak or move. "Sandy, I'm sorry honey. I didn't mean to hurt you but you accused me of something I didn't do and-and you hurt my feelings. You know I love too much to do something like that. I was out drinking with the boys and I guess we got a little rowdy and some beer spilled on me, that's all. Her being naive and loving; she forgave him and opened the door for more abuse. It wasn't until he beat her and threw her out into the streets that she started on the road to bitterness that twisted and turned until she passed the bitterness exit and drove full speed into the macabre. Sandy decided to pay him a visit after she contacted her new friend. She got out of the bathtub, dried off, and got dressed in her old clothes since she was her old self. Now where is that spooky business card? She walked into the front room to look on the coffee table, and there it was; standing on its edge like a dog wagging its tail because you've come home. As soon as she touched it a tingle rushed through her whole body, and then the pain started; from the top of her head to the bottom of her feet as the transformation took place. When the pain subsided, she looked in the mirror and saw the very image of what she had thought about; a tall, slim, black haired woman about 25 years old with an Italian skin-tone. She smiled at the stranger in the mirror and asked "Are you ready girl?" The smile faded into a face of stone, with dark eyes that seemed to darken as the smile faded. Sandy's spiked heels echoed in the cold antiseptic halls of the "Good Sam" hospital as she followed the directions that the lady at the information desk gave her. Daniel Brown was working in the laundry; in the basement. The heat from the dryers took the chill out of the air as she approached the laundry room, and she could hear his voice.

Daniel stopped talking and looked at the doorway; a light perfume had filled the room announcing the presence of a female. A smile grew on his face as he took in the vision of loveliness standing there looking at him; long, shiny black hair lazily flowed over her shoulders, framing her face. Dark eyeliner made her already dark eyes haunting. Red lipstick glistened on her full lips. Her short bolero style jacket was open, revealing a black lace camisole that stopped at her belly-button. Black skinny jeans clung to her long slightly bowed legs that were supported by black spiked heeled open toed shoes; her toenails were painted red. "Hello, is there something I can do for you; Ms. Lady?" Although his words were polite, his eyes were betraying their enjoyment. "If you could, I've foolishly gotten lost and can't find my way back to my car." "No problem, this is a big facility but there is only one parking lot." "I'd be so-o-o grateful if you would take me." The look she gave him made him think of much more than a walk to the parking lot. "Let me clock out and I'll do just that, always ready to help a lady in distress." The women co-workers were making noises of disbelief with their faces twisted in disgust, the men were grinning like little boys after someone farted. The reader was impressed, he was anxious to see where she would make her move for revenge. He would make things alright even if she killed him in the middle of downtown. As he read her devious thoughts, he thought about what kind of terror he would turn her into this time. Apprehensive about the evil thrill he was experiencing, he took a casual glance around to make sure he wasn't exuding his private joy. He must remain discreet; as there are laws in the 4th dimension concerning the nature and depth of reader intervention and manipulation. He had already crossed those boundaries, again. Sandy was not the first person in the 3rd dimension that the reader had turned from angry to killer. But he didn't have to write in her thoughts and actions like he had in the past. She was a natural, she was using the power. Daniel couldn't believe his good fortune; a stone fox came to him out of nowhere and asked for his assistance and maybe more! "So, pretty lady, what are you going to do when you leave here?" "I'm taking you with me, and we'll figure something out together." "That sounds like my kinda plan." He reached out and took her hand. She gave his hand a lite squeeze and smiled at him. "What is your name sweetheart?" "Sandy." "Sandy, I knew a girl named Sandy, but she was nothing like you." "There's nobody like me sugar, and before the day is over you WILL find out it is true. "I'm with that baby girl." Sandy pulled into a liquor store parking lot. On the way into the store, she passed Jason Wintergreen dressed in tennis instructor clothes; talking his usual "I'm so this and I'm so that" trash to a pretty but dumb redhead as they left the store. "Ya sugar, stick with me and you'll be playing at Wimbledon in no time. "She saw his eyes dart around her body then to her face without missing a beat in his conversation. So that's what you do now huh Mr. Wintergreen? She made a mental note to make sure she would get back to him. Sandy turned to Daniel and said "Get us a bottle of Moet champagne, you're gonna fell like celebrating." Daniel smirked like he thought she was testing him, and reached in his pocket and pulled out a hand full of money and asked the cashier "where are the magnums of Moet? Sandy gave him a look of approval, and then let her eyes drift downward and stop at his crotch and asked "Do you live alone?" A thought flashed through his mind that he quickly threw; out "She sure changed from the helpless damsel in distress." Then answered "I live alone as a one eyed man in a three eyed world." As they walked out of the liquor store Sandy in front, she said "That one eye must be better than two, because I can sure feel it all over my butt." Daniel opened the door to his apartment waved her in like a servant. "Welcome to Loveland, where all of your wildest fantasies come true." Sandy took the bottle out of his hand as she walked past with a twist, then looked back over her shoulder and asked "Do you have an opener?" Daniel looked at her like the wolf that ate little red riding hood's grandmother and said "how about get undressed?" Sandy tossed the magnum to him with a look of disdain, but followed up with a smirk that said "you're a bad

boy." Then she made herself comfortable on the couch. Daniel came back from the kitchen with two glasses filled to the rim and handed Sandy one, then spun around and headed for the stereo. Love songs gently permeated the air as he turned and gazed at Sandy. She smiled and blew him a kiss, and airborne spores of the *Balamuthia Mandrillaris* (otherwise known as the brain eating amoeba) entered his nose. The progression of the infection normally takes 1 to 14 days for the symptoms to start, but this is a special strain; one from the 4th dimension. The heat he immediately felt was the onset of fever, which he had mistaken for lust. He took another drink of the expensive champagne to change the bad taste in his mouth. His mouth filled with salty tasting saliva as waves of nausea rose from his stomach. Daniel rushed into the bathroom and spewed hot vomit all over the toilet. While he was trying to recover; tiny dots of light swarmed around Sandy. Disoriented from his sudden ailment, he staggered out of the bath room apologizing until he looked at Sandy. He watched in horror as she seemed to melt-down from her 6 foot height into a gigantic amoeba that sprawled out on the floor; its pseudopodia reaching out like arms. Off-center stared a single eyeball that followed his movement as it slowly drug itself toward him. Daniel vomited again but this time was out of fear, the amoeba absorbed it with its pseudopodia as it pulled closer, and closer. His head was pounding to the beat of his heart which was revved up like a race car, cold sweat shined on his face while his fever rose. Daniel tried to run, but his muscle control failed him. Wobbling toward the door he suddenly seized and fell to the floor trembling violently. He watched helplessly as the amoeba covered his feet and moved slowly up his legs, the huge unblinking eyeball focused on his eyes like it was enjoying his suffering. The amoeba had crawled up to his chest, covering everything below. He could feel the sticky wet creature's strength as it neared his chin, and the foul odor of disease gagged him. He could no longer see the horrible eye that shined with such evil glee, only the small odd shaped things that moved around inside the hideous creature as it covered his face. The reader closed the book with trembling hands. He had to leave the library before someone saw the evil excitement that was tingling inside him. He didn't look around; he just replaced the book and casually walked out maintaining his air of aristocracy. When Sandy's radio alarm sounded, the end of a loud song led into the news. Sandy awakened feeling terrible. Every muscle and bone screamed with pain, she had a headache and was weak. She painfully rolled over to turn off the radio that was giving an update on the dreaded serial killer that has been making headlines for the last six months "There are still no clues leading to the capture of the "Mangler" the FBI has taken over the case with little information to work with. If anybody has information that could lead to the arrest and conviction of this demented killer?" Sandy hit the off button and lay in bed wondering why she felt so bad. Am I coming down with the flu? She called in sick; using what little strength she had. Then she thought about Jason Wintergreen; yea you just wait until I feel better? Jason was preening in the mirror that he kept somewhere near at all times, when a beautiful red head dressed in a tennis skirt and sports bra approached him asking about tennis lessons. Her flat stomach pierced with a ruby, sparkled in his eyes drawing his attention south. His eyes traveled down her long muscle sculptured legs and back up to her green eyes. An alluring smile was awaiting his return. Her ineptitude at tennis was a skillful ploy that gave credence to the invitation of her smile. His suave advances were carefully constructed as a transparent veneer, designed to acknowledge his eagerness; an adjustment of an elbow from behind, the follow-through of a swing, anything that required closeness was demonstrated. The cat and mouse prelude to romance was played until Sandy took it to the next level. After the intense tennis lesson, she invited him to her apartment for drinks. She knew that Jason's expectations would lead him into a horror so extreme that death would be the sanctuary that he sought; there would be no other escape. Neither of them were drinkers, but they both had their different

motives for extending and accepting the reason for meeting. She gave Jason her address and they agreed on 8pm. Jason watched her walk away with a predatory look in his eyes. It had been quite some time since Sandy and Jason had parted ways. Jason had been a telemarketer then, and not a very good one. He would go home after work frustrated, and then take his anger out on her. The psychological release, unknown to him, was the thin barrier that kept him from murder. Once he had the urge during a beating he was giving Sandy, but caught himself. The evening he came home from work and found that Sandy had left him, was too big of a blow to his ego. On a mission of hatred and revenge against all women, his incubation period was over and what the news called "The Mangler" was born. Another victim had just been snared. Jason was gathering his tools for the meeting with Sandy; a small hack saw, knockout drops, and a sharp hunting knife. He put on a plastic suit under his dress suit, so that once the mangling started he wouldn't get any blood on himself or his clothes. The sky had darkened prematurely, signaling an approaching storm; the weather was setting the mood like a dimmer switch. He stopped at the liquor store on his way to Sandy's. His intention was to spike the wine with knockout drops. Rain started falling in sheets clapping against the pavement like a standing ovation. To most people, it was a dreary event, but to Jason (the Mangler) Wintergreen it was theme music. He was interrupted leaving the liquor store by a woman in distress. "Excuse me sir, but could I bother you for a ride? I thought I could beat the rain but obviously I was wrong." Opportunity had presented itself. "Is there no one at home you could call for a ride? "No, I stay by myself." A coy smile surfaced. Helplessness is a trigger for all predators; an irresistible reaction to a natural stimuli. He fought with himself because Sandy was already planned, but the instinctual reflex was too strong to resist. "Get in." he told his new victim gesturing to his car. Jason held small talk with a hint of sexual innuendo to keep things interesting. He already knew all he needed to know when she told him that she lived alone. He didn't want to seem to be focused on something else other than her; that could cause problems. It was 7:30 pm and Sandy had cleaned the apartment, put on some soft music and impatiently watched the clock for Jason's arrival. She thought about how the door and windows had disappeared before and spoke in her mind to the man in the panama straw "If you can hear my thoughts, work with me." The reader smiled and said to himself, nice touch. She wanted to use his power for dramatic effect. Jason pulled in front of the house that his next victim pointed to. Before she opened the car door she looked at him and asked "Would you let me thank you for your kindness? Come inside for a while." "How nice, it would be my pleasure. You go ahead, I'll join you shortly." She went inside and he spiked the wine. When he knocked on the door, it drifted open, releasing slow music and a blue light was shining from the bedroom. "I'll be right there." She almost sang from the bedroom. She came out wearing a bathrobe. Jason pretended to open the bottle of wine, watching as she walked to the kitchen to get glasses. On her return with a glass in each hand, the robe slid open enough to reveal her nudity. With obvious false embarrassment she closed it as she watched Jason's response. "Oops!" Jason said smiling in response to her mishap as he poured her glass of wine. She drank half of the glass before noticing that Jason hadn't poured himself a drink. "Aren't you drinking?" she asked while standing over him sitting on the couch, her crotch at eye level. "No, actually I bought this for someone else, but you were so irresistible I decided to give it to you." "Oh How sweet of you, wow this stuff really has a kick, what?" She staggered to the side; her robe falling open, she tried to counter the motion, over compensated and fell on the floor. "What did you give me?" She said in a dreamy voice. "Like I told you, It was intended for someone else but you were so-o-o irresistible. "Jason looked at the time, it was 7:45, and he wouldn't be able to make his date with Sandy in time. So he took his suit off, folded it neatly and set it on the couch. Then he picked up the unconscious woman



and carried her to the bathtub. He was thankful he didn't have to waste time taking her clothes off. The pockets in his plastic suit held the tools he needed. Starting with the hunting knife, he cut her at the joints like cutting up a chicken; the hack saw was for the tough spots. He hummed a song as he dissected his victim; it was a labor of love. When he finished his grisly task, he ran cold water in the tub and let the body parts soak. All but the head soaked in the cold water. He took special care of the head; he curled the hair, put makeup on the face, eyeliner, lipstick, eye shadow and then set it to the side. After he drained the tub, he dabbed each body part dry and took them to the front room. Once all of the parts were there, he stacked them into a pyramid, then carefully placed the head on top facing the door. He stood back to admire his work; satisfied, he found a plastic bag to put his bloody plastic suit in. Dressed himself, checked the time; it was Midnight. Sandy and the reader had been stood up. Sandy was fuming mad at Jason. She stormed to the bedroom and flopped in the bed; "Damn him!" The reader closed the book disappointed. At 10AM Sandy's alarm sounded. She stretched and rolled over to turn the it off. Anger flooded her mind. Could it be that my trap didn't work? Or did something come up that made him change his plans? He couldn't have known it was me, he was probably being his same old no-good self. As soon as the reader saw her intention of going back to Jason to find out why he didn't show up; he changed her into the red-head again. Sandy felt the transformation, but it was not as painful as it had been in the past, and it was quicker too. An unexpected knock came at the door. Sandy found herself changed back to her original form. "Who is it?" She snapped thinking it might be Jason. "Kenny James, you probably don't remember me but we went to the same school. Could I talk to you for a minute?" Sandy cracked the door with the security chain attached and looked out. A small man stood there wearing blue jeans, sweat shirt, and tennis shoes. His eyes lit up with joy and a smile as warm as a summer day radiated on his face. She didn't recognize him. "Yes, what do you want?" He looked down at the floor nervously, then looked into her eyes. "I feel like a fool, but they say love can make you act that way-you know, foolishly. Sandy I've been loving you since our school days, but I was always too shy to let you know. I've been searching for you for years." Sandy broke into his speech; "Look that all sounds sweet but I don't know you." She was about to close the door when Kenny said "Wait please!" He reached into his pocket, she backed up a little, and pulled out a small, old, worn, gift box. "I bought this for you when we were in school, but didn't have the nerve to give it to you. I know this must seem corny after all this time, but I never wanted anyone else to have it." She took the box and opened it, and there was a tiny bear holding a heart out with both hands. Sandy stared at it and felt a warm rush of emotion wash over her cold heart. Kenny stood watching her silently with hope in his eyes. They both stayed silent for an awkward moment, then she said "I don't know what to say Kenny." She smiled. It felt strange to have a feeling other than anger or loneliness. "Do you like it? "It's very sweet, I'm sorry Kenny; I'm embarrassed that I don't remember you." "That's alright, I used to sit in the back of the class and daydream about you all day." "So what are you doing now days?" "Besides dream about you I'm an accountant for EBay. I do pretty well for myself, but I need someone to share my good fortune with, and no one else will do. Please let me take you out for breakfast." "Wow Kenny, you're not shy any more. I must admit I am flattered." She opened the door and said "Where are my manners? Come in and have a seat Kenny." She thought it's been a long time since anyone showed her affection. The reader didn't like this new turn of events; so he sent flashes of how her past failed relationships started so sweetly and ended in anguish. Kenny saw her sudden apprehension and hung his head then said "I'm sorry, I never should have come here foolishly hoping to recapture a school-boy's dream. I won't bother you again, it was really good to see you though." He got up from the couch and started for the door. Sandy surprised herself when she grabbed his wrist.

“Wait, this was all so sudden and Kenny you don’t know what I’ve been through. Please forgive me, no one has been kind to me in a long time and when they were it didn’t last long. But still I shouldn’t take it out on you. Let me get ready, sit back down I won’t be long.” Kenny was ecstatic. “I’ll be right here if it takes the rest of my life for you to get ready. A flame of new hope flickered inside Sandy; the cold bitterness was beginning to melt. She would still remain cautious not to give her heart away too soon, but she was willing to take a chance. Besides, if he changed on her like the rest of them had; like she believed would happen, she could change too. The reader didn’t like this at all. If he wanted to read a love story, he would’ve gotten a book from another section. But his faith in Sandy, she had gotten a taste for killing and enjoyed playing cat and mouse; her being the cat of course. Jason Wintergreen felt good, like a lion after eating a fresh kill. Sandy came to his mind and he wondered if she was going to show up angry because he didn’t show up for their date. He had no intention of letting her get away; she would make a pretty pyramid. The vision of her long red hair cascading down the geometric structure gave him a thrill. Well if she doesn’t get here soon, I’ll just have to go and get her; with flowers and win. Yea wine. Sandy and Kenny were enjoying their breakfast and reminiscing long past school-days. “It’s amazing how you know so much about me and I know nothing about you, it’s like you read a book about my life and times at field elementary school. “ “I wanted to be a part of that story, but I was not a popular kid; I didn’t play sports, as you can see I was a scrawny boy and I wasn’t tough or particularly smart. I was one of those invisible kids who was only seen by the bullies.” That sounds a lot like my life to tell you the truth; I’m no runway model, there’s no worn down pathway that leads to my door. And bullies, don’t let me start on the abusive men that I’ve had the misfortune to have given my heart to.” “Well we’ve made it through those terrible times and I believe this is our chance for a little happiness, if you’ll trust just one more time. I promise not to treat you like those other bums. I know it will take time, but all the time I have left in this life I’ll gladly spend building that trust.” “Are you sure you’re not a salesman?” Sandy and Kenny burst into laughter. Jason knocked on Sandy’s door with roses in one hand and a bottle of Korbel under his arm. The wine was spiked, and his apology was rehearsed. His insatiable lust for murder had made him impatient; he couldn’t wait for her to show up, he had come for her. He knocked again, harder this time and listened at the door for any sound of movement, TV, radio, any sign of inhabitation. He beat on the door in angry frustration, pounding with fury he had lost sight of what he was doing. Rose petals lay scattered on the floor as he stomped away cursing to himself. In his anger he thought- I’m not going to knock her out; I want her to feel every cut, every tooth of the saw blade, she should’ve been home. Jason got in his car, slammed the door and sped down the street. Sandy and Kenny were coming from the direction that Jason was going, they going to Sandy’s and Jason was going crazy. They passed each other; neither of them saw that they had just missed meeting. Kenny walked her to her door. They looked at each other; Kenny with a look of disappointment and Sandy with puzzled look. “Are you seeing someone Sandy?” “No, I don’t have a boyfriend. I invited a guy over for drinks last night, but he didn’t show up; maybe that’s where the rose petals came from. Don’t worry about him, if he didn’t care enough show up he can forget about it now.” Sandy couldn’t tell him the whole truth but she wanted to quell his doubt. Kenny checked her door and found it locked. “Are you alright?” She smiled and kissed him and said “Yes I’ll be fine, thank you for a wonderful time. Here’s my number, call me anytime.” The reader slammed the book close in anger, then realized what he’d done and put on a mask of enchantment for those who he had unintentionally gotten attention from. As an afterthought; the reader found that Jason Wintergreen was quite interesting. His interaction with Sandy gave him a limited view into him, enough to pique his curiosity. He browsed through the titles on the bookshelf searching for him. The space between

Winterfurtz and Winterhaus was empty. Another reader had his story! He wondered if the other reader was the cause of Jason's erratic behavior; he couldn't tell that Jason was the Mangler. At least not yet, but he did know if the other reader was like himself; Sandy's story was about to become a duel of the titans. The reader pondered on seeking out the reader that had Jason's story, he wanted to know if he shared his taste for the macabre. It would be a dangerous move because there are laws in the 4th dimension concerning reader conduct and intervention; if a reader turns a good person bad the penalty would be molecular disassembly. Each molecule would be encapsulated in an impenetrable shield and stored in a vault; the 4th dimensional version of prison. The reader casually looked around; there were no readers in the "W" section, so the other reader must be in a reading zone somewhere in the library. The zones were used to keep a kind of private reading discretion; no other reader would know what section the book came from. Certain sections of reading were held in suspicion or were frowned at due to the nature of the people being read about. It was condoned to read anyone's life, but the darker side; murderers, sexual deviants, the occult and the insane rose red flags as the inhabitants of the 4th dimension were an evolved race that were supposed to be benevolent not malevolent. No books can leave the library, in the past mishandling or abuse of the people in the 3rd dimension led to the laws and punishment that govern the conduct of the readers. The zones were so vast that he would never find the reader of Jason Wintergreen unless he were lucky enough to catch him or her putting the book back on the shelf. The reader took Sandy Winstrom with him and sat down in a reading zone, not far from another reader. The other reader glanced up from his book, then continued reading. The reader opened his book. 10am the news blared on the radio, Sandra did her ritualistic stretch and roll. By the time she turned the alarm clock off there was a knock at the door. After putting on a robe she went to the door and asked "Who is it? "Jason, can I please apologize face to face?" "No, I'm not up yet. Was that you that left rose petals at my door? I think that was sweet. Come back later and we can talk, don't think I'm not mad at you." He wanted to kick the door down, but kept his cool. "You're a sweetheart, I'll come back later if you really want me to." "Ok, do that Jason; if you don't, don't come back at all." She hadn't turned into the redhead so it must not have been time. As Jason left the entrance to the building Kenny walked in. They looked at each other in passing wondering if Sandy was the reason for their reason for being there. Kenny noticed the roses and wine in Jason's hands and thought about the rose petals on the floor at Sandy's door. Kenny knocked on the door. "I told you I wasn't up yet Jason!" "It's me, Kenny. I'm sorry if I came by too early. "Oh no! Just a minute Kenny!" Sandy snatched a hair brush and started brushing her hair before opening the door. "Hi Kenny, come in. Jason is my tennis instructor; he's the guy I told you I had invited for drinks, but he stood me up. He came to apologize but I told him to come back later, don't worry I'm gonna keep our relationship professional, he blew-it. "I hope so 'cause I'm selfish, I don't want to share you with anybody." "You don't have anything to worry about. I admit I was thinking about giving him a try, but you came and blew him away; even if he would've shown up you beat him out hands down." Kenny hugged her gently and gave her a peck on the cheek. Kenny walked to the couch and sat down and patted a spot next to him and said "Come have a seat, there's something I need to tell you." Jason was furious. That wench had the nerve to tell me to come back later! Who does she think she is? I'm gonna take my time with her, she'll beg me to kill her before I'm through; He beat on the steering-wheel and let out a howl like an angry beast. Jason needed an outlet, a way to vent his anger. The Mangler had raised its ugly head. The urge to kill boiled in his blood; the dry, parched thirst that would not yield to anything but blood was rubbing his emotions raw. He turned onto the stroll; a street known for prostitution. He cruised slowly looking for a redhead that he could substitute for Sandy until he could trick her into letting him

in. A tall redhead got out of a car up ahead of him, he honked his horn and she looked his way and smiled. He pulled over as she walked back to his car. She leaned into the passenger side window showing her cleavage and said "\$500" He said "Get in" "Show me the money. "Get in!" "Show me \$500 or I walk. "Jason stomped on the gas causing the prostitute to jump back from the car, trip and fall on her butt. "You broke bastard!" The hooker screamed running into the middle of the street; shaking her middle finger after him. He drove to the cheaper end of the stroll, where the junkie whores walked up and down the street. There were more women out, but most of them were scarred or dirty looking, some were shaking or coughing and were missing teeth. The whole area emitted a dismal feel; trash on the street, burned out buildings, the graffiti of neighborhood gangs everywhere, junk cars on flat or on bricks, hungry dogs roaming and the rumble of too loud bass vibrated from an unseen car probably on the next block. It didn't really matter to Jason because he wasn't going to have sex with whoever he chose, at least not conventional sex. He pulled up next to a hooker wearing a red wig, she was one of the few white girls on this end of the stroll. She opened the car door and got in and said "Go to the corner and make a left and turn into the alley" Jason said "I've got a better idea; what do you drink, take or smoke, what do you do?" "She looked at him suspiciously and said "Who are you, the police?" "No, I was going to get whatever it is you like and take you to my place for some fun. "She smiled and said "In that case, take that left but go down two blocks and make a right. You got thirty?" He reached in his pocket and pulled out two twenties; thinking you just sold your life for forty dollars. the police answered a call complaining about a foul odor, upon arrival they knew the cause; the smell of death is unmistakable. What laid beyond the front door was not as familiar but was quickly gaining recognition. The Manger's signature; a pyramid of death. Kenny took Sandy's hand and looked deep into her eyes, she knew by the serious look that whatever he was about to say was going to affect her greatly. She squeezed his hand lightly out of tension as she braced herself for what was coming next. "First let me apologize for deceiving you. Wait, hear me out. To tell the truth, at first I was just doing my job; but as I got to know you over breakfast you became more than JANE PUBLIC. You see I'm really from the 4th dimension; I work for the R.E.P which stands for the Reader Enforcement Police. I'm a detective tracking a serial killer in your dimension that would not have been one had it not been for a deranged reader in my dimension. The news calls him The Mangler; and the only way I can stop the reader is to catch the Mangler in the act. There is a psychic link between the reader and the book being read, that link is like a fingerprint; unique to the reader. But even more important is that the link is not just left lying on the surface like a fingerprint, it's a pathway that I can use to administer justice through. Sandy was silent. Her mind was racing thinking about her situation, so that's what they call the strange man that has been transforming me; a reader. He did say something about "His" dimension being different than mine. Then it hit her like a wrecking ball that either he thinks I'm the Mangler or the Mangler is after me! It was hard enough to accept the transformations, but now my life is in danger and I'm involved in inter-dimensional crime! She couldn't let on that she already had some dealings with the 4th dimension so she asked "What happens to the person or book?" "It depends on what happened in the story, if the book became too corrupt to re-write a redeeming story; which the council would have to find due reason for a re-write, a hearing would have to be brought into session and supporting facts would have to be heard. Then the after effects would have to be weighed because changes in the 3rd dimension, if not carefully considered could be catastrophic.