

ALIEN MISSION

The Peacemaker Series Book 1

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CHAPTER ONE

DESECRATION

The enormous Ram pickup came to an abrupt halt in the dirt parking lot across from the Mission San Pablo.

“We’re here, bro,” said the heavyset young man behind the steering wheel. “Too late to back out now.”

His eyes were dark; his expression set. Then his lips curled into a sneer. “Trust me, this is what you want.”

The teenage boy sitting beside the driver turned and shrugged. “I guess.”

He was tall, broad shouldered with hopelessly troubled eyes. His nose had been broken, turning what would have been a handsome face into one that was merely rugged.

“You’ll be in the gang. You’ll have the respect of the compadres. You gotta go for it.”

The kid just shook his head. “But why *this*, Julio?”

“How bout, because I say so, because you owe me, Victor. I got the old man off your back, remember?”

The teen swallowed hard. He ran a hand through his wildly tangled black hair. His lips felt so dry.

“You served the gang well; you stole for us... time to come on board full time.”

Victor didn’t try to answer this time. He just nodded meekly, pushed the door open, and stepped out into the moonlight.

“It’s all in the back,” Julio called, and Victor turned, reached deep into the pickup, and hauled out a large can of paint and a screwdriver. He knelt beside the truck for a moment, prying the cover from the can. Then he dove back into the truck-bed and came out with two large cans of spray paint. He crammed them both into his belt, lifted the large paint can and marched off toward the mission.

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Victor did not go into the church. Instead he entered the little chapel beside it. It was a shrine to Padre Ignacio who had founded the Mission over two hundred years earlier. In all that time it had never been vandalized.

Victor lowered the paint bucket to the floor and approached the burial vault where Padre Ignacio lie entombed; he crossed himself, said a prayer for his own forgiveness, then turned back to the paint, grabbed the bucket, and set it back down again. Someone was watching him: someone or some thing.

Victor felt that it might be in that dark corner where the vigil light flickered with his movements and cast crazy shadows through the chapel.

“Hiss!”

Victor spun wildly toward the corner where the sound came from.

“Hiss!”

This time from the other corner! Victor jerked around in that direction, and his movement blew out the vigil light.

Darkness.

“Stay away!” came words hidden inside the hissing sound. *“Don’t do this!”*

Victor looked up at the chapel’s ceiling. He could barely make out something dark and terrible oozing out from above the vigil light. It bled across the entire ceiling, swept down over the wall behind the tomb, and draped itself over the burial vault.

“Stay away!”

Victor spun around watching as the blackness spread in the other direction, then down over the doorway blocking his means of escape. It drooled over the stained glass windows at the far end of the chapel, and then began creeping across the floor... *toward him!*

Victor saw it slithering up to his feet, and he jerked away awkwardly kicking the open can of paint as he did, sending it splashing across the floor and onto the front of the vault.

“STAY AWAY!”

Victor panicked, jumped at those words, reached into his belt and grabbed a can of spray paint in each hand. He desperately squiggled out the words; “Get out!” in day-glow green at the

oncoming darkness. Most of it landed on a statue of the Blessed Virgin that Ignacio had brought all the way from Mexico City.

When Victor saw what he had done, he threw the cans at the darkness and charged into the shadowy thing that hung over the doorway. He felt it grab at him, tear at him. It cut his face as he struggled through. Still he was able to clutch the doorway of the chapel and pulled himself out into the brightness of the moonlit night. Somehow the muck didn't stick to him. He was clean.

From inside the truck, Julio saw his little brother and started the engine.

Suddenly a beam of intense white light shot down at Victor and blinded him for a moment. He fell to his knees and felt himself jerked up feet-first into the sky above the church. The building, the truck, and the whole parking lot seemed to jump back violently until he found himself suspended hundreds of feet above them. Victor twisted up to look into the light that had captured him, but its brilliance overwhelmed him.

“GOD ALMIGHTY!” he called.

Almost in response, the light began to shake him violently, spin him, and toss him head over heels. His clothes and shoes tore away. A religious medal, which hung around his neck, began to glow with heat from the light. The chain burned into his neck and then, as he was jerked upright, the medal fell back against his chest and seared the sacred image of the Virgin Mary into his flesh. Victor grabbed the medal and tore it off, burning the same image into the palm of his hand as he threw it out into the night.

Victor let out a desperate cry, and at that moment Julio slammed the truck into gear and raced away from the parking lot leaving his poor younger brother captive.

Victor fell then, plunged directly toward the earth, still caught like an animal in a trap, flailing wildly to escape, but unable to do so.

He slammed into the ground, felt his body buckle, his shoulders crack and everything turn to darkness.

