

# Vizibir

By Scott Dokey

Part One:

Jeremy

## Chapter 1

My name is Jeremy Daniels, and I was eight years old when my father tried to kill me. My mother followed with an attempt of her own a year later. Both attempts failed. Both are dead now.

Unfortunately they are not the only ones. A long line of carnage has followed me throughout my past. Each day the shadows of those departed pound at my soul, sending it into an inescapable turmoil filled with sorrow and despair.

I fear now, that the only way for this pattern of mindless destruction to end is with my own death. Even then, it's not certain that the fires of evil that have engulfed my life will be extinguished, leaving it to continue to spread its fiery tentacles upon the world.

What follows in this journal is a complete account of the horrible events that have brought me to this point in life, teetering on the brink of the dark abyss that waited eagerly to swallow me up and suck me in to my doom.

My only hope is that, by the time I am finished writing this a solution has presented itself that will stop this madness.

If not, God save us all.

It all started when I was six, a young child with a vivid imagination, but also a lonely heart. All I ever wanted was for my parents to act like they cared once in a while, to love me just a little. Sadly, my Dad, being the workaholic that he was, and my Mom, his alcoholic wife, were not the best at showing any kind of compassion to anyone but themselves. So I had to create a world for myself where I could be loved, no matter how manufactured that world was. But a child's innocence can be both a blessing and a curse. While sheltering his soul from the pain and suffering found so readily in this world, it also blinds him to the real

forces of evil that dwell in the darkest of shadows, waiting for an unsuspecting prey.

If I'd have known then what I know now, I would have felt the icy tendrils as they penetrated into the core of my soul. I could have stopped the evil force before its transformation, while it was still in its infancy, and sent it back into the depths of Hell where it was spawned. But how can a child, who's only experience with monsters are those he's watched on 'Scooby Do', even know that real evil actually exists?

I certainly didn't.

Sometimes the forces of evil work in ways that are open for the entire world to see, their atrocities laid bare before God and man; men like Hitler and Stalin, who personified evil in its purist form. Usually though, the evil works just under the surface of our reality, spreading its icy tentacles into all that is good. At first, it feels like nothing more than a slight tickle, only mildly irritating, but before long it becomes a maddening itch that can never be scratched.

That's how it started with me,

A warm Saturday morning in June had me quickly devouring my bowl of Cheerio's in anticipation of the special times that were ahead. It was a day I had really been looking forward to. You see, today my dad had promised to spend some special time with me: first we were going to the zoo, where I hadn't been since I was two; then we would have a picnic lunch at the park before heading to my favorite ice cream parlor. To anyone else this might not seem like such a big deal, not worthy of my excitement or enthusiasm, but to me the chance to spend some time alone with my dad was the greatest thing in the world.

You see, my dad never seemed to have much time for me, or for my mom. That was probably best for her, considering how mean and bitter she got when she was drunk, as was the case most of the time. As a big time attorney his job

consumed nearly every waking second of his life. I can't begin to count the number of times when promises were broken, plans were cancelled, trips cut short, my heart broken in two. It might sound like I was a whiney child, but many sad nights were spent crying myself to sleep over another day of feeling alone in this world. As a child, all I wanted was to be loved-by anyone.

I knew as soon as the phone rang that my heart was about to be crushed once more. I listened with a familiar uneasiness coiling up in my stomach as he talked in his distinct business tone to the person on the other end. The Saturday morning cartoons, which I had been watching with complete enrapture a minute ago, now held no importance to me.

Then dad hung up the phone and spoke the words I knew were coming.

"Sorry, kiddo, I'm afraid I have to go in to the office for a while today. Something's just come up in this case I'm working on, so I guess we'll have to take a rain check on that picnic and ice cream."

For a few minutes I tried to be brave, tried to hold back the tears. But then the dam burst and I ran to my room crying feebly like I had so many times before.

That's when it all began.

## Chapter 2

A soft sound, like the flutter of tiny wings, drifted to my ears, breaking through the sadness and jolting my curiosity. I looked up from tear-soaked pillow to behold a soft, green point of light hovering a few inches from my face.

My first thought was that a lost firefly had somehow found its way into my room, searching helplessly for its way back to the night sky. Then I realized two things: first, it was still daylight, a long time before insects took over the outside world, and second, the thing floating before me had no visible body to support the glowing orb. It hung there in the air before me for a minute before it suddenly disappeared, but right before it did I swear I heard it whisper my name.

Quickly I ran to my mom to tell her what I had seen. Unfortunately the condition I found her in was one of a drunken stupor, an empty bottle of whisky on the end table next to the couch where she laid, the television blaring away and her cloudy eyes trying to focus on whatever show was playing. A cigarette dangled in her fingers, threatening to drop a pile of ashes onto the floor. Barely able to lift her head from the arm of the couch, she looked at me in a confused way while I recreated my close encounter for her.

Her words were slurred when she spoke. “What in the hell you talking about, boy? You going crazy, seeing things? If it’s attention you’re after, I’ll give you attention! How ‘bout I beat your ass and really give you something to think about?”

In the span of a minute my feelings of wonder and excitement were ripped to shreds and replaced with sorrow and despair. And so I ran back to my room, my harbor of refuge from this hurtful world I had been forced to live in. I buried my head back into my tear stained pillow and cried yet again.

As if on cue, the soft buzzing drifted to my ears once more, lifting me from my saddened state and bringing a smile back to my lips. This time the creature hovering before me seemed to shine a little brighter, buzz a little louder, feel a little warmer. It darted back and forth in front of me a few times, like a crazed happy-go-lucky firefly. It flitted around, tickling the end of my nose, brushing against my cheek, and nuzzling up to my ear. A soft voice then whispered into my ear a single word, a name.

“Vizibir.”

A few minutes later a soft knock sounded on my bedroom door and immediately my little alien friend vanished into thin air. My door creaked open slowly and my dad peaked his head in.

“I’ve got to go, kiddo. Hopefully this will only take a few hours and I’ll be home before you know it.” These were hollow words that I’d heard numerous times before.

“Since your mom’s decided to drink her breakfast today, I’ve asked your Aunt Sophie to come over and watch you until I get back,” he continued.

My aunt stepped from the hallway to stand beside my dad. She was a young lady with short, blond hair, and bright blue eyes. She resembled a younger version of my mother, only she had a clear head and a sense of self-pride, and she was sober. A very pixie-like demeanor radiated from her at all times, even when she was trying to be the one in charge.

“Hey, Jeremy,” she said. “How’s it going?”

“Okay, I guess,” I lied.

My dad turned to his sister-in-law, “You have my number in case you need to reach me?”

“Yep, sure do.”

She looked over at me. “Don’t worry, sweetie, we’re going to have lots of fun today. I figured we’d watch a couple of movies, maybe make some popcorn, order a pizza?”

I had my doubts, about the fun, I mean. But I remember my eyes lighting up, just a little. The buttery smell, the salty flavor, even the popping sound echoing through the kitchen was a grand weakness of mine that I still carry with me to this day. The very thought of that melted butter flowing down my throat as I crunched on a handful of the magic corn had me thinking that maybe this day would turn out all right after all.

I couldn't have been more mistaken.

After a few minutes I heard the front door close and my dad's car backing out of the garage. As I walked out of my bedroom toward the family room, I noticed that my mom no longer occupied the couch in the living room. I assumed that Dad had moved her to her bed before her sister arrived.

I was a little more enthusiastic, even anxious, as I sat down in front of the TV, waiting for the pizza party to start. My stomach started to rumble a little, trying to coax the pizza delivery guy through some arcane hunger communication to get here as fast as possible.

Sophie walked over to me carrying a couple of movies in her hands.

“Okay, kiddo, which would you prefer, ‘Toy Story’ or ‘The Lion King’?”

“Those movies are for babies!” I said. “I’m six-and-a-half now. I want something with some action, like the ‘Power Rangers’.”

She giggled at me. “Six-and-a-half now, is it? When did you get so big?”

After rifling through our large collection DVD's, which filled one large bookshelf in the corner of the family room, she finally pulled one out.

“If its ‘Power Rangers’ you want, then it's ‘Power Rangers’ you'll get.”

A few minutes later I was watching my favorites show, eating my favorite food, and thinking that for a child it doesn't get any better than this. Then I quickly realized that it was my aunt, and not my mom that I was enjoying this moment with. Suddenly it wasn't quite so fantastic anymore. I looked at my Aunt Sophie for a second, taking in her care-free, fun-loving essence, and thought that Mom was probably like that at one time. Somewhere along the road the pressures of life, marriage, motherhood, took their toll and zapped all of the joy from her spirit.

The ring of the doorbell snapped me from my moment of wistful thinking, and immediately I smelled the delicious scent of pepperoni pizza wafting through the house. My stomach communication trick had worked pretty quickly.

A second later I heard Sophie's voice shouting from the living room; "I said, take your hands off me, now!"

Quickly I jumped from the couch and ran out of the family room toward my aunt's cry. As I rounded the hallway, I saw her struggling in the doorway, trying to escape the evil delivery guy's grasp. Even though he wore the uniform of one of the most important people in this world, the look in his eyes and the tone in his voice was more fitting to that of an abusive lover or father.

"Listen, bitch," he said. "I want my stuff back, and I want it now!"

Sophie yelled back, "You'll get your stuff back, you jerk, when I'm fucking ready to give it back, and not before!"

The not-so-nice delivery guy responded by slapping her hard across the face. I remember the distinctly the look on her face as she slammed backward against the wall, a mixture of shock and rage. Immediately I ran forward and kicked him as hard as a six-and-a-half year old could kick.

This guy's automatic response must have to lash out, because once again his hand swung around, this time catching me on the side of the head and sending me sprawling to the floor. To this day I can still feel the sting of his hand as it struck my ear with a resounding blow. I remember it so distinctly not because of some terrible physical scar resulting from the attack, but because that one action was the deciding moment in time that set in motion the terrible chain of events that were to follow.

As I lay there on the floor crying frantically, blood seeping from a cut on the back of my jaw where his nails had caught my skin, I heard the now all too familiar buzzing echoing in my ear, saw the mysterious green light fluttering before me, bigger than before. Immediately it shot forward and struck the attacker full-force in the middle of the chest. The impact sent him flying backward into the stone pillar

that supported the roof covering the front porch. His body slumped to the ground, leaving a streak of blood behind to mark where his head had hit.

Somehow, at this time, my mom had managed to arouse herself from her drunken stupor in response to Sophie's outcry, and peeked her head into the living room.

"Oh my god," she cried. "What in the hell happened here?"

By this time Sophie was sitting up, propped against the wall. "I'm not sure. It all happened so fast."

She turned to me. "I saw it. I saw the light, right after he hit you. It flew forward and hit him right in the chest, sending him crashing against the pillar."

My mother, in all her splendor, just looked at me, disgust written all over her face. "What have you done, Jeremy?"

## Chapter 4

No matter how hard I tried, no matter how hard I pleaded, I couldn't make them understand, couldn't make them believe. In their eyes I was just a little kid with an overactive imagination.

Even though the evidence supported my story, that I had nothing directly to do with the terrible accident Mr. Not-So-Nice-Pizza-Delivery-Man had suffered earlier, my parents refused to even entertain the idea that some benevolent force had come to my rescue and thrown Sophie's ex-boyfriend against the wall. My only saving grace that day was that the dirt bag had only suffered a mild concussion from the impact. It was of little consequence to them that there a long cut running down my jaw where his nails had caught my flesh and ripped it open, or the deep bruise that had already shown its presence on my forehead where it had hit the floor when I fell. More important to them was the notion that their son was seeing and talking to imaginary creatures, a sure sign that there was something seriously wrong with his mental wiring.

For a few minutes I did as most kids my age when their parents didn't believe them: I threw a temper tantrum, complete with stomping feet, pounding fist, and yelling at the top of my lungs that no one loved me. Then I ran to the only place of sanctuary I had in this world-my room.

My pillow opened up to my tears once more, absorbing them as it had done so many times before. As never before, the feeling of loneliness engulfed me, sending me spiraling quickly into the bowels of despair, with no hope for rescue. I realized then that I had no one to turn to, no one to comfort me, no one to believe in me.

Again the buzzing sounded in my ears, and I looked up from my tear-stained pillow at the green, glowing form before me. Immediately it flew against my

cheek, sending a warm tingle through my face. Quickly I brushed it away, as if a pesky fly or mosquito were tormenting me.

“Leave me alone,” I cried.

Instead of disappearing back into the ether from whence it came, it decided to fly down and tickle me repeatedly in the stomach. I tried hard to resist, but the assault was virtually non-stop.

“You don’t understand,” I said. “Nobody believes me. They all think I’m crazy; loony in the head.”

Vizibir flew softly against my cheek again and whispered his name in my ear, only this time it was followed by one other word: “friend”.

I stopped moving and looked at the green, glowing orb floating before me. It looked so warm and friendly, so gentle and innocent/ I couldn’t help but feel a calming peace flowing through me. It had been a long time since I had someone call me friend.

Abruptly Vizibir flew from me and circled my bedroom like a whirlwind. I thought about the Wizard of Oz, and thought for a second that I would be sucked up into some incredible tornado and deposited roughly onto some magically land, complete with munchkins, flying monkeys, and an ugly green wicked witch. Or maybe I would be catapulted out into the farthest reaches of outer space, where I would die a silent death.

Just as suddenly as it started, the whirlwind stopped, and I looked around in amazement. What used to be a young boys room in total disarray-complete with toys and clothes and small bits of food strewn about-had been transformed into a wondrous magical kingdom that any child would love. The corner of my room was now a giant castle made out of a crazy combination of wooden blocks, Lego’s, and Lincoln Logs. One of my red socks served as the castle’s flag, waiving high above the main tower. Army men were strategically placed around the mighty structure in

anticipation of the savage attack being planned by the dinosaur horde nearby. G.I. Joe and a couple of the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers waited in the wings to give their support. A ship full of scurvy pirates went on with their looting and pillaging of an unknown vessel without any knowledge of the other conflict in close proximity.

When Vizibir once again whispered “friend” into my ear, my heavy heart was lifted up and replaced with one full of joy and happiness. My wonder-filled eyes failed to notice at that time that Vizibir had grown to twice his former size.

## Chapter 5

I learned very quickly that my relationship with Vizibir needed to be kept very secret. Under no circumstances did I want a repeat of my parents ridicule again. It was bad enough that they ignored me most of the time. I certainly didn't want the few times that they actually paid me any attention to be filled with accusations and diagnoses they had contrived from watching some Dr. Phil wannabe.

So, for the next few months, while my supernatural friend continued to amaze me any chance he could get, I kept his secret buried where nobody would find it. Vizibir had an uncanny knack for rescuing me from the monster of despair whenever it reared its ugly head from the shadows in my mind, always finding a way to lift my soul up into a state of joy and bliss. His vocabulary grew as we interacted more and more, and before long he was able to communicate in full sentences. Each night I waited anxiously for the time when the lights in my room would turn off and my parents would retire their selfish little lives to their selfish little bedroom, barely acknowledging that I existed. But then the soft green glow would spread throughout the room, signaling Vizibir's entrance and the beginning of my nightly journey into the land of make-believe. I never knew what awaited me, whether it was a kingdom filled with dragons and wizards or one with aliens and spaceships, but I knew that it would be marvelous. And as I began my story each night Vizibir would nestle himself gently into my bed beside me, spreading his warmth around me like a magical blanket engulfing me, and listened intently.

One day, though, before I was able to start into my story Vizibir spoke up, and I became the listener for once. His story started the same way as mine, with the familiar 'Once upon a time', but once he began the essence of the story the words hit my heart like a sledgehammer. Immediately I was transported back into that dark place in my mind where a lonely little boy sought desperately to find love and acceptance in a cruel world.

It started like this:

“Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there lived a sad little boy name Jack. Now, Jack wasn’t sad because he was poor, or ugly, or short, or fat. In fact, Jack was just the opposite; a smart and handsome young boy who lived in an expensive house, with every toy at his disposal a child could want. The problem with Jack was-the reason he was so miserable-was that his parents didn’t love him.”

At this point I sat up in bed and told him that I didn’t want to hear anymore. The room grew silent for a minute before Vizibir spoke up again.

“Don’t worry, Jeremy,” he said in a calming whisper. “Everything will be fine in the end.” He followed this with the two words I had heard far too often from my parent, and no longer believed: “I promise.”

But since I was a child and longed for any kind of acceptance, I laid back on my bed and let my mysterious friend continue his story:

“One day Jack was outside playing in the woods near his house. The sun was shining brightly, and the birds were singing their happy songs. A gentle breeze stirred the leaves gathered on the dirt path beneath his feet.

“He followed this path as it wound through the woods to his normal destination: a small cave nestled in the hills behind the lake. Almost everyday he ventured hereto play make-believe house with a make-believe family, only in his family the mother and father showered their son with an abundance of love.

“Unknown to Jack, a group of three big ruffians was making their way through the woods causing trouble. They threw rocks at baby animals, kicked over small trees, and squashed innocent bugs galore. Then they stumbled upon Jack and his little hidden cave.

“Well, boys,” said the biggest of the bullies. “What do we have here?”

“It looks like a little sissy boy to me,” one of the other boys shouted.

The third one chuckled, "I think he's actually playing house here."

The three boys laughed while Jack stood silent. A second later the leader of the group walked over to a large rock that sat in the corner of the cave and picked up the teddy bear that had been posing as the child in Jack's pretend family.

"Leave that alone," Jack cried as he lunged forward to recapture his stuffed friend.

Unfortunately the other two boys grabbed hold of Jack before he could get close. "Awe, look at the little baby playing with his baby toys!"

An evil smile crossed the leader bullies' lips as he grabbed the bear's arms, one in each hand. Jack made one last scramble to escape the other two's clutches, but a swift kick across his shins sent him sprawling to the ground.

At this point I was laying with the blanket pulled up to my chin, anxious and nervous for the end of the story. I already said that I didn't believe in promises anymore.

Vizibir continued:

"Watch this," the leader said, and then pulled hard, ripping the arms from the defenseless teddy.

Jack cried out, "No!"

Just then, when it looked like Jack himself would become the next target, a bright light filled the cave, followed by a sudden forceful gust of wind that lifted the bullies off the ground. The three of them hung suspended in mid-air for a moment, a look of astonishment on each of their faces, before they were flung them away from Jack. When the dust settled and the bright light subsided enough so Jack could look around he saw the three bullies lying on the ground a few yards in front of him, each one grunting and groaning from the aerial assault. But that wasn't what shocked him the most-not the mysterious whirlwind that had picked them up like they were nothing more than dead leaves, not the blinding light that

had appeared out of nowhere and would have given the sun a run for its money—none of these freaked him out more than the sight of his exact double standing behind the bodies, a soft green glow surrounding him, a sharp smile on his face.

The double immediately lurched forward, landing only inches from Jack, and looked curiously at him for a moment. Then he spun quickly around, his eyes glowing blood-red, and he raised his arm and pointed at the stuffed-animal killer. The bully-leader rose up into the air and flew against the cavern wall like a ragdoll. A sharp crack echoed through the chamber as the boy's head smacked solid against the stone. Then he was lying on the ground in a pool of blood, dead.”

At this point I pulled the blanket completely over my head in an attempt to vanquish the images that were assaulting my young mind. Again Vizibir sought to comfort me with his soothing voice.

“There’s nothing to be scared of,” he said.

It was easy for him to say. I was six. He was whatever. But I inched the blankets down just a little, down to my chin so at least the story monster wouldn't be able to get at my neck and chop off my head. I listened very timidly as he continued his story.

“Jack's double gave a little wink toward Jack before reaching down and grabbing one of the other boys. He held the boy up with one arm so that he was inches from the double's face. Then the doppelganger opened his mouth wide and sucked in the boy's soul, the dead flesh caving in upon itself as the life left its body. When he was done he let the body fall in a heap on the cavern floor.

That left just one more, the last of the bullies. The double could have let this one go, sure that he had learned his lesson that it was not okay to prey upon those that were weaker, but instead he felt he had responsibility to Jack to finish the job and make sure that Jack would never be harmed again. So, he raised his hand once more and the last one left flew up and sailed to the back of the cave to be impaled

through the heart on a long and sharp stalactite that jutted up from the corner of the cavern floor. Blood gurgled from his mouth for a second and then his body went limp.

The supernatural rescuer walked up to Jack, smiling, and spoke to him, just one word, "Friend."

Then he disappeared just as quickly as he had arrived. The end.

There was silence for a few moments while, I believe, Vizibir waited for some kind of comment from me on his storytelling. Even though the story had kind of a happy ending, with Jack escaping the clutches of the evil bullies, I sensed for the first time something very powerful and very destructive in Vizibir. The graphic depictions of the boys and their deaths sent a chill through my veins, and I had an inkling then that a future full of storm clouds lay ahead of me.

Just then something even more startling happened, something that shook me to the very core. Standing immediately before me in my room was a full-size apparition bathed in his familiar green glow, his smiling face staring back at me, waiting for approval from his audience.

The face was mine.

## Chapter 6

Up to this point, even though Vizibir had displayed glimpses of his awesome power and hinted at the darkness inside him, he had not done anything so terrible that I would fear for my life, or the lives of those close to me. Sure, he had hurt Sophie's ex-boyfriend, but that was only in my defense, acting as my savior when he had tried to hurt me.

That all changed when I started the third grade and a girl named Becky came into my life.

As I look back now I see how things could have been so drastically different; how I could have reacted differently and changed the end result. Maybe I could have just stayed in that lonely place in my mind and accepted things the way they were? Would that have been enough? I think it might have. But then again hindsight is 20/20.

Until the time of her death Vizibir had not shown the slightest bit of jealousy. But then again, I had never had a girlfriend before. Out of fear, I have not had one since.

It started at my eighth birthday party. Becky Montgomery and her family had just moved into the house across the street, and when I saw her chasing a toad around her front yard I knew that I had found something that I had been searching for a long time. She was a kindred spirit, someone I could play with, talk to, a friend.

Gathering every ounce of courage I possessed, I crossed the street and proceeded to capture the brown jumping creature for her. It was to be my token of admiration to her. Unfortunately it responded to its entrapment by peeing in my hand. This caused Becky to burst out laughing hysterically, and almost sent me running back home in embarrassment. Then something incredible happened: as I

watched her standing there, her blond curly hair blowing in the gentle breeze, her bright blue eyes sparkling in the sun, the happiness exuding from her, I felt a warmth spread through me that I had never felt before.

“Hi, my name’s Becky,” she said with a smile.

“I’m Jeremy,” I responded as I offered the toad to her awkwardly.

Graciously she accepted the squirmy gift from me, and in doing so set the foundation for a wonderful friendship that I had hoped then would last a longtime.

Nearly everyday after that found us together doing something fun or crazy. It was as if this spunky little girl across the street had been sent down from Heaven to rescue me from my doldrums. Some days we would head down to the small pond a couple of blocks away and watch the fish, or ducks, or squirrels, or whatever wildlife happened to be wandering our way. Others we would ride our bikes all over the block until we ended up at the park, where the jungle gym would serve as the magic fortress that enslaved the princess. Of course I was the handsome prince who rescued her. And sometimes we would venture to a secret little hideout we had built in the woods in the back of our house. It was there that I received my first kiss. It was there that I felt the first tingle of love flow through my veins.

Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, would forever be engraved in my soul as one of the best and worst days of my life. It was my birthday, the one special day of the year when I actually felt like I was part of a real family. Dad actually stayed away from work, mostly, that is, if you don’t count the multitude of phone calls he received on his cell phone. Mom even did her best to stay sober, limiting herself to a little Irish Cream in her coffee, and only smoking a half a pack of cigarettes.

Three o’clock finally arrived and I jumped excitedly when the doorbell rang, announcing my first guest. I couldn’t have been any happier than when I saw Becky standing in my doorway, a large gift in her hand, and an even larger smile on her face.

Politely I ushered her in, trying to impress her in a gentlemanly manner. As she walked past me her arm brushed against me and a jolt of electricity shot through us. At first I thought it was just static coming from the carpet in the foyer. Now I know it was just a precursor of the horror to come.

“Ouch!” Becky cried out.

When I glanced down at her I was shocked to see a bright red mark on her forearm. Then I heard a soft giggle in my ear, and felt a soft tickle across my cheek. My heart sank immediately, sweat started to cross my brow, and I glanced nervously around for a second before leading her down the hall toward the dining room where most of the festivities were taking place. As Becky placed her gift on the floor in the corner of the room with the others I happened to glance up into the mirror above the buffet. I almost cried out when I saw the reflection staring back at me with a wicked smirk on his face. He turned and blew a kiss in Becky’s direction before vanishing.

Quickly I yanked Becky out of the room toward the backyard. Even though the threat of rain had moved the party inside, the heavens had yet to open up, allowing us the chance to escape the threat I knew was coming. Soon, very soon.

“Where do you think you’re going, young man?” my mom called out as she placed the last candle on my birthday cake.

“We’re just going outside to play for a few minutes,” I replied nervously, hoping that her normally grumpy demeanor would stay passive for the moment.

I got lucky, if you can call it that. “Just don’t get dirty,” she said.

No sooner had the words left her mouth and we were out the door. Becky was more than a little shocked at the abruptness of our departure.

“What in the world is going on?” she asked as soon as we were outside.

Not wanting to divulge the true nature of my anxiety I quickly made something up. “I just wanted to spend a couple of minutes with you alone before everyone else showed up.”

She leaned forward and looked into my eyes. “That is so sweet,” she said before planting her lips on mine. For a brief second I felt like I was in Heaven. Then I heard the buzzing in my ears and felt the terror rising in my stomach. When I opened my eyes I saw Vizibir standing behind her as big as life. The fury in his eyes clearly portrayed the hatred burning in his heart. Immediately I pushed away from her, causing her to stumble backward, a look of shock on her face.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I thought you felt the same way I did.” Tears streamed down her face, each one tugging violently at my heart.

I tried to reach for her but she pulled away. “I do feel the same way,” I pleaded. “I really do. You have to believe me.”

“You have a funny way of showing it,” she said as she pushed past me and ran back home.

I learned later that she had spent the rest of the day locked in her bedroom, crying her eyes out. The only thing that prevented me from doing the same thing was the arrival of my other guests. Instead of hiding away in the sanctuary of my room wallowing in despair, I had to put on a false front for everyone and pretend that everything was fine. When my dad came up to me and asked where Becky was, I lied and told him she had gone home sick. The suspicious look in his eyes told me that he didn’t quite believe my little white lie. The sick feeling in the pit of my stomach told me that the worst was yet to come.