

BRINGING BACK THE UNORDINARY

By **Sharkchild**

The movie man found me at an awards banquet. It was for my swim team, and it was the last place I expected to meet someone who would change my life. When his greeting occurred, all of the awards and speeches had been given and made, and things had just begun to wind down. Loose conversations were forming around the dining room and some people were already making their way out of the country club. I had been caught in an in-between moment of solitude, casually meandering through the patches of bodies, trying to look intent as to give my uniqueness purpose.

Of course, when the movie man first spoke, I did not notice, but by the third time he said my name, I had located him and noticed his need of my attention. He sat at a table with his chair positioned out. A group of people swelled on the side, talking and laughing very loudly. I had never seen him at any of my team's swim meets or at any other team function. A large, brown beard covered his face and though he was dressed up, he looked untidy.

He stuck out his hand and I shook it.

"Mr. Masselton," he said, "so glad to meet you. I am privileged to have caught your attention. I have an opportunity you might be interested in. Throughout the course of the next few months, I will be traveling to different oceans around the world to shoot some scenes for a movie that is currently in production. For these scenes, I will need someone of your swimming ability. You will be paid handsomely and you will not have to worry about any expenses, whether travel or trivial."

I was about to interrupt him, but he stopped me.

"Please do not answer me now. Just think about it and then if you would like to join me, you can call me, but I must know your answer by the end of the month." He handed me a worn business card that he pulled from an even more worn wallet. "Goodnight, Mr. Masselton, and congratulations on the great year."

While I walked away from the movie man, I glanced down at the card he gave me. Upon it was written:

VISIONARY OF THE UNORDINARY

On the back of the card was a handwritten phone number. Other than those two items, the card was empty; there was not even a name of the gentleman of whom I had spoken with. I thought about throwing out the card then and there, but I restrained myself.

It was two weeks later before I called the number upon the movie man's card, just before the end of the month. The thought of calling the number had not even crossed my mind until then—until I realized that I wanted no part of the proverbial cage that awaited everyone who dreamed after the already attained. I wanted no chains or obligations, to money or any other visible or invisible entity; I wanted sweet, concrete freedom—the kind I could only visualize myself acquiring if I went venturing around the world. To leave it all behind, I had to call the number, and so I did.

I met up with the movie man a couple days after I made the call. He waited for me at a local park in the back of a black car with tinted windows. A chauffeur sat comfortably at the helm. As I approached the car, the back window rolled down and the voice of the movie man met me:

"Mr. Masselton, so good to see you! Please join me inside. The chauffeur will take your luggage."

Not but a few hours after entering the car, we pulled up in front of a large house. It rested on a road directly next to a grade that steeped down to the ocean. The waves crashed calmly against the shores. And that, mixed with the pale light of the day's end, gave me a euphoric attention to detail. I saw a subtle breeze manipulating, ever so minutely, the wild grass that lined the terrain, and I saw flies fluttering to and fro amongst the opaque and surreal air that seemed to exist as something seductively tangible. Even the opening and closing of the car doors sounded crisp as they echoed faintly thereafter our exit.

"Stay here," the movie man said. "This shouldn't take long."

I watched on as the movie man made his way cautiously up the entrance path of the house and entered into the place without even needing to knock. In one of the ground-level windows, I briefly caught a figure of a man glancing upon me, but he quickly disappeared as the movie man went inside.

Soon after, there were many strange sounds: slamming of doors, yelling, laughing. And then, after a brief silence, a man dressed entirely in black with three long spikes attached in decoration to his shoulder-length hair barged out the door—without pause—in a sprint towards the car and myself. I stood in terror as the foreign adrenaline man crashed into the side of the car, ramming his fist fiercely through the driver's side window, catching the chauffeur's throat before pulling his arm back out and the chauffeur's head along with it. The driver's head slid silently into the shards of glass that rigidly danced to greet it.

I could not bear to watch more than a second and began running down the incline to the shore. The adrenaline man ran after me as if he were a machine. I could sense him gaining on me like those final moments before death wearily accepted the mysterious beyond. It was only seconds before he harshly tackled me and we tumbled horribly down the rest of the hill. His arms clenched around my body, hugging so dispassionately the breath out of me. Even as rocks plunged against his head and body his composure remained.

Only by the grace of our landing at the bottom of the incline did I have the ability to escape. When the angle of the grade was abruptly halted by flat ground, and we rolled into it, the force and direction that the adrenaline man's initial arm hit the surface caused it to break severely. There were no signs of pain from him, but there was a great reduction in the strength holding me down. It was then that I managed to writhe myself free. And then I did all I could: I ran into the water and swam as hard and as far away from the shore as possible, utilizing that one talent even the machine of a man could not match.

I swam a great distance from land and—once I was what I considered to be a safe distance from it—stopped. I let my limbs go limp and my breathing calm. I let the water hold me as I floated deep into the night.

At that time when the sun should have risen to signify the morning of a new day, my entire perspective of reality reversed, savagely. Rather than the sun rising from the east, it came from where it had just left—the west. Twilight

once again took control of the air, sending its warm glow across the scope of the seen as the sun rose backwards from beyond the ocean horizon. It was a very radical and intoxicating moment. My senses heightened and time slowed. The water I was in felt new, as if born that very instant into existence. The air felt clean and invigorating with each breath I took.

I did not know what to think or how to react. I doubted that anyone other than myself had ever witnessed such an act of miraculous and horrible power. Awe quelled my thoughts and silenced my soul.

When the initial overwhelming had passed, I began to swim back to the shore since there were no reasons left to hold me to the tides of the ocean. Though I had spent the evening floating out at sea, there was a hidden energy flowing through each of my strokes. I moved smoothly and swiftly against the forces of the water, making my way to the sand without any significant physical exertion.

The sand felt exhilarating beneath my fingers. I grabbed hold of it just for the sake of being able to, and then let it wash away out of my hands as I put them under the surface of the water. The wet clothes I wore should have been a burden, but they were not; I barely even noticed I had them on. My shoes joyfully squeaked with their containment of sea. For a time, I gazed at the glistening shore, each granule of sand reflecting the strange sun's surreal rays.

Perhaps it was the disillusionment of my stupor, but I only noticed the lady hanging upside-down from her legs several moments later. She hung from a swing set further up on the sand, her legs tied with rope. Her hair was pitch black and her skin was quite fair, even more so as it shimmered in the glow of twilight. Her shirt was pulled down by gravity, revealing much of her stomach, and shorts covered a small portion of her legs.

When I did detect her, she was very well conscious and staring at me.

"How did you get there?" I asked.

"I told them they could do it, so it's actually my own fault," the hanging lady replied. "I didn't realize I wouldn't be able to get out of it!"

"Whose they?"

The lady gave me a peculiar face in return of my question. "Oh, my friends," she said. "They have a lot of fun doing things like this."

I walked up to the hanging lady and let her down by climbing up on one of the swings.

"Thank you," she said after she half-fell, half-landed on the ground.

"You're welcome. Have you ever seen the sun do this before?"

"Do what?"

"Rise backwards the way it came."

"No—that's a strange question. Why were you swimming with your clothes on?" the hanging lady asked this time.

"Huh? Oh, it's kind of a long story," I said.

The hanging lady saw my reluctance in answering the question and changed the subject. "Why don't you come home with me? I'll introduce you to my friends."

"Okay," I replied.

Something was very alluring about the hanging lady, even beyond her beautiful appearance. She was playful and very childlike in her mannerisms. She quickly became a constant for me in the midst of the very unusual course of events.

“Come on then!” she proclaimed, grabbing my hand. The touch tingled my nerves and brought goosebumps to my flesh.

We walked for about ten minutes before coming upon a large house. It took me only but a split second to recognize it—it was the same house that I ran from. However, there were many things different about it. For one, there was a chainlink fence that outstretched widely around it. Another difference was the large lawn that covered a wide region in front of it. There was also a kind of party or gathering going on atop the lawn. A couple dozen young people were enjoying each other’s company and drinking from blue cups.

“Are those your friends?” I asked the hanging lady, gesturing to the party.

“No, no, definitely not; they’ll be coming soon though.

As we walked alongside the fence surrounding the house, something very terrifying came into view. Lying uniform in lines stretching across the expanse of a small, dirt hill on the side of the house was a horde of dead, male lions. They were laid upon their sides, legs extended neatly below them and jaws pried open. Some were further rotting than others, and flies frenzied in orgasmic glee about them. I could not count them all, but they instilled a raw, gripping fear.

“Why are all of those there?” I sputtered to the hanging lady.

“As art of course,” she replied.

Nothing but questions—that was all I had. I was in a place I did not even come close to understanding. The landscape was the same, but the sun and everything else was so much different. I did not want to go any further and I wondered if the adrenaline man would rush from the front door of the house towards me, but the hanging lady beside me caused me not to leave, and, instead, move forward.

“Here we are,” she said as we stopped in front of a portion of the fence not far from the front of the house. I blinked not one time and then the hanging lady was on the other side of the fence by no means of an opening or door, walking towards the house without me. When she left, I instantly became horrified and desperately vulnerable. As strange as the reality, so became my own control over my emotions and will. I could not even muster my voice to shout to her to wait for me. What I did do, out of new instinct, was climb up the fence. As if safety awaited me there, I just sat at the top, unable to move. The fence stood approximately ten feet in the air.

As I remained perched upon the fence, numerous zebra-like beasts of small size began walking out from around the house. They walked towards the party of people and soon walked amongst them. The people in the party did not even give them notice, as if they did not know they were there.

Each of the zebra-like beasts had four legs upon which they walked and were roughly the size of children. Their breathing and sounds were very humanlike. Once they were within the crowd of people on the lawn, they actually began to speak. Each of them spoke, in chaos of different times and cadences, these words: “Can only bite one.” Some said it once and some said it repeatedly. “Can only bite once.” Amongst this chant of unnerving words, the zebra-like things began to bite the people, one bite per person from each of the beasts. They moved slowly in a drudging rotation, missing not one person with their bites. The people began to bleed severely, their clothes becoming animated by moving blood, and eventually fainted before most assuredly dying.

I turned away from the disgusting scene and caught the man I had previously seen in the window of the house there once again. The window was open and he was talking to the hanging lady through it. I somehow caught a fragment of what they said.

“You must be careful,” I heard the man say.

And I heard the hanging lady reply with, “I aligned our auras, and they match.”

The next thing I knew, the hanging lady was at my feet, shaking the fence.

“Come on, get down from there,” she said. “Come on. Can only bite once.”

I held on to those links with all of the strength I had, pressing the metal deep into my skin.

On the ground beside the hanging girl, the zebra-like beasts gathered, speaking their brilliant words: “Can only bite once. Can only bite once.”

“Come on down,” again spoke the hanging girl. “Come see my friends. Can only bite once.”

I closed my eyes tightly to escape the terror I felt if even by the slightest bit...

...And when I opened my eyes again, I was being pulled out of the ocean onto a boat. I was gasping for air and my skin burned.

“Anyone else would have drowned,” came the voice of the movie man. “He was the perfect choice.”

“Yes, it could not have gone any smoother,” came the voice of the man from behind the house window.

“We must hurry now and move forward with the surgery.”

“Yes, call up the doctor—the skin needs to be mended immediately.”

“She bit pretty hard.”

“They all bit pretty hard; they had to—they can only bite once and it’s a long journey.”

“When will we tell him what happened?”

“We won’t have to. She will tell him with the principalities that came with her.”