

## Life After

*“OPEN FIRE!”* Bullets flew across the air and plasma bolts burned the earth, scorching it to a dark black. Men screamed as they were torn limb from limb by the brutal creatures. I strained my eyes in the darkness to see what was attacking us in such a bloody fray. Black objects dashed around the group, picking out soldiers and killing them at will. I started shooting at the things with random determination. As I fired, I noticed one glare right at me; its vibrant red eyes glowed luminously amongst all the others. It stopped, and charged at me, pushing everyone else aside and pounced on me, knocking me to the ground. My final sight was the beast bringing its claws up high and driving them right down into my chest.

Another nightmare, this was my second tonight. It always repeated itself, always the same setting, always the same carnage. Why wouldn't it leave me alone? Why did it keep coming back? When would it end?

My encounters with the Virsons were not pretty ones. I saw my best friend get ripped to shreds like a piece of paper, and then my son; he foolishly joined the army despite my concerns, and was burned into ash by the largest of them all, a Vernon. All he managed to do while dying was to shoot out one of its eyes.

I still remember when my brother was killed on my wife's birthday. A Valasyve crushed his car while he was travelling to my house to celebrate. These attacks were frequent, but nothing serious, according to the government. The military tried to stop them, but all attempts were futile. No one knew where they came from, or why they attacked us.

Armies attempted to annihilate them, but none were successful. Yet one day, there was silence, no attacks, nothing. It seemed we prevailed in defeating the invading aliens. However, one year later, and I mean exactly one year later, they returned.

Messages were received on every radio transmitter on the earth. The world was under attack by the Virson armies. Fortunately for humans, they gave us enough time to replenish our supplies. Perhaps they were just testing our willpower the first time, or it was just practice for the full frontal assault. Thasticers, Virsons, Vircos, Vernons, and Valasyves attacked all the major cities in the world. Civilisations were destroyed, billions were killed, and half the world became a desolate wasteland.

Something must have been triggering my dreams; they would always be the same, everyone dying in the same way, the same brutality, I needed help. I decided to see a therapist and find out if something in my sub-conscious activated all these nightmares. I skipped breakfast; I didn't even say goodbye to my wife, the first time in years, which is how serious this had become. I walked down my front porch, opened the garage, and slowly opened the door to my car. I drove out slowly, cautiously in case of anything uncertain. I knew that would never happen, but I still did it.

While I drove to the therapist, I noticed everyone looking at me as I drove. People everywhere would stop what they were doing to stare at me. Gardeners stopped their raking to look up at my car; children ceased their games of hopscotch and rollerblading and stared without conscience towards me, right into my eyes. When I pulled up to a red light, the people in the car next to me stared at me with soulless eyes, as if no human were in control of their minds. They continued to stare even after the light turned green. I turned on the radio to avert my attention from everyone looking at me with their gazing eyes.

I reached the office without noticing anyone else staring at me. I walked up to the front desk, and looked at the woman sitting in the wheelie chair. The receptionist had red hair, pushed up into a bun, and a purple scarf wrapped around her neck. She wore crimson lipstick, and poorly managed green eyeliner. The receptionist was taking a call and took no notice of me. I stood there feeling stupid while the receptionist talked on for five minutes.

“So darlin’, what’s your name?” The receptionist finally said to me with a cigarette-charred voice, “Say, have I met you before?”

“Err, I don’t think so,” I replied stunned, “I’m Jerry Harrison, I haven’t got a scheduled time, is it still possible to see the therapist?”

“Yes it is actually, you will have to wait for that child over there to go in, then it will be your turn, hon.”

“And how long will that take?” I replied, feeling anxiety welling up in the pit of my stomach

“Dunno, depends how long the possessed kid take.”

I pretended not to hear that answer and took a seat next to the magazine pile. There was nothing that intrigued me in *TIME*, so I decided to look around. The only thing other than the apparent possessed kid was the receptionist desk, a plant that was in need of a good watering, and a picture of the President. I turned to look at the kid; he seemed like a normal little boy, he wore a blue baseball cap, red and white striped t-shirt, shorts with pictures of yachts on them, and bright yellow shoes. He could never have a demon in him. He turned to me, a freckly face that seemed full of life, brown ruffled hair, and big blue eyes.

“Hi,” I said in a friendly voice.

“I’ve been waiting for you, *Jerry*,” the kid replied in a deep voice, he then smiled an evil grin; his teeth were all sharp-pointed fangs

I turned away startled, and began reading the magazine again, then put it down after five minutes. I decided to see whether or not I could sleep. I didn’t care if the nightmares plagued me again; I thought that maybe I could describe them more vividly if I had just witnessed them. I leaned back against the wall and closed my eyes. I heard the therapist come out of his office and say he was ready for the kid.

“Goodbye, I’ll be seeing *you* later, Jerry,” I heard the kid say

After half an hour I’d fallen asleep, but this time I didn’t dream the same dream that always came to me while sleeping. Instead I dreamt I was still in the therapist’s office, but everything was blurry and white. Two figures started talking. I couldn’t make them out, but I recognised the receptionist’s voice when they started talking, about *me*.