

Vicki

AWKWARD

Two bodies pressed close and quivered in unison. One ragged breath fell into step with the other. Limbs tightened, eyes darted and pulses raced. Rexona and Dior melded with other musky odours as tender flesh was crushed and grazed. I let out a moan and felt weight shift as he moved his hand and clapped it over my mouth. A drop of sweat snaked down my neck and under my collar and I wondered if it was mine or his. What the hell! Sharing body fluids with a gawky stranger was not what I had planned this evening. Either was hiding in a cramped storage cupboard while whatever it was sniffed around the hallway on the other side of the door in search of the only ones who knew of its existence.

Only fifteen minutes earlier I'd been heading home from work. Aiming for the exit leading to the basement car park I had only thoughts of pizza and a relaxing evening in front of the TV on my mind, when I discovered I wasn't the only one left in the facility. A 'woohoo' followed by a crash proved this fact. Intrigued, I tiptoed in the direction of the sounds and furtively opened a door I'd never noticed before labeled '*Authorised Personnel Only*'. I calmly expected to find a geek at his computer rejoicing exuberantly that he'd unraveled a scientific conundrum, or at very least just received a rare friend acceptance on Facebook. What I didn't expect to witness was a birth. An alien birth.

The huge black membranous sack pulsating on the stainless steel work bench had truly been something to behold. Bravely, or maybe stupidly, I stepped closer, my shoes crunching on shards of broken glass. I was vaguely aware of the odour of formaldehyde and shelves lined with jars of all shapes and sizes. The sack suddenly began to tear open, leaking fowl smelling luminous amniotic fluid. When sharp talons pierced holes from within and ripped open a wide yawning gash I knew things were not going to bode well. What slithered out and plummeted to the tiled floor could only be described as a paradox. Similar to a newborn fawn, with wide blinking eyes and button nose, it made comical attempts to stand on weak, shaky legs like a cute Disney creature. I was torn between giggling like a child and screaming like a 'b' grade horror movie starlet. While

Bambi had only four legs and soft downy fur, this absurdity had six gangly limbs and a pelt made up of a million glistening needle like barbs. I lifted a foot to begin my retreat when a voice whispered from behind me.

'Don't move,' it gasped. My shoulder was squeezed painfully.

'What is it?' I squeaked a little too loudly.

Large cloudy eyes lifted and peered in our direction. They blinked once. Then the unearthly thing opened its mouth, rolled out a licorice strap tongue and bellowed like a cow on steroids.

That was when I was grabbed and ushered behind the nearest door which happened to belong to a broom closet. Hence our confined space.

It was now unnervingly quiet on the other side of the closet door. In the semi darkness I struggled to read the name badge right in front of my eyes.

'Has it gone...ahh...Heathcliff?'

'I..pfft...don't know ' he answered through a mouthful of my hair.

Something hard was jabbing into my thigh. I hoped it was a broom handle. 'Did you lock the door?'

'Lock? Why?' Heathcliff chuckled like a mocking squirrel, 'Geez its not a velociraptor, it can't open the'

The doorknob creaked and turned. First one way, then the next.

'Shit,' we exclaimed as one.

The door was suddenly flung open and fluorescent lighting poured in. We both let out suppressed screams.

'Well, well, what have we here?' said a familiar, accusing voice.

I squinted against the glare. The silhouette took the form of Darren from IT. Being in Admin, he enjoyed making my life hell. 'Turn it off, then turn it back on again,' was his answer to everything, no matter the question. Wanker.

'A little bit of after-hours hanky panky, I see', he whinnied. 'I wasn't aware you knew each other.'

'We don't!' we cried together.

Darren arched an eyebrow. 'Well that's even more interesting. What is this, an experiment to see if a beauty and a geek really can get it on? I'm sure Management would

like to know the outcome.' He grinned, while Heathcliff and I stared, open-mouthed. 'What, scared are you?'

We nodded. Not because of what Darren had just said but because of what we could see looming over his shoulder. A long, slithering, black tongue was waving in the air above Darren's head. As it whipped around his neck and tugged him backwards I reached out and pulled the door shut.

Screams, bellows, gurgles and God-awful crunching and sucking noises wafted through the gap under the door. Heathcliff groaned and pressed against me more tightly. My stomach lurched and my mind spun. I had so many questions I wanted him to answer. Like, what the hell is going on; where did that thing come from; what were you going to do with it; will we ever get out alive; why would your parents name you after a dark, brooding romance hero when you were obviously going to turn into a more ganglier, more quint-eyed version of Harry Potter; and, what is your hand doing beneath my blouse? God help me!