

# **BLACK KNIGHT**

Sometimes it takes a while  
to find your way back home

Matt Grandis

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Dan pulled open the trapdoor and motioned for them to get inside. Juno quickly went down the narrow wooden stairs into a surprisingly spacious room. There was a couch and a television set. The walls were stacked with canned food and bottled water. Mounted on the wall behind the television set was a now empty weapons rack.

“Damn it, you’re an honest to God prepper.”

Dan shut the trapdoor behind him and locked it with a sturdy bolt.

“Well, go ahead and make jokes. One of us was right.”

MJ shrugged.

“You have to admit, he’s got a point, kiddo.”

Juno turned around to inspect the room. There was a door leading to another room. She went over and opened it. It was a small but fully featured bathroom.

“Huh. I guess we could actually survive down here,” Juno said.

As she turned around, she noticed a poster on the wall behind the stairs.

“Oh come *on*, man.”

“What? It’s important to keep your spirits up when you’re sitting out the apocalypse,” Dan said.

MJ walked over and looked at the poster.

“Huh,” he said, cocking his head. Then he pointed at the naked woman stretching seductively on a motorcycle and looked at Juno.

“Don’t you think she kinda looks ...”

“Stop!” Juno interjected. “Don’t say it. I don’t even want to think about it. You’re disgusting, Dan.”

“This ... has already been here when I bought this place!” Dan exclaimed.

Juno squinted at the text on the corner of the poster.

“It’s 1996. That’s Miss March 1992. You’ve had this store for ten years or so.”

A scratching noise came from the trapdoor.

“Don’t worry,” Dan said. “They won’t be getting through. We’re safe down here.”

“Yeah, safe but also trapped,” Juno said.

She grabbed her walkie-talkie and pushed the speak button.

“Kate? Can you hear me?”

“Yeaah, about that,” Dan said sheepishly. “This room is shielded.”

“Of course it is,” Juno said sighing, putting the walkie-talkie back on her belt. “Well, they know where we are. They’ll send help.”

MJ dropped on the couch.

“I guess there’s nothing for us to do but wait then. You guys have any idea how to pass the time?”

“I do,” Juno said. “How about we play a game of *I Spy With My Little Eye* ... something a pervert would have in his basement.”

Dan threw up his hands.

“Come on now!”

“I’m just glad this room doesn’t have black light.”

“Actually ...,” Dan said, looking up at a dark purple light bulb on the ceiling.

Juno stared at him in disbelief, shaking her head.

“Why? Why would you have black light in your basement?”

“It’s for mood lighting.”

Juno closed her eyes.

“You know, I take back my idea about this game. It’s stupid. I don’t think there’s any way to lose. *Everything* around here is sick.”

MJ pointed at a can on the shelf.

“Is there really a whole chicken in that can? That sounds so disgusting, I really wanna try it.”

“Those are emergency rations. We’re not going to eat something just for the fun of it,” Dan said sternly.

“Go ahead and eat it if you want, MJ,” Juno said.

Dan stared at her.

“Excuse me? This is still *my* ...,” he began.

Juno shot him a look that instantly shut him up. She pointed at the poster.

“That right there makes up for everything I ever did to you. And then some.”

“Really, I’m telling you, it’s just a ... coincidence. And I don’t even think she looks at all like ...”

“Ah ah ah!” Juno said, raising her hand. “Don’t say it.”

“In case we’re still playing this game, I’m sure I found the most disgusting thing down here,” MJ said and showed the open can to Juno. “No, I don’t wanna eat this after all.”

Dan rolled his eyes and Juno scrunched up her nose.

“Ew.”

Shots rang up from upstairs. MJ dropped the can in surprise, spilling a mix of fat, bones and half-liquefied meat on the floor. There was hissing and scrambling and more shots. Muffled voices. Someone called out. A lot more gunfire. Then silence. Juno, MJ and Dan remained motionless for a while. Then Kate’s voice called out, “Juno, are you here?”

Juno pulled back the latch and pushed the trapdoor open. Kate kneeled in front of the trapdoor, all worry dropping from her face and turning into pure happiness. Behind her stood one of the deputies and another man, both carrying hunting rifles.

“Juno! Are you okay?” Kate exclaimed.

“We’re all fine. I mean, some emotional scars, I guess. But otherwise, we’re fine.”

Kate glanced over to one of the bodies.

“Yeah, this is a lot to take in ...”

“What?” Juno said. “No, not because of them. You should see this cabinet of perversities down here.”

“Oh come on!” Dan’s voice came from the basement.

“She’s right though,” MJ’s called. “Come on down here, Kate. Smell this. This is amazingly disgusting.”

“Stop opening all my emergency rations!” Dan yelled.

Kate put her hand on her mouth and laughed, visibly relaxing and relief flooding her face. Juno winked at her and stepped down the ladder again.

“Do come on down, Kate. You gotta see this.”

Kate followed her down and looked around.

“Huh,” she said. “You know, Dan ... let them laugh, I’m actually impressed. This is completely off the grid, I guess?”

“Well, thank you, Kate,” Dan said, throwing a look at Juno and MJ. “It’s good to have a professional opinion. Yes, this is completely off the grid. There’s a generator behind that wall panel over there. And I’ve got an air-filtration system installed. The bathroom runs on rain water. Purified, of course.”

“Not bad. Not bad at all,” Kate said. “But we should get going, back to town hall. Come on guys, outside.”

Everyone went up the stairs. As Juno stepped away from the trapdoor, she heard Kate yelp.

“What? What is it, Kate?”

She kneeled down in front of the trapdoor and looked at Kate who looked back up at her.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I just ...”

Kate pointed behind the stairs at the poster.

“God, for a moment I thought that was you.”

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