

## Prologue

Something was wrong. Clark could feel it in his gut. And yet, nothing appeared to be off as he drove up to the security gate. With a quick scan of his keycard, the gate opened and admitted Clark up the hill. Slowly, the building came into view. It wasn't very large, with only two stories and about 200 feet long, and not very flashy. But, that was the point. Clark parked the car and got out. Something was still bothering him. He lingered for a moment, puzzled, and then began his walk to the building. He glanced up towards his office on the second floor. Another long day of paperwork, Clark thought. Suddenly, he stopped in his tracks. Looking up again, he spotted what caught his eye. Inside his office, inside every room in fact, yellow lights rotated quickly within their casings, flashing light across the walls. Clark frowned. Maybe paperwork wasn't the largest of his problems today, he thought. Returning his gaze to the building entrance ahead of him, he noticed the man from the office next to his, Bob, running towards him.

"We've moved to a Code 4 alarm!" Bob shouts.

"Hold on, what happened?" Clark replied.

"Sometime around 1am last night, the alarm was triggered. Security checked the whole building, but only found blood trails and a hole in the glass. All personnel are being sent out to find it," Bob explained.

"Wait, what are you talking about?"

"The project lab's been working on for the past year. They escaped, Clark. The creatures escaped."

## Act 1:

BZZT BZZT BZZT. James bolted upright. He looked around frantically, searching the room for danger. With a sigh, he relaxed. Rubbing his eyes, James lurched out of bed and turned off his alarm clock. These late nights scrambling to finish homework really needed to stop, he told himself. Throwing on a sweatshirt, he headed downstairs to prepare for school.

"Morning James," his father, Tom, bellowed from the kitchen.

It's too early for such loud noises, James thought.

"Good morning, dad," he mumbled while pouring a cup of coffee.

"After school, would you mind helping me in the barn? Carl's out sick and the animals have been acting up lately, so I need an extra hand."

"Yeah, sure."

"Great. So, how'd you sleep?"

"Dad- "

"Your mother and I slept great. Heard some weird noise around 3am but - "

"Dad, can we talk about this later?"

Mike Kastan

“Sure thing.”

James grabbed a Pop-tart and made his way back to his room. Quickly, he made his way through the rest of his morning routine. Twenty minutes later, he ran back downstairs, snagging his backpack off the table. After petting the dog, Ripley, James went outside to board the approaching Town of Romulus school bus. With a nod of his head, he greeted his friend as he sat down in the seat next to him.

“Do you think Toscano’s going to chew me out for not finishing the essays?” Sean asked.

“Nah, she’s too laid back. Sullivan, however, wouldn’t let you hear the end of it,” James replied.

“You guys haven’t seen any of our cows, have you?”

“You lost a cow? How do you lose an animal that large?”

“We don’t know. It was there yesterday but when Pa went to go milk this morning, we were down by two,” Tom responded.

“Alright, we’ll keep an eye out.”

“Thanks. The Johnsons are reporting that they lost some sheep earlier in the week. And everyone is missing chicken. Maybe there is a fox on the loose.”

“I don’t know, man. You don’t lose animals like that without a trace. Something strange is going on.”

Romulus was the third town Clark had checked this week. Since the breakout three months ago, they’d had little luck. The creatures were stealthy and had left no trace of what direction they headed.<sup>1</sup> The best that the organization could do was split up to the nearby towns and search for clues. So far, the closest they’d gotten was a potential sighting in Waterloo, with an old woman claiming to have seen “bigfoot” clambering through the woods behind her house. But, with no video or physical evidence, the report amounted to nothing more than any other monster sighting: a wild goose chase. The higher ups were beginning to panic. Actually, that would be an understatement. The higher ups had begun to panic after the first week. What they were now could be better referred to as utter calamity. The best hope was that the creatures had also gotten unlucky and died quietly somewhere in the woods. However, the more likely scenario was that they’d found somewhere out of the view of prying eyes to set up home.<sup>2</sup> With nothing in the area that could hope to be a predator to it, the beasts’ only problem would be their own food source.<sup>3</sup>

Clark pulled into a local diner. While my peers may try going to the town office first, or some other official establishment, Clark thought, there is no better place to get information than a restaurant. And lunch, his stomach growled in reply. Clark took a second to look around. It was a nice, quaint little town, he thought. It would be a pity if the creatures had ended up here. He headed inside and seated himself at a table.

“What can I get you?” a waitress said, approaching the table.

Clark flashed a warm smile. It was helpful to seem friendly while gathering information.

“I’ll take whatever you recommend. I’m starving!” he replied.

“Chicken sandwich it is then. Anything else?”

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“Well, a side of information would be nice. This is my first time in town and I’m not sure what to do.”

“No problem! We are a pretty small town, but right down the road is the Seneca Army Depot. The Army no longer uses it but the current host for a population of white deer. That would have to be thing to see here. Otherwise its mostly just farms.”

“Alright, one more question. Have you heard about anything unusual happening in town lately?”

“Well, some people have been losing animals in the night. Like, the animals just up and disappear. No trace of anything. We’ve been hearing strange noise at night too. Some people would almost describe them as.....the sounds a gorilla would make I guess. But nothing too out of the ordinary. It’s not like we’ve been seeing bigfoot.”

“Ok, thank you.”

“I’ll go get your food started”

The waitress went back into the kitchen. It was nothing concrete, Clark thought, but this was the best lead he’d seen so far. The sounds were certainly the right type. But still, this simply meant that the creatures were likely somewhere nearby. It gave no hint as to where they were actually hiding. It also didn’t give him enough proof to warrant calling it in. The higher ups would want physical evidence before they sent in a team. Clark shook his head. The little town had no idea what they were potentially dealing with.

James couldn’t shake the feeling that he was being watched. It began the second he got home off the bus. He turned away from the seeds he was sorting and examined the woods. Their property was right on the border of the Army Depot and the woods transitioned into it after about 30 feet. Slowly, he scanned the perimeter fence. He wasn’t sure what he was expecting, but he certainly didn’t find it. The only animal he saw was a single squirrel darting through the trees. He turned back to his work.

“How’s it coming along?” Tom asked, peaking his head out of the barn.

“It’s slow but it’s getting there.”

“I can’t tell you how much I appreciate your help. It means a lot to me.”

“No problem, Dad. Glad to help.”

Tom smiled.

“Hey, when you’re done with that, Ripley was barking at the woods near the fence line, but I can’t find her now. Would you mind going out and looking for her?”

“Sure, soon as I finish up,” James replied.

James hurried through the final seeds packets and ran into the house to grab some dog treats. Emerging from the house, he studied the border of the Army Depot again. Whatever was watching him, it was gone now, he assessed. With a quick jog, he approached where Ripley had been seen last. Now that he had gotten closer, he could see a hole large enough that he could crawl through dug under the fence. What have you done now, Ripley, he thought. Carefully, he navigated his way through the hole. Standing up on the other side, he took a quick look around. With a final glance behind him, James headed into the Army Depot.

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Originally, Clark thought the Army Depot would be a waste of time, a tourist attraction that offered nothing but a chance to see unique deer. But, for once in his life, he was very glad he was wrong.

“One of our tour buses hit it an hour ago. It ran out of the bushes carrying the dog that’s recovering over there” Hammond said, pointing to the corner of the room. “Thankfully, she appears to only to be knocked out. Can’t say the same for animal in front of us.”

Clark examined the corpse laid out on the table ahead of them. It was about five feet long from the feet to the top of it’s head. It resembled a chimpanzee, but the size of a gorilla.<sup>4</sup> It had large, aggressive fangs and an abnormal amount of muscle, clearly the result of the genetic engineering that the lab had done.<sup>5</sup> The picture Clark had been given didn’t do the creature justice as to just how intimidating it really was. He shuddered imagining what seeing a live one in person would be like.

“How many people saw it?” Clark asked.

“Only the driver and myself. I stopped guiding the tour to take care of this, but the driver made sure things kept moving. Didn’t want to cause a panic,” Hammond replied. “You know, I was surprised when you showed up so quickly. It was probably only some fifteen minutes between my call and your arrival.”

“Well, that would be because I’m not with your sheriff’s office, or whoever you called. I’m with a more...private organization. We’ve actually been looking for this for quite some time. Is this the first one of these creatures that you’ve seen here?”

“Yes. I’m friends with pretty much all the farmers and no one has mentioned seeing anything quite like this. However, this would explain the weird noises everyone has been hearing. Say, are these carnivorous?”

“Yes, almost exclusively. They’d rather starve than eat plant matter. Why?”

“Well, in addition to farm animals disappearing, we’ve also had a drastic decrease in our deer population here in the preserve. We went from a population of almost three hundred to nearly 12. We haven’t seen a deer on the tour in probably two weeks. If these have been here in the Depot, it could explain all of it. The real question is where are they all hiding? You think someone would have some something like this be-“

BOOM. The door flew open. A man that Clark assumed must be the bus driver stood in the doorway with a panicked look on his face.

“Hammond, call an ambulance!” he shouted. “James Scott has been attacked!”

Act 2:

Enough is enough, Tom thought. James had been killed and nothing was being done. If it plans were at least being put in place, he may have thought differently. Yet, the town could agree on nothing. So far, Tom had sat silently in the town meeting, letting other speak for him. After all, it was probably best to let those with level heads make the decisions. But his boy had been killed and nothing was being done. Slowly, Tom stood up.

“Excuse me,” he said.

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The bickering continued, unchanged. Something about not even being sure what attacked his boy.

He cleared his throat. "EXCUSE ME!" he yelled.

Silence.

"Don't you people get it?! A child is dead now..... We have a clear and present danger. We have an idea were the creatures live. And we've seen what they can do. AND YOU PEOPLE DO NOTHING BUT BICKER! Meanwhile those...things roam free, still able to attack whenever they want! OUR CHILDREN ARE STILL IN DANGER! AND YOU DO NOTHING! Well, enough is enough. I'm going into that preserve. And I'm going to kill done every last one of them. Who's with me?!"

Silence once again fell on hall. Then, one person stood up. And another. And another, until finally everyone was standing up.

"Grab your guns. We're going hunting."

"Sir, whatever response team you've been organizing," Clark said into the phone, "you need to mobilize them immediately. The father of the victim has worked up a mob. There is no stopping them now. These people are going to get slaughtered."

"Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do to speed up the process on this end," the voice on the other side of the line said. "The units we have prepared have entered a radio silence stage in preparation for infiltration. We'll do what we can, but it looks like you're on your own."

Clark sighed. "Alright. Thank you sir. I'll report in when I have more news."

The line went dead. Clark looked at the shotgun in his open trunk. They're going to need every gun they can get, he thought.

The townspeople were supposed to meet up an hour after the meeting, but by the half an hour mark, a sizable crowd had already gathered. Clark counted thirty six people, all armed. At the front of the group, he could see the father from the townhall surveying the group. Lightening lit up night sky. Clark could almost smell the rain on the breeze. Quickly, he jogged over to the father.

"Are you the one in charge?" he asked.

"I suppose so," Tom replied.

"Sir, you need to stop this. This is not going to end the way you think. You have no idea how many of these creatures there are or even where they are hiding."

"We know they're in the Depot and that's enough for me. The sooner we take these things out, the safer the town will be."

"You don't understand, these things may be reproducing at a ridiculous speed and--"

"More the reason to exterminate them now before they can become an even bigger threat."

"Please, just wait a few more--"

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“No, the time is now,” he said, turning to the crowd. “Okay people, the plan is to split into groups of six and search through the Depot one bit at a time. First five people here will go with me, next six will go together, and so on. Check-in in half an hour. Let’s move.”

Clark fell back to the rear of the first group. He looked around. Hopefully the boys in the lab were wrong, he thought. But they rarely were. With the information that he’d given them, they’re models predicted a far larger number of beasts than they had originally estimated. According to the scientists, the Army Depot and its deer population represented a worst case scenario. In addition to having no predators, the beasts now had a plentiful food source that they had no competition for.<sup>6</sup> While the beasts already had accelerated reproduction rates, now there was nothing to hold back their population.<sup>7</sup> In all likelihood, these people were completely outnumbered.

Clark felt a rain drop hit his head. He stopped and looked up. With even the weather against them, this situation was literally a perfect storm. Tom lead their group to their assigned portion of the Depot while the other groups headed to theirs. Ahead of them stretched a long road, spanning most of the northern part of the Depot. The group stared into the darkness, unmoving. Without a word, Tom raised his hand waved it forwards. Slowly, the group proceeded down the road. Ahead of Clark, the five townspeople gripped their weapons tightly. All of them constantly looked around, never staring at the same spot for more than a few seconds. Thunder crackled overhead and, as if on cue, rain came pouring down. Step by step, the group made its way down the path. Clark double checked that the safety on his gun was disengaged. Peering around, all he could see was black silhouettes, only illuminated by the occasional flash of lightening. Suddenly, there was a loud crash to Clark’s left. The group snapped to face the source of the sound. Slowly, they lowered their weapons as they saw one of the townspeople pushing himself back up from the ground. After recovering from the misstep, they continued their search. At the end of the road, Tom signaled for the group to stop. He looked down at his wrist.

“They should have checked in by now,” he muttered.

A gunshot rang out in the distance. Clark’s heart jumped. Another gunshot. The group turned in the direction of the shots, muscles tense. Minutes passed as they stood on edge, listening. But, only the sound of falling rain filled the air.

Tom was the first one to move. Breaking into a run, he headed in the direction of the gunfire. Approaching the location of the noise, Tom slowed to a walk and pointed his gun ahead of him. Frantically, he scanned the darkness, looking for any sign of movement. Lightening flashed overhead. Tom’s eyes went wide. In the brief flash of light, he saw the bloodbath that laid ahead of him. Cautiously he approached the scene as the rest of the group caught up behind him. His foot hit something metallic. Reaching down, Tom picked up a hunting rifle. The barrel was still warm. Running his hand down the gun, he felt the blood that covered most of the rifle. Putting the gun down again, he pulled the phone from his pocket. Panicking, Tom called the leader of another group. No response. He tried another group. No response. Again, he called another group. No response. Hands shaking, he put the phone back in his pocket. What have I done, he thought. Lightening flashed, showing the grisly scene once more. Taking a deep breath, he reminded himself that the creatures were still out there. Kneeling down, he stared at the ground ahead of him. The other group members continued scanning their surroundings. Again, the lightening flashed. Tom quickly took note of the direction of the blood trail. Standing up, he

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motioned to follow him. Ahead of them, a bunker loomed in the darkness. Quickly, the group gathered around the door. After glancing at the group members, Tom lifted the handle on the door.

The smell was the first thing to hit Clark. He struggled to maintain his composure, trying hard not to puke. The stench of rotting meat was overwhelming. Slowly, the door creaked open on its hinges. With a bang, the door stopped as it hit the wall. The group peered into the bunker, straining their eyes to see anything. Clark adjusted his grip on the shotgun. Suddenly, the hair on back of his neck stood up. Inside the bunker, he could hear the slow rhythmic sound of something breathing. Multiple somethings. The group stood motionless. Clark's heart raced. Lightening flashed, illuminating the bunker. Clark's eyes went wide he saw the contents of the bunker: numerous beasts looked back at him black fur covered in blood. As if given a signal, the entire collection of creatures lunged toward the doorway. At the same time, the entire group opened fire, unloading their weapons into the bunker. As the ring of gunfire faded, Clark listened. Thankfully, the bunker was silent. That was too easy, Clark thought. The group looked at each other in silence. With a jerk of his head, Tom motioned to head back to the entrance. Slowly, walked through the trees. Lightening flashed again, revealing the entrance in the distance. Clark frowned. Something darted across the path ahead of them. A scream shattered the silence. Whipping around to see the source of the sound, Clark glimpsed one of the group members getting dragged into the shadows. The screaming was abruptly cut off with a sickening thud.<sup>8</sup> Tom raised his shotgun and fired the remaining rounds into the darkness where the creature was last seen. With each shot, Clark noticed more and more eyes reflecting the flashes back at them. Evidently, Clark thought, the scientists were right.<sup>9</sup>

CLICK CLICK. Tom pumped the shotgun again and pulled the trigger again. CLICK. Slowly, he lowered the gun. The shotgun shook in his hands. As the ringing in his ears stopped, he could hear the sound of the beasts breathing. The sound of the rain almost completely masked it. Behind him, the group remained still. Suddenly, a guttural howl rang out from the shadows. All at once, air was filled with the sound of galloping footsteps.

“RUN!” Tom cried.

He broke into a full sprint, heading in the only direction he didn't hear stampeding creatures. Behind him, he could hear desperate gunfire and furious footsteps as the group followed him. Tom dropped his gun. It would only slow him down. He quickly glanced back and saw several group members firing off shots before dropping their own weapons and breaking into full sprints. As thunder crackled, Tom heard another group member cry out, only to be quickly silenced. Ahead of them, the lightening illuminated the old artillery magazine. Busting open the door to the closest one, he ushered the survivors inside. As the final one, Clark, ran through the door, he slammed it shut and braced himself against it. Complete darkness swallowed the room. From farther in, he heard a metallic clank.

“Grab that!” someone shouted.

BAM! The door shuddered under the impact. BAM! The door shuddered again. BAM! This time the door was pushed back. Tom slammed himself back into the door, closing it. Outside, he heard a cacophony of feral noises. Suddenly, a scraping sound mixed with the sound of hasty

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footsteps filled the air. As it got closer, Tom heard someone tell him to get away from the door. With a bang, whatever was being pushed slammed against the door.

“Artillery shell container,” a voice explained. “Should provide more resistance than any one of us.”

BAM! The container shook. BAM! BAM!! To Tom’s horror, the door cracked open.<sup>10</sup> Leaping forward, Tom and Clark threw themselves against the container and closed the door again. BAM! BAM! BAM! Each strike was stronger than the one before and the door had almost opened with the last impact. For what felt like an eternity, Tom waited for the next hit. Silence enveloped the room. In his head, Tom counted to thirty. Cautiously, he took his pressure off the container. Perhaps they’ve moved on, he thought.

BAM! Desperately, he put all his weight back into the barricade. BAM! BAM!!! The door flew open, throwing him backwards onto the ground.

Light flooded into the room.

“Go, go, go!” A voice shouted from outside the magazine.

Tom’s eyes went wide. One by one, he watched as soldiers poured into the room. Stopping in front of him, one of the soldiers lifted a hand to his ear.

“Delta Six to Overlord, we have the survivors. Area is secure,” he reported. “I repeat, area is secure.”

Act 3:

The funeral for James Scott was held the following weekend. Although Tom had invited him to attend, Clark watched from a distance. He couldn’t help but feel responsible. After all, it was his organization that caused the problem in the first place. After seeing the burial, Tom got in his car and headed back to his office. As he drove through town, he saw people going about their daily routines. It’s almost as if nothing happened, he thought. On the sidewalk, he spotted a pair of fellow agents going door to door. As per standard procedure, his organization left a small group inside the town to ensure that word never got out. Lucrative deals were made to guarantee silence. In the distance, Clark could see helicopters hovering over the Depot. The mess there was probably going to be finished within the day. The organization liked to get things done fast. From what he’d been told, they were flying in white deer too, replacing some of the ones that had been consumed. Similarly, the surrounding farms were being compensated for whatever they lost.

In his office, Clark finished up his report. Only four people who went into the Depot made it out alive, he summarized. The creatures had massacred thirty-two people and nearly finished off any resistance.<sup>11</sup> It had been a miracle the SEAL team had made it when they did. If action hadn’t been taken then and there, it was possible that the creatures could have spread and become an



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‘invasive species’. With the genetic modifications they possess, there was nothing natural that could have stopped them. Thankfully, they’re population never quite got large enough.

As a result, he typed, the project is deemed too dangerous. Recommendation: project termination.

He saved the document and sent it in. Grabbing his coat, Clark headed down to his car. He opened the door and threw his stuff in. Looking up, he gazed at his office. He stared at it, deep in thought for a couple seconds and then got in the car. After scanning his keycard, the gate opened and he drove down the hill. In his mirror, the building went out of view. He stopped at the road and took one last look over his shoulder. Satisfied, he turned back and pulled onto the road. For the first time in a while, he thought, nothing is wrong.

Epilogue:

“The report from Clark looks promising. The subjects appear to have act exactly as intended. Highly aggressive and incredibly stealthy,” the board member stated.

“Agreed. The test was a complete success. The intentional release may have seemed stupid when it was proposed, but it certainly paid off,” another said.

“On that note I propose that we move forward with the plans. Our... donors just guaranteed the money. Who is in favor?” the member at the head of the table asked.

Everyone nodded in agreement.

“Proceed to phase 2.”

The Science:

1. Transport, the first stage of the TEST invasion stages. Wherever they originally came from (likely Africa given the ape as the base animal), the animals have been released into a foreign environment.
2. Establishment, the second stage of the TEST invasion stages. The animals establish a sustainable population in a location. A variety of factors including high fecundity, absence of predators, and ample prey allow them to successfully establish. Since the creatures would have also been healthy specimens, they would have had relatively high propagule pressure as well, further increasing the chance of establishment.
3. Natural Enemy Release Hypothesis. With no predators to prey on them, the animals have an advantage and are more likely to establish. The creatures have nothing that can prey on them, which gives them the advantage over native animals.
4. Chimpanzees are the only apes to hunt and eat meat. They are known to hunt down monkeys. Although the teeth are useful, the method they prefer for killing is blunt force trauma.
5. CRISPR-Cas9 and other modern techniques allow for gene editing. Theoretically this could be used to insert genes from other species into any desired species. In this case, it allowed the genes for size and musculature from the eastern gorilla, the enhanced canines of a dog, and a carnivorous appetite of any number of species. The reproductive system has also been genetically modified to allow much faster reproduction, at around 22 days.
6. Colonization-based saturation. If a niche is unfilled, invasive animals are likely to fill it and establish. The Depot has no predators, leaving that niche open for the creatures to completely take advantage of.
7. Fecundity. The ability to produce an abundance of new offspring. Higher fecundity leads to higher likelihood of establishment. The creatures have modified reproductive systems which allow for faster reproduction/higher fecundity, making them more likely to establish.
8. Blunt force trauma, the favorite method of chimps.
9. Undisturbed, with plentiful food, no predators, and accelerated reproduction, the creatures have amassed a generous number. Definitely enough to overwhelm a bunch of unprepared farmers. They've had three months to do nothing but set up a stable population. They've successfully established.

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10. Fun fact: gorillas have six times the strength of humans. The creatures have that strength. Given time, that door is coming down. Navy SEALs on the other hand use breaching charges.
11. Spread and Impact, the final two stages of the TEST invasion stages. Although the creatures were wiped out before they could spread, they certainly had an impact on the town, killing at least 33 individuals and numerous animals.

Musical suggestion:

- Prologue: Godzilla! -Godzilla 2014 soundtrack
- Act 1: Starting at scene where James goes looking for Ripley: To Q Zone -Godzilla 2014 soundtrack
- Act 2: Clark heads to the back: The Wave -Godzilla 2014 soundtrack  
The group is attacked: Last Shot -Godzilla 2014 soundtrack  
Banging resumes: Godzilla Victory -Godzilla 2014 soundtrack
- Act 3: Back to the Ocean -Godzilla 2014 soundtrack