

# Short Story Contest

November 2021

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PROMPT: You've been recruited into a shadowy organization that handles paranormal and extraterrestrial encounters across the world. You're not a Field Agent—you're the new Head Archivist.

## Even Eldritch Monstrosities from Beyond the Stars Need a Hug Sometimes

by **Davis Welch**

## Even Eldritch Monstrosities From Beyond The Stars Need A Hug Sometimes

I opened the door to my office and flicked on the lightswitch. I hung my jacket on the coat rack next to the door. My office was decorated to my liking, a large mahogany desk (that was a little cluttered if I'm honest) and a black swivel chair placed behind it. Two brown leather chairs were seated on the other side, replicas of famous paintings hung on the wall, a book shelf stocked with some of my favorite volumes as well as some assorted trinkets was snug in a corner. Everything still seemed so new and fresh, nothing was worn down or chipped yet. I took a seat in my chair and cleared some of the papers off of my desk. I checked my watch, a Rolex that used to be my father's. It was almost time for the morning report. I wonder who will bring it in, Ethan or Emily?

Emily was the one who brought the report. She had a dark complexion, long hair, and green eyes. She was in her twenties, about ten or fifteen years younger than me. "Emily Rosewell?!" I said and threw my arms up in mock surprise as she peaked her head into my office. Emily grinned, rolled her eyes, and stepped inside. She already had her lab coat on and a clipboard tucked under her right arm.

"Morning Winston," She said. I stood up and she handed me the clipboard she was carrying.

"Morning! Looks like we got a doozy here today eh?" I said as I thumbed through the papers on the clipboard. On the top right corner of each page **PAECU-site A6** was printed in thick black letters. It stood for Paranormal and Extraterrestrial Containment Unit. I've been head archivist for about three months now. Archivist was a poor name for the job, because I didn't really sort records. Most of the job was monitoring the objects and entities housed at site A6.

“So which one are we taking care of first?” Emily said. I looked up from the papers. She was facing one of my paintings on the wall, *The Kiss Of Judas*.

“Hmm let’s do our old pal in the tank first, shall we?” Emily’s head snapped toward me, eyes wide and jaw a little slack. She recovered from my comment and shook her head.

“I don’t know how you are able to deal with that thing and be so casual about it. I mean I’ve seen at least three archivists driven insane by its touch alone.” Emily said. She had a point. The job of an archivist at PAECU was not a safe or easy one. Employees lost limbs, got killed, went insane, and got shunted off to other dimensions all the time.

I shrugged my shoulders. “I think it likes me, what can I say? And if I’m being honest I kinda like it too.” I walked past her and grabbed my lab coat from the coat rack, then gestured to the door “Let’s hit the road.” I locked the door to my office as we left.

We made our way to the elevator and pressed the button for the twenty third floor. When we reached our destination, the doors slid open and we were met with the bright white halls of the underground sector. Workers in lab coats strutted through the place, large burly guards equipped with firearms and black ballistic armor stood by silver doors. We began to walk to room 2367, the home of the Leviathan.

“Really though, how do you resist its effects on your mind?” Emily said as we walked. She was referring to the Leviathan’s touch. In order to speak to the Leviathan, you had to be submerged in a large pool of water (dyed black so you couldn’t see its true form, as it would, of course, drive you insane) then you had to let it touch you. The touch was so it could establish a telepathic link, but this also gave the Leviathan complete control of your body and mind. For whatever reason, the whole mind and body control doesn’t affect me. “I mean the last

guy who got touched by that thing that wasn't you ran around screaming about how he loved the Leviathan and he needed to free it so it could be loved." she said.

"I don't know, I guess I just got a strong noggin" I said as I rapped my knuckles against my head.

Emily rolled her eyes again. "We've lost hundreds of test subjects and personnel to this thing, I don't think you realize how lucky you are."

"People rarely do." I said. We stopped in front of the door to room 2367. "You ready?"

Emily took a deep breath. "Yeah, as much as I can be." I started to open the door but stopped dead in my tracks when Emily shouted "Wait!" I looked at her, my head half cocked. "Do you have its tribute?" I grinned and rattled the plastic pirate coins in my coat pocket, then stepped inside the command room.

The room was simple and small. A grey locker stood on the right most wall, beside a chair and silver control panel lined with colorful buttons. Above the control panel was a reinforced glass screen that looked out over an ocean of black water, hundreds of yards wide. Dim white light shined down on the liquid from above. I could see the submersion cage through the glass, hanging from the wall by a large mechanical claw. I opened the locker and grabbed the breathing kit and wet suit that was inside.

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After I got changed and stepped in the cage, I looked back at Emily through the glass. I gave her a thumbs up, and she did the same to me. I saw her press a button on the control panel. I put the breathing apparatus over my mouth and felt the cool water soak into my outfit as the cage lowered. It took a while to reach my desired location. I tried not to think about the only other

living thing in the water with me. If I thought about this part of the job too much, it gave me butterflies in my stomach.

Once I was fully underwater I could feel the movement of the Leviathan below me. I don't know how to explain it, I can just feel ripples of water push against my body from different directions. It took two minutes to get low enough for the Leviathan to touch me. I know it took that long because I always count every second.

I could feel the cold aura of the Leviathan before it even made contact with my skin. Its touch was freezing. The appendage that slithered across the nape of my neck left a trail of thick mucus that the water could not wash off. The only thing I could hear was my heart slamming against my chest.

*“Winstonnnn. You have arrivvved.”* I heard the voice in my mind. It sounded ancient and raspy, like a nine hundred year old chain smoker.

*“Did you doooo as I requestttted of you?”* the Leviathan said.

“Not yet buddy, I came to see you first. Are you sure you want to do this?” It took a few seconds before responding. I felt the water stir around me and I shuddered.

*“I'm not sureee. What if she does notttt reciprocate myyyy feellings?”* The Leviathan was referring to Zooldepluth, queen of ooze and muck. (the Leviathan had a little crush on her). It wanted me to explain its feelings for her.

“Well you know, if you don't take this chance to tell her how you feel you'll regret it for your whole life. You'll never know if she might have said yes” I said.

*“Yessss Winstonnn I knowww, but we have knownnn platonic companionsssship for thousandssss of years. I do not wishhhhh to undermine ourrr friendshipppp.”*

“Well if you know who she is as a person, or uh, entity, she probably won’t chastise you for confessing your feelings. Just make it known that you like her and if she doesn’t feel the same way you still want to be friends.”

*“Ahhhhhhhhhhsssssss”* The Leviathan let out a low groan.

“I know it's tough sport, but you gotta stick to your guns. I mean even if she says no you’ll no longer be tossing and turning about whether you should tell her or not.”

The Leviathan was silent for a good while. At this moment, I realized my heartrate had gone back to normal, I couldn’t hear it anymore.

*“Youuu are correctttt Winstonnn. Please tellll herrrrr.”*

“Alright I will, and hey, look what I got you!” I unstrapped the one pocket on my wetsuit and pushed the pirate coins out to the water. The Leviathan loved shiny things, no matter the value.

*“Winnnnnnstonnnnnnnnn. Thankkk youuuu. Your giftssss pleaseeee mee.”* I noticed some ripples of water push against me. It was moving. My heart started to pound again.

“Yeah no problem pal.” If I was speaking with my mouth, my voice would have been shaky. I felt the cage start to rise. “Well I’ll see you tomorrow ok?”

*“Winstonnnn you cannottt seeee meee, your mindddd would shatterrr.”*

I gave a polite telepathic laugh. “Ha ha, you’re right, well I’ll communicate with you tomorrow.”

*“Bye Winstonnnn.”*

“Have a good one, Leviathan.”

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I entered the command room, back in my dry work clothes. Emily looked up from the control panel. “How did it go?” she said.

I leaned against the glass. “It went well, he decided to confess to the slimster.” Emily raised an eyebrow.

“Is that what we’re calling the primordial queen Zooldepluth, ruler of the mindless masses?” I only gave a shrug in response. Emily shook her head. “I still don’t know how you can stay so nonchalant about all this stuff. It’s impressive” she said.

I tapped my temple. “It’s all about mindset. I just think of this experience as a big squid giving me a kiss on the neck then talking about his love life.”

Emily just stared at me. “You’re like a middle school history teacher that has way too much fun teaching the War of 1812” she said.

“I’ll take that as a compliment.”

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The rest of the day was uneventful. We made sure the *Book Of The Seven Realms* wasn’t leaking daimons again. We fed the Abyss That Sings False Truths. We sharpened Excalibur, then put it back in the stone. We told the garden on the fifth floor it looked nice and pretty so it didn’t try to consume anymore staff. We met with the Ambassador From Lost Carcosa and discussed the Chicago Bulls’s 1998 championship run. The Ambassador loved our talk so much he gave Emily and I gifts. Emily got a ring embedded with ruby, and I got a sapphire pendant.

At the end of the day I went back to my office. All the lights in the hall were dimmed. I unlocked the door. I flipped on the light switch, just as I did in the morning, but this time I shut the door behind me and locked it. I walked over to *The Kiss Of Judas* and took it off

the wall. I stared at the grey safe that hid behind the painting all day. I entered the combination and revealed all the shiny little things I've been collecting. Coins, toys, some jewelry, all tucked within the safe. I placed the sapphire pendant among my other treasures. I rubbed the back of my neck where the Leviathan touched me. The place where it always touches me when we talk.

“Soon love” I said, to no one but me and my pile of tributes. “Soon we'll be together, and I can give you all the shiny trinkets you desire. It will just be me, you, and the queen.”