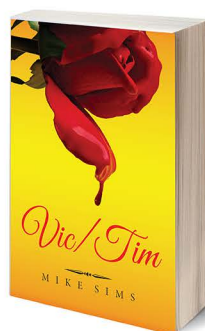
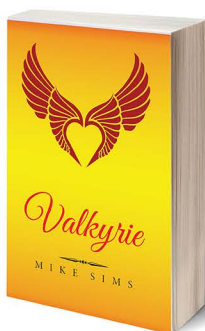
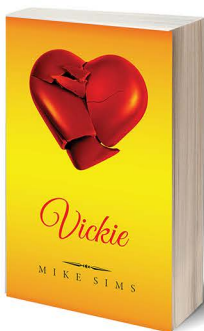


Vickie Series Preview



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Vickie Series of Books

Preview of the books Vickie, Valkyrie and Vic/Tim

About the author and preview of the new book Violet.



Mike Sims

Since his teenage years, Mike Sims has been the ultimate story-teller, creating written works of art of all types. He has built a following on social media entertaining people with his never-ending and unique brand of humor. Working tirelessly behind the scenes writing jokes for morning radio personalities to professional comedians. His work has caught the attention of Hollywood producers and marketing professionals across various industries from commercials to infomercials and everything in between. His passion for storytelling has led him to publish his work and bringing what he hopes is helpful and entertaining literature to the world.

History of the Vickie series from the author:

After starting his job at the electronics company in 2005 he came up with an idea for a short story to add to his collection he had written over years. He wrote about a woman named Vickie that revenged herself on a man that tried to rape her. It was meant to be a dark comedy how she revenged herself upon this man but as he wrote the story it turned dramatic. It became obvious this story was too big to be a short story. However, he had never wrote a novel before and had no idea what to do. The story remained dormant till 2012 when things changed in Mike's life. During the adjustment to all the changes his story of Vickie came to him and the whole novel became apparent. He now knew how to write this book. Working on it for two years with the help of his wife, friend Nicole and others several drafts developed. Nicole suggested this story would make a great TV series and began to evangelize it

towards those ends. In the meantime, Mike worked on getting it published as book. Having very little resources to polish and edit the book and having no luck finding a literary agent, he decided to self-publish on Amazon. Feeling the book was not going to go anywhere after months he was finally contacted by a publisher. The publisher wanted the book and stated they felt it was going to be big. Mike was signed with them and shortly later they published his book with a whole new look and polished text. After people began to read his book Vic/Tim they asked; how did this Vickie character come to be as she is? He realized that Vickie's story was too big to be in one novel. It then came to him four more stories to make it a series, three prequels to Vic/Tim and one final sequel. He started work on Vickie the first book in the series that shows Vickie's start written in one month. The next book Valkyrie followed. Mike is currently writing the next book Violet to follow as well as working on expanding a number of his short stories into novels. Currently Mike has moved his novels under Mazzaroth as a publisher moving away from his old publisher which he is grateful to for giving him his start.

Book Information:

Mike's books are now published under Mazzaroth however there still shows older versions published under his old publisher. They will continue to be shows till inventories in various resellers are depleted. Look for Mazzaroth in the description to know you have the current versions. Mazzaroth publishes his books in hardcover 5.5X8.5 inch with dust jacket on white paper making it a nice collectable. Paperback versions in 4X6 inch travel size and 5X7 inch regular paperback on crème paper are available.

Ebook version are available anywhere as well.

For more information:

www.Mazzaroth.net

Contact info:

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Mazzaroth
PO Box 842290
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Vickie



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Vickie

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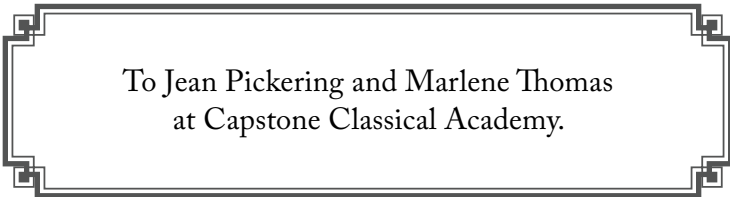
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To Jean Pickering and Marlene Thomas
at Capstone Classical Academy.

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In the Beginning...



IT IS A hot summer day on a long endless stretch of road. The Newsome family are on their way to moving near some of their family to start again. Tom and Mary as well as eight-year-old Vickie are enduring the long journey to a hopeful destination of Tom's brother Dan. Times had driven them from their home as they made their escape with what money they have and their few possessions dragging behind them in a trailer. Like a modern-covered wagon, they head west to find a new life and new start. Tom Newsome knows he should be heading elsewhere but has managed to lose his way. His wife tells him to pull out the interstate and see if they can find a map or directions. This violates his sense of manhood but eventually realizes it is a lost cause. He drives down a lonely road away from the interstate and sees a crossroad and a small rundown gas station.

As he pulls into a gas station, the attendant begins to walk up to the car.

“Howdy,” says the attendant.

“Hi yourself,” Tom replies. “Say do you know how to get to Hemdale? We are not far, I know, but not sure which way to go.”

Attendant responds, “You want to take the road to the right, follow it to Sands and then left on 88. That will take you straight to Hemdale.”

Tom says, “Thank you, sir.”

The attendant looks at the young girl in the back and asks, “Why, who might you be?”

The girl looks away shy and blushing while her mom Mary responds, “Vickie, answer the nice man.”

The attendant responds, “Vickie, what a nice name for a pretty girl. You know I have a feeling you’re going to grow up to be a very important person.”

Vickie looks at the man as he intently stares back and quietly says, “Yes, indeed, you will make a huge difference in many.” A silence creeps in as only the sound of desert wind blows.

Mary looked at the attendant then Vickie and then to Tom. “Well, honey, don’t you think we should be going?” She turns to the attendant, “Thank you, sir, for your guidance.”

The attendant slowly looks back at the parents and says, “No problem, ma’am, you people have a safe trip.” The attendant backs away as the Newsomes begin to move their car forward.

Vickie stares at the man as he nods his head yes at her. Vickie looks confused but curious as the man never stops staring the whole time they drive away. She stares back as far as she can.

Vickie asked, "Mom, who is that man?"

Mary answered, "Just a man who runs a gas station."

"He looks like I have seen him before."

"You just remember seeing someone like him, we have never been around here before."

"What was he telling me?"

"I think he was trying to be nice to you."

Tom interrupts, "You two need to shut up. I am trying to concentrate on the road and don't need a lot of chitchat."

A silence befalls them for a while and Mary asks, "Honey, would you like the radio on?"

Tom says, "If it would shut that trap of yours."

Mary says, "Do you have to talk like that to me?"

"Look, I'm trying to keep us alive and fed which is a bit hard when you bitches won't leave me alone."

"Tom, do you have to use such language in front of our child?"

"You bring it out me. I can't wait to get to my brother's house and have a drink."

"Please, Tom, do you have to drink? Hasn't it done enough damage?"

"Listen up, you two drive me to drink. That is the reason I lost my job and our home."

“Don’t put that on me and especially your daughter!”

Tom is getting more and more upset, and as soon as his wife begins to utter something else, he slaps her in the face. Mary grabs her face with her hand and quietly stares out the window whimpering. Vickie is sitting there with her mouth open as the tears build in her eyes. She knows not to cry or say anything as this will just draw her dad’s anger to her. She is young but can sense the pain in her mom. The emotional tether is like an invisible connection of energy, a conduit of empathy flowing to and from them both. Hours pass and silence is king as the air is thick with control from Tom. He is on edge, unsure of what their future holds. He knows his older brother has always been there for him. Dan has always tried to take care of Tom growing up. Dan, in poor health, himself is happy to try to help especially since the death of his wife and son Derek moved out. Dan’s home is quiet and inviting. Tom knows it is his safety net and a new start that may solve his problems. However, Tom does not know how to quiet the rage in him and can’t even remember when it started. He sometimes thinks and wonders why he is so rough on Mary. It bothers him sometimes but the rage blinds him the other times. He is jittery, wanting his liquid courage.

Mary stares out the car window acting as if she has fallen asleep. But she can’t sleep not knowing when the next rage or hit will come from Tom. Her instincts are to care for Vickie, and take the brunt of Tom’s rage is her job now. Like

a movie repeating itself, she thinks back to when Tom was so nice and caring when they dated. He was so handsome and a pure gentleman. The envy of her friends and she was so proud. Their marriage was beautiful and first year so perfect. She was pregnant after the first year and Tom was such a proud daddy. After the death of his dad and mom in a home invasion, it left him cold and troubled. Mary tried and tried to bring back the peace and caring of days past but Tom was stuck in a loop of self-pity and remorse. He never quite forgave himself for things he did growing up. His parents went through a lot to bring him around. He was always in trouble as a youth. It seemed like after they were gone, the restraint was broken on him. Mary has analyzed a million times trying to find the solution. None seem to be found, especially when she is hitting a brick wall with Tom. He is impenetrable and not interested in anymore kids. She has suggested before maybe he would be happier without her and Vickie but that was not an option for Tom. Maybe they are his only tie to bind him to normalcy but the struggle remains. His soul tormented by life and his traps. Mary just opens her eyes once in a while to make sure they are going the right way but does not dare to get Tom's attention. Her ears intently listen to Vickie playing quietly in the backseat. Vickie knows to stay quiet.

Vickie lives in her own little world far away from the harshness of her dad. She loves him so much and can even remember times he made her feel like a princess of a

wonderful kingdom. He read to her and took her to parks constantly. She was the center of his universe. She does not understand what changed but only understands as her mom explained that daddy is sick. She prays every night that God will make him better. Vickie's emotional tie to Tom is severed now unlike with her mom. She can't afford to share the emotions of her dad. Like an instinct to protect children programmed genetically that protects little Vickie. Vickie is oblivious to the dynamics; she just knows her imagination is her refuge where she can build on the good memories to create fake ones. It is her fuel to keep going. She knows that someday her dad will come back to being healthy. That happy day will come soon. She patiently waits for the world to become happy again so she can pretend other things like about space. She loves anything to do with space and wants to grow up to be an astronomer. But that dream is on hold while she concentrates her focus on dad's health. Maybe when he is better, he will buy her another telescope to replace the one he broke in anger. She hopes and she dreams.

Home Away From Home



TOM, MARY, AND Vickie arrive at Dan's house, and he comes out to greet them with open arms. "Tom, my little brother, it is so good to see you," Dan states. Dan turns to Mary. "Mary, so beautiful as before." He notices the red side of her face where she was struck earlier and asks, "Are you okay?"

Mary replies, "I am fine, I slept on it most of the way, what long trip."

Dan has a strange look and looks at Tom as Tom is unloading the car. Vickie runs up and Dan says, "Hey, pumpkin, you are getting so big!"

Vickie said, "Hi uncle."

Dan asked, "Are you hungry, Vickie?"

She nods yes, and he says, "Well, go in the kitchen and make yourself at home. I bought some snacks sitting on the counter just for you."

Vickie's eyes light up and she turns to her mom as Mary says, "Go ahead, Vickie."

She runs into the house in anticipation of the bounty. Mary looks at Dan and says, "Thank you, brother, I think you just won her over. All this has been so hard on her."

Dan said, "Not just her, I suspect."

Mary replies, "All that matters is her."

"Right."

Mary smiles and says, "I better help Tom."

"Right again," as Dan and Mary start unloading the car with Tom.

Later that evening, they are all moved in as there was not much really to move. Tom takes the trailer to a local branch that he had rented it from. While away and Vickie watching TV, Dan asked Mary, "Everything is going to get better now you are all here. I will take care of you guys and help Tom be a good man again."

Mary said, "Tom means well, we just need to get back on our feet."

Dan replied, "It is more than that. Tom is not the same since our parents were killed. He needs to forgive himself."

"I know but hell if he will listen to me."

"I think between us, we can reach him."

Mary begins to weep. "I hope so because I don't know how much more I can take."

Dan reaches out to her. "Listen, it will get better."

Mary nods her head yes and smiles wiping her tears away. She squeezes Dan's hand in thanks and walks to Vickie to watch TV and hold her. Tom returns and as the car door slams, Mary turns the TV off and she and Vickie come to attention. Dan stares in horror realizing things are much worse than he even realized. Tom comes in the house and says, "We're all done. Hey, Dan, do you have any beers?"

Dan replies, "Sure, Tom, in the fridge."

Mary says, "Tom, everything is put away."

Tom replied, "I am sure it is. You are always good about getting things done." Tom gets a beer and sits on the couch.

Mary tells Vickie, "C'mon, sweetie, let's get you cleaned up and ready for bed."

As they walk by, Dan says, "Good night, little princess."

Vickie smiles back at Dan as Dan looks at Tom. Tom is busy drinking and not even paying attention to Mary or Vickie. Dan grabs a beer and sits down in his favorite easy chair. It is quiet as the guys stare at their beer, and Tom wanders his eyes around the room of pictures.

Tom started, "Hey, I remember that bike you have."

Dan smiles. "Had, is more like it."

"What happened to that hog?"

"Had to sell it to pay for Susan's medical costs."

"I am sorry I could not make it to her funeral."

"That is all right, you had your own things to contend with."

“Hey, maybe tomorrow we can visit her grave.”

Dan smiles. “That would be nice. She would appreciate that.”

“She is still here with you, isn’t she?”

“Always, she was my whole life. It was my honor to live with her and enjoy every day with her.”

“Yea, that is nice. What was it like, you know, her with her illness?”

Dan stares at the ground. “It was nice and pleasant before her illness. Seem like life was perfect. Then one day, she paid a bill twice. I was concerned but we just shrugged it off as a senior moment even though we were not seniors. Then she got lost coming home and I had to go find her. Before we knew it, she could not remember simple things. Then she began to ask about wanting to see friends we have not known for years. She even mentioned wanting to watch you play basketball in high school.”

Tom says, “Oh, brother, that is rough.”

Dan looks up. “Yea, yea it was. I refused to put her in an Alzheimer’s unit even though sometimes she did not recognize me. One time she thought I was our dad. Then all the sudden one morning I turned over to wake her and she was gone. She had a heart attack in her sleep. She looked so peaceful, you know. At peace finally, not agitated by her condition.”

“How did Derek take it?”

“He was in college and kept coming back and forth to help. He was really good, a rock, solid. After his mom passed, he was more a comfort to me than I was to him. He is definitely his mother. She was always taking care of me, now he does.”

“Where is he now?”

Dan replies, “Oh, does not live far from here. He should be stopping by tomorrow to see you guys. He is married to a woman named Sherry, and they have a son, thirteen months old.”

“Wow, I have been gone too long.”

“Well, you are here now and I think this is a blessing for all of us.”

Tom replies sarcastically, “Yea, blessing.”

“You know, Tom, you need to use the bad as much as the good. It is what makes us what we are.”

“I know what you are saying but I don’t need a sermon right now.”

“Right, you just relax and focus on that wonderful wife and kid of yours. Your daughter is so beautiful.”

Tom puts his beer on the table and asks, “Did you ever feel like your wife and kid were doing things to drive you crazy?”

Dan laughs. “I think we all go through that. I know hard times can skew our perception. What I have learned is that your spouse and kid are cogs in the machine. They move

in the direction you do because they love you. Sometimes they trip over themselves trying too hard to please you. Remember, the tighter you grip sand, the more it slips out your grasp. You have to learn to cup your hands and gently hold the sand to keep all of it. Let them live and empower them to do what they know to do. You will find things happen automatically, and your life is so less stressful in the process.”

Tom stares for a while at Dan and picks up his beer to drink. “If it only worked that way for me.” Dan smirks as Tom finishes his beer and stands up. “Thank you, brother, for taking us in. I will find a job and be out of your hair as soon as possible.”

Dan stands up and hugs Tom. “Tom, no rush, just relax. We have plenty of food and money here. Get better and get your family whole. You guys are welcome here for as long as you want or even permanently.”

Tom smiles and goes to the bedroom to shower up. Mary and Vickie are already asleep. Tom stares at them both and with a troubled look goes to prepare for sleep.



Valkyrie



M I K E S I M S

Valkyrie

Valkyrie



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Valkyrie

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Fiction / General

To Laura and Gary Neal, Keith and Cheryl Partney, as well
as Kim and Gerald Svetlik.

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S



Thank you, Nicole Andani, for your wisdom and support in making this book and its series a reality.

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P R O G R E S S



Vickie sits in her office staring out the window thinking, *My life has been a recipe for disaster, but yet I hunger for it.* She sits at her desk and picks up the Lazarus Game paper, staring at the Valkyrie symbol on it. She thinks, *Why would people play games with other people? Seems my whole life people have tried to play games with me. It seems that games are the nature of people. Maybe not the nature but boredom that rules their sense of being decent. Look at how much we sell because of boredom. An entire industry of marketing exists to keep people occupied. Like boredom was some kind of mental disease to be fought. Our industry spends more on advertising and marketing than we do fighting cancer. It is the way of the world, so be it.* She drops the game paper and begins to thumb through statistics on the computer. After a while Vickie rubs her eyes and stands to look out the window some more.

John Taylor, the marketing director, walks in. "Has anything moved out there."

Vickie turns around and smiles. "I am keeping an eye on it."

"Here are the results of the Spinner campaign."

"Great, more things to read."

John frowns with a half smile. "My mom asked about you the other day."

"She feeling like berating someone?"

John laughs. "No, she wanted to know how you were."

"And how am I?"

"You are doing just fine."

"I am glad to hear that about me."

"Can I ask you question?"

"You just did, sure."

"You don't date much, do you?"

"Why, John, delving into my love life?"

John's face turns red as he begins to stutter. Vickie replies, "There was another John in college. My God, I make it sound like I am a prostitute. Anyway, that was the only one." Vickie looks down at her desk. "He destroyed himself." John has a concerned look on his face. "I am sorry I brought it up." Vickie looks up. "No, it is all right. He was an alcoholic." John looks down. "Wow." He then notices the Lazarus Game paper and picks it up. "You are playing this too."

"No, Dan brought that."

“Yeah, he is a legend at this game. I heard about him at King’s Way.”

“You play it?”

“No, too rich for my blood. I don’t have time for it either. Honestly, it seems cruel.”

“Yeah, but these people get to experience a part of life they most likely never would.” “Yeah, I get it, just not for me.” John leaves as Vickie begins to look over the latest campaign results.

That evening Vickie is at her martial art school, and after her lessons she sits in front of her sensei Sato. “Sensei, have you ever heard of a game called the Lazarus Game?”

“No, what kind of game is it?”

“It is a game executives play by taking very poor people and trying to make successful people out of them. The first one to achieve it wins.” Sato stares without comment. “It may seem cruel, but it allows these people to see a part of life they never would.” Sato continues to be motionless as Vickie stares around and says, “It might even change their life for good.” Vickie sits and quietly waits for Sato to reply, and eventually he says, “Are you trying to convince me of the game’s merit or yourself?”

“I am not sure.”

“How can this make anyone successful if they were not gifted to be what this game wants them to be? Success is not a matter of money or position but whether you achieved what you want to do. Making another achieve another’s

definition of success for the amusement of that group is a form of slavery.”

“You don’t think these people would benefit from having their horizons expanded?”

“You can see all horizons but must live in one.”

“I understand, but how is it slavery? These people choose to play the game and take a chance on being so called successful.”

“It is not the poor that are the slaves but the executives. They are the ones being played.”

Vickie looks confused. “I do not understand.”

“Things are never simple in the designs of men, but in nature the complexity is hidden in its simplicity.” Sato stands as Vickie follows, and they bow. He leaves Vickie to ponder about what he said.



The next morning Dan walks in with Trevor Ortiz, who is his candidate for the Lazarus Game. Dan introduces them. “Trevor, this is Vickie, and vice versa.”

Vickie shakes Trevor’s hand. “Nice to meet you, Trevor.”

“Nice to meet you, ma’am,” replies Trevor.

“Please, Vickie.”

Trevor smiles as Dan says, “Sure you don’t want to partner up with me?”

Vickie says, “You afraid I might join the game to compete.”

“Has crossed my mind,” Dan said.

"I heard you do just fine by your lonesome," said Vickie.

"Okay, let me know if you change your mind." Dan escorts Trevor, out telling him, "You are going to have an office someday like this."

"Wow, never been in an office," says Trevor.

Vickie stares with a concerning look on her face but then gets back to work.

She brings some reports to her boss, Tom Patterson. "Here you go, Tom."

"Thank you, Vickie." She stands looking at Tom as he asks, "What is wrong?" Vickie sits down in front of Tom's desk and asks, "Do you think it is necessary for Dan to be playing this silly game here at the office?"

"Personally, I never understood it, but I guess it gives people a taste of something new and part of the pool goes to charity."

"Yeah, but the charity part is just to seem like it is for a good cause. I am not so sure this is a good thing."

"It is a waste of company time, but the advantage of it is that a lot of executives play it, and it helps a company build relationships. Used to be golf was the social business outlet, now this. What bothers you about it?"

"Like you said, it just seems like a complete waste of time."

"Now if you have problem with it, I will tell Dan not play it on company time."

Vickie looks around. “No, no, that is not necessary. I know the relations to other possible clients is important. Never mind, sorry I brought it up.”

“Not to worry, always let me know your concerns.” Vickie grins and leaves.

The following week Trevor delivers some reports from Dan to Vickie.

“Reports from Mr. Childers, ma’am—I mean, Vickie.”

“That’s better. Dan has you doing intern work?”

“He says I need to learn the work flow around here.”

“Uh-huh. Is he going to have you shine his shoes next?” Trevor looks at her with a confused look. “Never mind, good luck on your venture.” Trevor leaves to do more of Dan’s tasks. Vickie is going on a two-week vacation—her first since she has worked there. She just needs to tidy up things while she embarks on cruise.

C R U I S E C O N T R O L



Vickie makes her way onto the cruise ship to start her vacation. She has flown to Florida to leave for a weeklong trip to various touristy stops in Mexico and then back to Florida to spend the rest of her time at a beach house. At least that is the plan. She arrives on deck awaiting departure and grabs a deck chair before they are all taken. A waiter asks if she would like a beer, and she replies, “No thank you, but I will take a virgin pina colada.” She watches the land move and thinks about how far she has come in life to now be able to be here, grateful and at the same time concerned about if it will last and what else can life throw before her. But for the moment, the drink and the sun are bleaching the issues away. Vickie gets dressed up for a nice dinner, which is shared with few other people at her table. One at her table mentions he is a CFO of a large company and that his name is Zach as they introduce each other.

“Zach, can I ask you a personal question?”

"Sure, Vickie."

"Have you heard of a game called the Lazarus Game?"

Zach slows down on his eating and looks up at Vickie.

"Yes, of course I have."

"Your thoughts on it?"

"I played it one year about five years ago. It seemed fun, but it really does not help people. It is just for the amusement of bullies that like to taunt and flaunt what they have in front of those who have less. If you are thinking of playing it, don't."

"I did not realize that there were people that set against it."

"Well, if I catch anyone playing it in my company, they are gone."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Obviously you are passionate about it."

"The worse hell is not just going to hell, it is experiencing heaven and then being taken to hell. It is enough for some to not want to live anymore." Zach stares at his food as if to play with it. Vickie continues with her dinner saying, "It is good."

"Nothing beats these dinners."

The dinner is pleasant and quiet till she is done. Vickie says, "Well, guys, it was nice meeting you, and I hope have a good cruise." Zach says, "Same to you."

Vickie changes to more comfortable clothing and sits out on deck to watch the stars. She thinks to herself, *There are so many of them. Wonder if there are other planets with people looking at our stars? Mom, I miss you. I hope that I am doing okay in your opinion. I wonder if my daughter looks up and sees these stars. She would be eight by now. Seems like a long time ago and another life. How did I make it through that time?* Vickie stares at the stars and drifts off from time to time. She thinks it is time to head back to her stateroom. The next day she enjoys some burgers a cruise employee is grilling. "These are very good."

"Later we will have barbecue," the employee replies.

"Not made from goat, is it?"

The employee chuckles. "No, pork ribs."

"Good." Vickie walks around the pool, and toy lands at her feet. She picks it up as a little girl runs up to her.

"Here you go, sweetie."

The little girl responds, "Thank you, lady." Her parents walk up, and her mom says, "That is very good, Veronica." Vickie smiles at the parents and asks Veronica, "So how old are you?" Veronica holds up eight fingers and says, "Eight." Vickie stares for a bit and says, "You know, I have a little girl your age."

"Where is she?" Veronica asks.

Vickie slowly and quietly says, "I don't know."

Veronica smiles. "You should find her then."

"Yes, I should."

"I'm going to be an as...as...astronnomer someday."

Vickie lights up. "Astronomer. You know, that is what I wanted to be when I was your age."

"You are not one?"

"No, I went another way in life, but I loved astronomy. I am sure you will be one and be a very good one."

Veronica's parents tell her, "Come on now, let's leave the nice lady alone." The mom looks at Vickie. "Sorry, she is so enthusatic." Vickie says, "That is okay, she reminds me of me at that age." Veronica's dad says, "It was nice to meet you." He picks up Veronica and kisses her on the cheek. "All right, you, let's play in the pool." Vickie watches them leave and start playing in the pool. Veronica sees Vickie looking at her and waves. Vickie waves back and sits down to watch a nice family having fun. She reminisces about her childhood and wishes it would have been like theirs. She thinks to herself, *I am not going to sabotage my present by regretting my past. My past will not dictate how I feel about myself now. I will only let it be my tool to learn from.* Vickie starts to leave, and Veronica asks her parents something as they nod yes. Veronica runs over to Vickie and hands her the little plastic starfish toy she had. "I want you to have this. It is a starfish. Nothing to do with stars, but it is named after them."

Vickie says, "Really, I did not know that. Thank you, Veronica. I will treasure this." Veronica has a big smile on her face and runs back to her parents. Vickie walks back to

her room carrying her starfish. She goes to her stateroom and sits on her bed looking at the starfish. She turns it over, and it has a red V on the back. She stares at it for a bit and puts it in her luggage.



Vickie enjoys an uneventful cruise and excursions to the ports. She manages to buy jewelry and some souvenirs for the ones at work. At the end of the cruise she gathers her luggage out of customs. She notices Veronica and her family gathering theirs. Vickie reaches in her purse and pulls out the starfish. Veronica smiles and waves as Vickie waves good-bye. She arrives at her beach house and just lays on the bed looking at her starfish. She spends the week reading her new books and relaxing.

OFFICE SUPPLIES



Returning to work Vickie sits at her desk holding her toy starfish from Veronica. She smiles and sits it on top of the Lazarus Game paper. Tom Patterson walks in. “Well, how was vacation?”

“It was good, I like the sea. I like looking at those stars at night. No light pollution if you go to certain parts of the ship.”

“Well it is nice to have you back with us.” Tom sees the starfish. “A memento of the trip?”

“A little girl gave it to me on the ship. She was so cute, I wanted to spend the whole day with her.”

“Well it sounds like you had a great time. We have a new client called Mazzaroth I wanted to discuss.”

“Okay, I will be right over.” Tom points his finger and smiles as he leaves. Trevor walks in to hand some papers to Vickie from Dan. Trevor is very quiet and disassociative.

“What is the matter, Trevor, you missed me?” asks Vickie. Trevor stands quiet turning back and forth between leaving and standing in front of Vickie. “Trevor, what is wrong? You can talk to me, I am here if you need me.” Trevor mumbles at first and then says; “I am okay, ma’am.”

“Look, I have to meet with the boss, but let’s talk when I am back.” Trevor nods and leaves as Vickie grabs her notepad and pen to meet with Tom. She enters Tom’s office, and he is already meeting with Dan at his office small conference table. Vickie sits down, and Dan says, “Hey, Vic, how was vacation?”

“It was good, I was away from you for a while,” replies Vickie.

“Not nice,” says Dan.

Tom says, “C’mon, guys, lets get to it. Vickie, to catch you up, we have a production company called Mazzaroth that uses a web domain of Mazzaroth.net. They specialize in books, TV shows. What they need for us is promote season four of their successful tv show *Destiny*. Now this is a reverse of what we usually do as you know. We usually sell advertising to TV shows for clients, but our recent work on campaigns has led them try the opposite.”

“Basically they want to buy our advertisers by letting us manage things,” concludes Vickie.

“Exact-a-mundo,” says Dan. “I have analyzed their show, and it is like a variety show where different characters experience a new situation each episode. There is no continuity to the show, each is different.”

"That presents a problem as we are not sure how each episode will be received."

"Right metrics are out the window on this one."

Tom says, "Vickie, here is the copy of the Mazz file. Give it a study, and work with Dan to figure out a plan, okay, guys?"

"You got it, Tommy boy," says Dan.

"Okay," Vickie replies. Dan leaves the office. As Vickie is about to leave, she turns and asks Tom, "What is a Mazzaroth anyway?"

"The client Melinda says it is an ancient word that basically has to do with the twelve signs of the zodiac."

"Hmmm, okay."

Vickie returns to her office, and as soon as she does Trevor walks in.

"You need any office supplies, ma'am?" Vickie leans her head to one side and stares at Trevor as he says, "Sorry, Vickie."

"That's better. I don't think I need anything at the moment." Trevor stands there as Vickie says, "I guess I could use some notepads and a few pens."

"Yes, m—Vickie." He leaves as Vickie starts to read the Mazzorth file. Very quickly Trevor returns with the supplies. "Thank you, Trevor. Can you put those on my shelf for me and tell me what is on your mind?" Trevor puts them away and says, "Vickie, I not happy here."

"Not happy here or not happy with Dan?"

"With Mr. Childers." Vickie sees Dan looking at her office. "Trevor, go ahead and get back to Dan. Let's talk

after work, okay?” Trevor nods his head and leaves. Vickie watches as Dan is obviously saying something to Trevor that is upsetting him. Trevor’s head is slumped down and nodding. As soon as Dan finishes with Trevor, Dan walks into Vickie’s office and says, “Is Trevor bothering you?”

“Not at all, he got me some office supplies.”

“All right, I was just hoping he does not bother you. He has a tendency to get a puppy-dog depressive attitude once in a while. He likes to gain sympathy from people.”

“Well what do you think? He is in an environment he is not familiar with and doing things he has never done before. He wants to please everyone and do a good job. Does not help when you don’t lend a sympathetic ear or berate him constantly.”

“Look, you may not be used to working with interns, but I have, and they are usually young and need to learn how to work in a professional environment.”

“That is crap, Dan. You are just mean by nature, and the only thing you are interested in is winning that stupid game of yours.”

“Whatever, Vic, I will just do things my way.”

“Well you just do what you do best.” Dan leaves as he directs Trevor to do more busy work.



That evening as the business day closes Trevor walks to his bus stop as Vickie drives next to him and says, “Get in,

Trevor, I will take you home.” Trevor gets in her car and says, “Thank you, Vickie.”

“Where am I going?”

“I live in Hilltown.”

“I know where that area is.” Vickie makes her way to that area of town as she says, “Well, Trevor, spill the beans. What is wrong with Dan?”

Trevor looks down as he says, “I don’t think I can do this job anymore.”

“I know Dan can be kind of tough, but you are going to find the world is full of assholes like him.”

“Yeah, I know.” There is a few moments of silence as Vickie asks, “There is more to it, is there?” Trevor nods. “Tell me what it is. You can trust me.”

“I don’t mind the work at your company, and I don’t care about Mr. Childers getting onto me about things. It is the things after work that bother me.”

“What things after work?”

“Sometimes after work he takes me to his house to do house work. You know, mowing the lawn, fixing up things. One entire weekend my parents and I painted his house.”

“What?”

“He says it builds character and work ethic. He told me that is the reason he is successful and people like me are not. He said we are lazy and inefficient.”

“That is not true. I doubt Dan has worked a real job a day of his life. From what I know of him, his family is well-to-do. He is just using you for free labor.”

"I did not mind at first because I hope this takes me to a good job later."

"It won't. I am sorry to tell you this, but you are just part of their game, and when it is over, you will be left high and dry. It will be up to you to keep whatever level of success you achieved in the game. The problem is no one is going to keep you at the relationship level they can with someone like Dan."

"But I still might have a chance."

"Of course you have a chance, every lotto ticket buyer has a chance. The odds are against you though. If you want a real chance, go to college. Get an education and get a real job."

"This is my turn off to my neighborhood." Vickie follows his directions to his house in a very poor neighborhood. As they pull into his driveway, Vickie says, "Trevor, I will help you get started on an education. There are lots of things to help out there." Trevor opens the door and says, "I will think about it." He leaves, and his parents step out on the porch to greet him. Vickie thinks to herself, *He is so young.*



Vic/Tim



M I K E S I M S

Vic/Tim

Vic/Tim



M I K E S I M S

M
Mazzaroth

Vic/Tim

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To my wife, Melinda, and daughter, Maribeth.

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THE BEGINNING ENCOUNTER

SOMETIMES WHAT LOOKS like bad people is only good people in bad situations. So what can we say about Vickie Newsome, an advertising executive who is single except for her two cats, Stone and Jones. She named them after one of her first ad sales on a show by the same name. She leaves work as she does most days, not traveling to clients or researching for her job. She plans to make it a quiet evening of watching reruns and wondering what ad could have been put in that show long ago. She makes her way out of her office building and hikes down the street to a local corner grocery to pick up a few things. It is snack night and her night to jump off the diet, if only for a bit. She makes her way back to her car to put her items in the trunk and decides to drop in the bookstore across the street to see what is new. She tends to get lost in these bookstores, so much to discover. She wanders the aisles of self-help books

to cooking and to romance novels. A book catches her eye, titled *Short Stories Not from a Real Writer*. The simple book title draws her attention as she picks it up. She is a little aware that someone else has taken notice of her. A mysterious and unseemingly suspicious-looking man begins to watch her from corners and small openings in bookshelves. She looks around as if something beckons her to pay attention to her surroundings, but she continues happily looking around. She picks up a few more books and leaves, as it is getting late.

The man follows and gets into his car to continue the pursuit. Vickie arrives at her house in the suburbs remotely, opening her garage door as the man passes by turning the corner. She made a small mental note of him passing. He must live around here, that's why the car seemed to go wherever she went when coming home. She leaves the garage door open as she carries her goods into the house.

The man sees she is inside and sneaks his way into her garage and hides behind a cabinet so she will not notice him. She grabs her final things and closes the trunk of the car as the garage door lowers. As it closes, her security light automatically comes out outside when dark. The man watches as the light extinguishes from the garage door closure. He waits patiently for a long time so that her guard will be down. He listens for the TV in her house to eventually go off. He knows the longer he waits, the

more neighbors will go too. Thoughts race through his mind of doubts about what he wants to do. However, the urge is strong and the adrenaline is pumping in his anxious state. It is like a drug, for this is something he had fantasized numerous times in his head, but his emotions have convinced him to make the fantasy real. He is scared yet excited and knows there is no going back after this. It runs through his mind like a car in a circle with no place to park as he keeps hearing her shuffle around her house. Finally, it is getting quiet as he hears her walking up the stairs. He makes his move to the garage house door, noticing it is unlocked. Vickie is showering and preparing for bed. The man has made his way up the stairs and takes position in an adjacent room waiting the right moment for him to surprise his victim.

Vickie dries off after a short shower and changes into a long t-shirt. The man's heart begins to beat faster as the moment has come. He has not done this before but has rehearsed it many times in his head. He is no killer but pulls his steak knife out that he acquired from her kitchen for intimidation. She is sitting on her bed reading now. He thinks to himself, *Okay, Tim, this is it.* He begins to have second thoughts about his life and why he is doing this, but the obsession to control another human being is too much of a high for him. Chemical responses in his brain from the excitement are like a drug and he begins to feel powerful.

He summons his courage and bursts out, quickly overtaking Vickie and putting the knife to her throat. He covers her mouth immediately and tells her not to make a sound. She stares intently at him and down at the knife. Tim tells her to comply with his wishes and she won't get hurt. He then tells her that he is going to take his hand off her and she must take her clothes off. He asks her if she understands as, and she nods slowly yes. He releases her and she slowly stands up to lift her shirt off. She then looks behind Tim and says, "Thank God you are here."

Tim quickly turns to see who is behind him and no one is there. Turning back quickly, he is kicked in the chest hard by Vickie, knocking him against the clothes drawers. By this time, she has grabbed his hand with the knife and turned his wrist, forcing him to drop the knife on the floor. He panics and begins to try to make a break for it as he labors to breathe from the kick. However, she is too quick for him and pushes him against a wall corner. He falls back, stunned.

By the time he gets up, she has a short wooden stick about three feet long and cracks him across the back as he makes it to the stairs. He tumbles, hitting the wall at the bottom. Looking up in horror, she is running down the stairs with a look of fury on her face. He runs to the fireplace and picks up a poker to defend himself, but she has already deflected his thrust and hits him in the arm with

the stick, causing him to drop the poker. He is badly hurt, and she cracks him again across the temple of his head. He is dazed and slowly gets up, seeing everything fuzzy. She is standing there hardly out of breath and staring at him like a lion about to finish its kill. He pleads with her to do no more and he will gladly go to jail. Like out of a martial art movie, she spins around and lands her foot across his sternum, knocking him backward again on the ground. His speech is slurred as he quietly begs, "No more, no more," then blacks out.

Tim wakes up and he is sitting on a chair as he looks over and Vickie is sitting in the chair in front of him smoking an e-cigarette. His eyes grow large wondering what is next. He pleads with her to let him go and he has learned his lesson.

Vickie says, "You know, I was a rape victim before when I was a teenager. It nearly destroyed me. I felt suicidal because I thought there was something wrong with me. I had a hard time with relationships with men as I grew up. I went to a lot of therapy and it cost a lot, not just in terms of money, but life. All because a man wanted to have sex with someone other than his own wife. I understand more than you might think about how men tick. Some are weak and have very little control like you. So since the time of my attack long ago, I have earned three black belts and work out regularly. Because I know that it could happen again.

I trained and prepared for the day that someone like you would attack me. I know you perverts are not diminishing in numbers, you are growing. Now you have the internet and easy access to porn and other shock images to tantalize you. But what happens when that is not enough? You guys have to carry it further into the real world. It is like a line that you cross and the line moves further. Blame it on hormones or bad childhood, but the fact is you types have no restraint. You travel further into depths of depravity rationalizing that it is now normal and okay. Before you know, it won't just be rape but murder to get your feelings nurtured. Well, I am going to teach you about being violated. I am going to show you what it is to have your life ruined. You are going to know what it is to be a victim, Timothy. I have copied your driver's license, I know all about you now. Amazing, the same internet that feeds you maniacs can also give me all the information about you that I could possibly want. This will be therapeutic for both of us. Well, more for me. And I know there is nothing you can do because if you try to get me in trouble, your fingerprints, even DNA from your ass whooping, is all over my place, especially the knife you threatened me with. So go now and let us begin this learning experience for you. Go ahead. I said go!"

He stares in horror that he is trapped in a nightmare he can never leave. She has him and he knows his only chance is to comply and maybe she will leave him alone.

Tim gathers up all the strength he can and carries himself out of her house as she stares at him. He looks back and says, "I'm sorry."

Vickie says, "Well, I am sorry too, Tim. See you around."

Tim gulps as he leaves. He walks very slowly and staggers back to this car. He leaves for home.

ESCAPE FROM VICKIE

TIM DRIVES HOME to his subdivision about forty-five minutes away. He walks up to the door, barely hanging on and rings the doorbell. His wife answers and asks him in horror what happened to him. She helps him inside and his daughter age eight asks her mother, Lana, if daddy is okay. The mother assures her everything is okay and tells her to go back to bed. Once they are alone, Lana asks Tim what happened. She was worried he was so late. Tim says that he had car problems and while he was looking at his car, a gang of kids beat him and took his wallet. Lana responds that they should call the police right away.

Tim says, "No, they know where I live and said if any trouble with the law happens they will come after us. It is best to just leave it be."

Lana says, "I told you about your late evening excursions. I know you need time to yourself, but I wish I knew

what you needed. We all have needs, you know. Need to stop peeping tomcatting around.”

Tim looks at her with a horrid face as she says, “Sorry, that was mean. I don’t mean to make light of this.”

Tim nods yes as Lana doctors him and helps him to bed. He lays down and tells Lana, “I love you and I am thankful you are in my life.”

Lana smiles. “What would you do without me? For one thing, you need to take better care of yourself. What if something happened to me?”

“I hope not, I need you to keep me out of trouble.”

Tim smiles as Lana replies, “I can’t do that for you, honey. Besides, it’s not like you are likely to get in trouble on purpose.” She nurses his wounds as he starts to drift off to sleep. Lana whispers to herself, “What did you get yourself into?”

BACK TO WORK

TIM HAS TAKEN the rest of the week off to recover. The following Monday, he arrives at work less bruised and in better spirits. He tells a story of how the gang attacked him. His fellow coworkers tell him he is lucky that he only lost his wallet and not his life. Tim is called into his boss's office and he asks him if he is okay otherwise. Tim is surprised and asks why. His boss explains there has been a collection agent calling all week wanting to know your whereabouts because of some debts you owe. Tim explains it must be a mistake because he has no outstanding debts. His boss tells him that he should then deal with this as soon as possible because as he knows a schoolteacher is supposed to set an example at school for his students.

Tim says, "I am sure it is identity theft from the attack I had."

Tim moves to retrieve the days of phone messages left by the collection agent. He looks down and the agent's name is Vickie and the name of the collection company wrote down is "Vic/Tim Time To Pay Inc." He goes to a nearby phone and calls the phone number which comes back as an operator for the victim abuse line for battered and raped women. He hangs up and crams the messages into his pocket. The bell rings for school and he rushes to his class.

Tim storms into his classroom and the class laughs. One of the junior high kids proclaims, "You're late, Mr. Jenkins. Were you out peeping through people's windows?"

Some of the students in the class give a big "Ooooh."

Tim looks up at the student and says, "Why would you ask a silly question like that?"

The student replied, "It is a joke that our guest speaker made about you being gone. She said you must have been out being a peeping Tom."

"That is a not a funny thing to say about a teacher especially in these days, you can't even joke about such things."

"Sorry, Mr. Jenkins. It seemed funny when that Vickie lady said it."

Tim's eyes grew big and he stared for a moment at the student. Then Tim asked, "What guest speaker? When?"

"Yesterday she was here for career day. She talked to us about the advertising business. She used you as an example for the whole hour practically."

“What else did she say, like what examples did she give?”

“She just talked about different types of people, you know. Like normal people and weirdos. Oh, yea, like she said that she had to understand people’s issues like rapist and so forth. She said that everyone has little devils that tug at them, begging them to do bad things. Her job is to appeal to the bad in people without driving them over the edge and stuff.”

“Well, I don’t know how you remember that so well when you can’t seem to remember sentence structures.”

The student laughs and responds, “Well, if you were a blonde babe like she was then I would remember everything. I wouldn’t mind being a peeping Tom for that!”

Tim turns around from the board and assertively responds, “Don’t ever talk about peeping Toms or rapist in my class again, understand?”

The student quietly responds back; “Sure thing, Mr. Jenkins. Like I said, I am sorry.”

Tim turns around and begins writing on the board and talking about grammar as the students look at each other bewildered and smirking.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

TIM LEAVES SCHOOL at the end of the day and wanders to his favorite bookstore out of pure habit, as if his brain is on autopilot. He starts combing through the books on literature and a feeling begins to drape over him as he realizes that this is the store he first saw Vickie in. He begins to calmly but briskly leave and sees Vickie outside the bookstore on a patio side cafe table staring at him. He looks around and walks over to her table to sit down.

He says, "Look, you got me good with the beating, and the collection agent thing, and the guest speaker thing. Just leave me be and I will seek help. I beg you to leave me alone now."

Vickie puts down her book and looks at him for a moment then leans forward. "Tim, Tim, I haven't even gotten started yet. Don't you know that? It is over when I say

it is and not before.” She leans back in her chair with a look of disgust.

Tim looks around, very bothered. “You know what, you are harassing me. That stunt you pulled in school as a guest speaker. Really? I could go to the police, you know.”

She smiles at him and reaches into her purse. She pulls out a ziplock bag with the knife Tim left behind at her house he used to threaten her. The bag, marked in black bold letters, says “Exhibit A.”

“Go ahead and call the police. Then you can explain how your fingerprints are all over this knife and at my residence too, or don’t you remember that? Go back to your life. I have a lot in store for you.” She gives a slight smile that seems to cover pain. Tim is horrified, almost in tears as he clumsily gets up to leave but can hardly take his eyes off her, when she says, “Oh, you should read this short stories book. It is pretty funny and sad. You can get a lot out of books you know.” Bewildered by her attitude, he leaves.



Tim arrives home and tells his family he is not hungry as he goes upstairs to lie in bed. His wife comes up later and starts to comfort him. She says, “Honey, I know you have been through a lot. More than any person deserves. Try to

rest and put it all behind you.” She kisses him and tends to their daughter.

He can only stare off into the wall as if the wall is miles away. He is reviewing the whole predicament eyes focusing and defocusing on the ceiling patterns. Tim comes out of the shower and sees blood all over the bed trailing to his daughter’s room. He runs frantically as he sees his wife and daughter stabbed to death and the knife he used at Vickie’s is still in his wife’s chest. He turns and looks to his left and Vickie is there and runs toward him. Suddenly, the alarm clock is buzzing for him to wake up. He gets up and looks over to see his wife sleeping. He walks over to his daughter’s room and stares at her sleeping. He always gets up much earlier so he can jog before breakfast, but today he just spends his time looking at his family back and forth till they wake. He finally breaks away and begins to get ready for work, passing by his chair and table and seeing a book laying there, the very same one Vickie was reading outside the bookstore. He picks it up and flips the pages.

“Ah, you got yourself another book, I see. Is it good?” his wife asks.

He turns and says, “Yes, quite.” He puts it down and leaves.

STICKY VICKIE

IT IS TUESDAY and everything seems uneventful all the way through Friday. He feels good after a good day at school. The class is happy about it being the end of the week. He stops and gets a couple of roses, one for each of the women in his life. He feels that maybe finally Vickie has given up on him.

As he walks in the door to his home, he sees Vickie has his daughter in a headlock. He immediately storms in the living room, demanding to know what she is doing here. Vickie stops to let go of his daughter, Tanya.

Tanya and Tim's wife look back at Tim intently. Lana asks, "What is wrong, dear? Vickie was just showing Tanya how to defend herself against attackers. You know there are a lot of rapists and child abductors in the world."

Tim, confused, asks, "Vickie is teaching her this?"

His wife replies with a smile, "I'm sorry, honey. This is Vickie. She runs a home business on the side teaching self-defense right in your own home. She stopped by a while ago and was giving us some free lessons."

Vickie stands up and holds her hand out to shake Tim's. Vickie says, "Need to work on your grip there, Tim, kind of weak. Bet I could take you in a fight. But, wow, you have a strong parental feeling. I can tell you cherish this little girl of yours. I am sure you want her to know how to defend herself against attackers. Lots of perverts out there, you know, and you don't want her to grow up with memories like that. What do you think, Tim, what should they do to people like that?"

Tim replies, "Maybe punish them, I guess, but some maybe are just sick, you know, in the head."

"You're right, Tim, sick. But even dogs are put down for attacking people and the dog is just under the influence of instinct."

"Well, well, well, yes, but wouldn't a class somewhere be more appropriate?"

"You are absolutely right, Tim. I am an associate martial arts teacher down at Sato's Karate Gym. Here is a card, why don't you come down with your family and I can teach all of you some pointers, for free, of course. My way of saying sorry for this intrusion into your home."

Tim looks around trying to grasp an excuse until his wife says, "Sounds great! We will be there tomorrow night as you suggested earlier."

Tim is speechless as Vickie looks at him and says, "Don't worry about bringing a knife, we have some rubber ones to practice with. You know most home intruders bring a knife because it is quiet, unlike a gun, especially if their intention is to rape. Usually it is robbers that bring a gun because they want to scare a person as much as possible. You got to know these things, Tim, in case someone wants to do harm to you and your family. When you come down tomorrow evening, I will show you exactly what I mean by that."

Tim's heart is racing as the innuendos never cease, it seems. Lana asks Vickie if she has read this short stories book her husband picked up. Lana had read it and found it interesting, telling Vickie that Tim gave her a book on their first date.

Vickie says, "Hmm, that is good to know. I have seen that book by the way. In a way it kind of changed the course of my life. How about you, Tim?"

"I think that book has set a lot in motion."

Vickie smiles and says good-bye to the rest as they warmly say good-bye back. Tim just stands there listening to his wife close the front door. As she passes, she says, "She is a nice lady. Did you know she was attacked twice by rapists? Once as a teenager and another time not long ago. She

said she was able to beat the last guy pretty well till he got away. I tell you, I would hate to be on that woman's list. Did you have a good day today, dear?"

Tim snaps out of his semihypnotized state and says, "Fine, yeah fine." He goes to help with dinner.

Preview of Violet

Book 3 of the Vickie series

Violet precedes Vickie's story right before Vic/Tim. This is the first draft lines from the first chapter to preview:

Aftermath

The universe is a dark shroud covering all existence yet it allows us to see the stars. Vickie looks at the night sky wondering how her life came to be like this. "The stars are so beautiful and the moon. The moon has no light of its own but even though it reflects the light of the sun it shows its own." The desert is so quiet as Vickie looks around in the grey washed landscape of the moon's glow. She thinks; "I cannot be the sun or the stars but I am the moon and must change the tide." Vickie stares at the moon contemplating her next moves, but it was six months ago where it began in what was her biggest trial yet.

From the author:

Thank you for previewing my books and I hope you read the completed versions and enjoy them as much as I enjoyed writing them.

- Mike Sims