

Piece by Piece

A sudden, violent thunderstorm swept across northern Alabama at 3 o'clock in the morning. Moses "Mac" MacDonald awoke with a start as he felt the fury of the storm in his back yard. He looked out the bedroom window and saw a huge ball of lightning forming right before his eyes. As he threw up his arms to block the intense white light, he passed out cold on the hard floor.

When Mac woke up, he was flat on his back, naked. His outstretched hands and feet were somehow attached to a hard surface. He could barely move his head, but he glanced around the room and it was all white – white and bright. He felt a sudden urge to sleep, and then he passed out.

When Mac awoke, he struggled mightily with his bonds, but it was no use. Then he shouted for help and cursed at the top of his lungs, and then he threatened the invisible people who were holding him captive. The white room had no visible features. An urge to sleep passed through his mind, and sleep, he did.

When he awoke, he lay quietly for a while, trying to figure out his situation. Obviously, he'd been captured and restrained by someone, but he didn't have a clue who or how or why. Mac was a professor of physics at the University, so his analytical mind started working on the problem of freeing himself in a methodical manner. He looked left and right, and then up and down. He saw no bonds on his wrists, and he couldn't see his ankles, only his toes. He struggled with his arms, but the more he struggled, the tighter the bonds became – he worried that his circulation would be cut off if he kept trying, so he lay still for a while. He felt the urge to pee, and couldn't restrain himself. And then he felt an urge to sleep, and he was out cold in a second.

Mac awoke to a faint vibration, which was something new, he realized. He looked around and saw that the little finger on his left hand was gone. He screamed and twisted and writhed to no avail. He felt a sudden urge to sleep, and he was out like a light.

When he awoke again, he felt the vibration and tried to characterize it, but he'd never felt anything like it. His left hand felt numb, and he kept looking at where the finger used to be – there was a flap of skin folded over the stump, so he assumed that a surgeon removed the finger carefully. A pain in his feet caused him to look down, but his head was restrained from movement in that direction, but by straining, he saw that the little toe had been removed from his left foot. He screamed and passed out.

Mac awoke with primal fear washing over his body and shredding his mind. Why would anyone tie him down and start cutting off fingers and toes? He screamed and swore and screamed some more. After another sleep period, he woke up and suddenly realized that the mystery torturers had removed part of his manhood – the screaming lasted for only a few moments before he passed out cold.

Mac's left leg was gone.

And then his right arm.

And then an ear.

Finally, an eyeball was harvested.

One day, the room twisted and pitched. He felt like a ping-pong ball inside a metal drum. It stopped almost as soon as it began, but then he felt woozy, and he realized that his inner ear was telling him that there was no gravity. His brain rejected that, but his remaining ear wasn't lying. He vomited, and passed out.

When Mac awoke, he could feel a sense of spinning – there was torque in several different axes at once. The physicist in him realized something shocking: he had become a captive of some race that had appeared in that ball of lightning; he was a specimen, pinned to a table; he was being dissected, piece-by-piece, and studied; the ship he was on had just been attacked and disabled by a superior force; he was alone and strapped down, and he was certainly going to die right here.

And then the automated dissection machine pumped a drop of something into his body and he slept.

And then gravity was back, and he was missing his entire right leg.

And then the ship lurched and was tortured again, and he was forced to sleep through the battle.

And then the rest of his manhood was removed, and he screamed and screamed.

And then his vocal cords were removed, so his screaming was as quiet as the cold outside.

They removed his other eye, and most of his teeth.

He lost his other arm, and then the rest of the skin on his torso.

Unfortunately, because he was in very good shape, it took Mac a long time to die.

He knew the moment when his skull was opened, and they removed his brain. It stayed alive for quite a while in a special container that they probed in many different areas. He felt the entire range of human emotions, one-by-one, as the exploratory probes did their job.

And finally Mac was allowed to expire.

Mac never knew that he was on a robotic exploration craft that was gathering information about humans. The A'rrl race was expanding, and Earth was next in line for conquest and destruction. As usual, they dispatched a robotic craft to harvest samples of dominant life forms, dissect them, and decide how to totally eliminate them in one quick battle.

Only the evil Gladdenan stood in their way – they had pounded the A'rrl ship to a pulp several times, but the robotic craft rebuilt itself and continued its mission. Piece-by-piece, it analyzed Mac MacDonald's pieces and sent data to the home world which would guarantee A'rrl success.

And then the A'rrl invasion began.