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THE PHASEWALKER: ALIVE AGAIN

by

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## ONE

The countryside was quiet that Monday afternoon. A gentle breeze cut through the trees and across the green fields as the warm summer heat covered everything like a blanket. The calm, reflective water glistened in the canal as it weaved through the landscape, interrupted at regular intervals by sturdy wooden locks designed to cart its path downhill. Ducks and swans happily swam down this watery pathway, minding their own business, greeting the small flock of geese that hung out beside one of the many bridges that crossed over this canal. Either side of the water, cows and horses dotted the fields between farms and woodland. The dual carriageway could be heard in the distance as cars sped through the blissful country without a care. Within the fields, a small road weaved across the green, cutting through a farm and past a car park that served the local bar called “Man’s Former Nest”. The punters never liked the name, so they just called it *The Nest*. The building sat on one side of the canal. Mirroring it on the other side was a farm with a building under construction, a work in progress going back years. If you followed the road further in this direction, you would come across a pair of buildings hidden away behind some bushes, nice and secluded just as the occupants liked it.

One of those occupants was a young man named Troy Anderson. He was a big bloke, broad shouldered with a square shaped head and a neat flat topped haircut, his beard covered the underside of his large chin and rose to join his sideburns. Today, he was wearing loose shorts and a t-shirt with socks on his feet. He rubbed between his eyes, the spot where he wore his glasses which had been put down on the dining table. He walked over to the door leading to the garage, where he was greeted by the happy barks of his Alsatian dogs. He shooed them aside so he could open the fridge and retrieve the bags holding their dinner, blood soaked meat which he could mix with the nutritious dog food in the kitchen. They followed him back and waited impatiently to be fed. He measured out the bowls and led them outside into the large

backyard, placing the bowls down watching them dig in hungrily. He couldn't help but smile. He loved his dogs.

Walking back into the house, he shut the back door, cleaning up the kitchen and retracing his steps to check on the puppies, caged in the garage so they couldn't tear up the furniture. He just put away the leftover food and equipment when there was a loud ring from the doorbell. All the dogs started barking in response, as if Troy was incapable of hearing it on his own. "Every time" he sighed, a painful reminder of all the early mornings he'd suffered because of this wake up call. He shut the garage door and headed to the front door, seeing the silhouette of whoever was paying him a visit.

He wasn't expecting anyone. *Who could this be?*

The door handle turned and unlocked the door. As soon as it cracked open, he was met with a disturbing smell, a disgusting blend of vomit and sewage. His nose recoiled as he fought the urge to throw up on the spot. "What the fuck...?" he grimaced, throwing open the door only to be met with a figure slumped against his wall, covered head to toe in gunk, sludge and gloop that he couldn't begin to describe. It was like he'd been dunked in tar, then in slime, then rolled through a slaughterhouse. It looked horrible. The figure stood strangely, wavering on exhaustion, their clothes he wore were stained and soaking. His dark hair was sticky and matted. The glasses he wore were askew and greased with slime. In his right hand he held what appeared to be a silver sabre, the sword dripping with more blood and slime. Around his feet, a puddle formed giving the illusion he was melting.

Troy stared at the figure, who hunched his shoulders offering him a pleasant smile. "Hey mate" Jackson said. "Surprise. Any chance I could come in? You would not believe the week I've had."