

Synchronicity or Spirits in the Material World  
by Kim Switzer

Tuesday, May 8, 10:08 a.m., downtown Greenvale

“I'm not really sure I'll be able to get that done, at least not so quickly. It's not actually part of my job, you know, so I'm going to have to find little bits and pieces of time here and there to fit it in.” Andi snapped her teeth shut to keep from saying anything else, anything she might regret later in the unemployment line. She felt the heat rise in her cheeks as her anger threatened to choke her.

“Oh, I know you. You always come through.” Ben's voice boomed through the small room, and his toothy grin didn't reach his watery blue eyes. “Gotta find a way to fill those slow spots, anyway, right? Build some business, get some new clients on board.” He dropped a box of envelopes and a flash drive on her desk. Let me know when they're done. If you can't get them all by tomorrow, that's okay. Thursday's soon enough.” He rapped the top of the box with his knuckles and left the room without a backward glance.

Andi ground her teeth and clenched her fists, her ragged, bitten nails digging into her palms. She tried to breathe and be calm, but it wasn't working.

“Sure,” she muttered, slamming her fingertips against the keyboard as she opened the files on the flash drive. “Do more stuff. Do it faster. No, you can't have a raise. Do it for the team. Idiots. There's no team. Just them and me.” She switched to her journal software and typed faster, her fingers bruising against the keys as she wrote out her frustrations, all the while knowing she would be back here tomorrow doing it all again.

Tuesday, May 8, 10:08 a.m., Beauregard State Park

The boys crept through the underbrush, moving slowly to keep the leaves from rustling.

“I hear it! I can hear it breathing up ahead.” The first boy paused and looked over his shoulder at his friends.

“Shh!” the second boy hissed, stumbling forward as the third boy didn't stop soon enough.

“I can smell it,” said the third boy, his brow furrowed. “Are deer supposed to stink like that? Maybe it's not a deer. Could be a bear.”

“Would you two shut up!” the second boy said, forgetting himself and letting his voice rise. “There's no bears around here. No no one ever sees bears. And whatever it was, it's probably gone now. You two and your yammering probably scared it into Canada by now.” He shot them a disgusted look and strode forward, taking the lead. “Come on.” He waved the others forward. “We can maybe find some tracks or something at least.”

They moved toward a clearing just visible through the trees. As they approached, a stench rose around them, musky and acrid, burning their nostrils. They froze, staring around wide eyed.

“What the...” the first boy started to speak. A roar rolled through the air. The brush exploded in front of them, leaves and twigs spinning like shrapnel against their faces.

A towering beast, all large fangs and claws and wild yellow eyes reared up, roaring again and swiping at them with thick black claws like giant hands. The three boys spun as one and ran screaming back the way they came, the foul stink and thunderous roar of the beast fading behind them as they went.

Friday, May 18, 7:40 p.m., downtown Greenvale

“Hey, Les, what are you reading?” Andi slung her messenger bag across the back of an empty seat and plopped down into the other empty seat across from her friend. She leaned back with a groan, letting her head tilt back and eyes close as she stretched.

“The Telegraph. Have you heard all this stuff about all the Sasquatch sightings outside of town the past couple of weeks?”

“The Telegraph? You're reading that trash? And no. I've been dealing with my own monster the past two weeks. I don't have time for Sasquatch.”

“I got this from my Nonny,” Leslie said defensively. “The East Coast guy still giving you a hard time?” She twisted her lips into a sympathetic grimace.

“Oh yeah. I think he's trying to get me to quit. Or he's trying to commit suicide by office assistant.” She blew on her cappuccino and took a sip.

“So what's his deal? Is he at least cute?”

“Hardly. He's short and chunky, and his face is so red all the time I swear he's about to have a stroke or something. That can't be healthy.”

Music jingled from her purse, and Andi scrambled to drag the bag onto her lap. “Josh,” she said as she rummaged through the bag and pulled out her phone.

Leslie snorted. “That's your text alert? Cute.”

“Just for Josh,” Andi said with a sheepish smile. She thumbed through the keys, pulling up the message. “Maybe he wants to get together tonight after all. I've been kind of stressed with this new boss thing, so Josh and I haven't been seeing a lot of each other these past couple of weeks. I think I haven't been that fun to be around, so he's been keeping his distance.”

“Maybe you guys need a romantic weekend away,” Leslie suggested.

“I don't think so.” Andi's voice was flat and strangled.

“What's wrong? Is Josh okay?”

“He seems to be fine. He just seems to be not my boyfriend any more.” Andi pushed the phone across the table so Leslie could read the text.

“He broke up with you by text?” Leslie's voice was filled with outrage. “What a total loser jerk! We should have my Nonny put a curse on him.” She looked worriedly at Andi who was twisting and

shredding her napkin, eyes wide and staring at nothing.

Andi swallowed, still not focusing on Leslie. "I guess that's how life is," she said in that same flat, strained voice. She rose, knocking over the empty chair as she threw her bag over her shoulder. She stepped around the chair, not bothering to pick it up, and stumbled out of the cafe.

Friday, May 18, 7:40 p.m., outskirts of Beauregard State Park

The old woman shuffled around the fire pit outside her tiny, battered trailer. Her worn, fuzzy pink house slippers kicked up dust from the dirt yard as she poked the embers with a charred stick, stirring up any remaining hot spots to make sure they didn't spark up later and catch fire to any of the stragly scrub bushes in the yard.

Satisfied the fire was safe to leave alone, she turned toward the open door of the trailer. Behind her, deep in the forest, an unearthly scream split the evening air. She froze for a moment then whirled toward the dense, dark forest encircling the tiny clearing and the trailer.

"What the hell was that?" Her husband appeared in the doorway, flannel shirt open over a yellowing undershirt, open bottle of beer dangling from one hand. He stared past his wife into the forest, not moving to join her.

"Don't know," she said, taking a backward step toward the trailer, some primal intuition keeping her from turning her back on the trees.

Another scream split the air, closer this time, and they could hear something large crashing through the woods toward them.

"Get your ass in here," the old man yelled, lurching back from the door and waving an arm to hurry his wife inside.

The old woman staggered toward the trailer, losing one pink slipper and she pulled herself up the stairs. Tree limbs snapped at the edge of the yard, and another roar rolled over them from the edge of the trees.

The old man hauled his wife up the last step and shoved the door closed as something large slammed into the trailer, rocking it on its cinder blocks. The unseen beast screamed again and hit the trailer over and over until it tiled off its base and fell on its side in the dirt.

The old couple screamed inside until they heard the rending sound of claws in metal. They fell silent, cowering against the bottom of the upturned trailer. The beast fell silent, too, and they held their breath, listening. With a final roar and another shove against the trailer, the beast left as quickly as it had come.

Saturday, June 2, 11:25 a.m., downtown Greenvale

"I know it sounds crazy," Leslie said. She spread notes and printouts and newspaper clippings across Andi's kitchen table, trying to ignore her friend's lank, dirty hair and pale, drawn face. "But when I started pulling up all these times and dates, it all came together. It's happened too many times to be a coincidence."

“You think my new boss is Sasquatch?” Andi asked.

“No. Probably not. But every time you have a run-in with him, there's some sort of Sasquatch activity reported at the exact same time. And that day Josh broke up with you, right at the same time you got the text, something huge attacked an old couple in their trailer, knocked it off its moorings and ripped part way through the side of it.”

“That wasn't about my boss,” Andi said, eyes narrowing as she finally focused on Leslie's face. “So I guess he can't be Sasquatch. That was two weeks ago, anyhow. Was that the last of it? Maybe it's over now, whatever it is.”

Leslie shook her head, curls bouncing against her forehead. “It's not. That day your boss threatened to suspend you for taking too much personal time? A hiker was attacked in Beauregard Park. He's still in a coma, lost his leg, and he may not survive.”

“Still, it can't have anything to do with my boss,” Andi said. “You said yourself the one time it happened was when...when I got that text.”

“I know,” Leslie said quietly. “I don't think it's about your boss.”

“What? You think it's me?” Andi asked, her voice hardening. She glared across the table. “You think I have something to do with this?”

“Not just me,” Leslie said. She shrugged uncomfortably. “My Nonny had a dream about it.”

“Your Nonny is eighty-seven years old, for Pete's sake!” Andi jumped up and started pacing around the small kitchen, her bare feet slapping against the vinyl tiles. “She's senile.”

“She is not senile,” Leslie snapped back. “She's a seer. Everyone knows that. Even some of the elders from the reservation ask Nonny for her visions. And she saw that you're connected to this thing.”

“Sorry,” Andi said, returning to her seat. “I know she's not senile. Nonny is great, you know I love her. But this idea is pretty crazy. The thing these people have been seeing and all, it's not Sasquatch. It's probably a bear, if there's really anything at all.”

“What about the sightings and attacks happening every time something bad happens to you? And what about Nonny's dream?”

Andi shook her head. “I don't know. Coincidence? And something she ate? I just don't know. But I know I don't believe it's Sasquatch.”

“Will you at least come with me to Nonny's? She and some friends just want to do a ceremony.”

“I don't think so.”

“Come on. What can it hurt? If you don't believe in Sasquatch, then it's just a nice drive out into the country. And looking at you, you could really use some time out of this house. You'll put Nonny's mind at ease, and her friends' minds, too, and we can get some of her peanut butter chocolate chip cookies.”

“Cookies?” Andi smiled. “Well, if there are cookies...”

Saturday, June 2, 4:50 p.m., just outside Beauregard State Park

Andi sat on the pile of cushions in the middle of Nonny's living room. Leslie, Nonny, and several friends of Nonny's formed a circle around her, each holding a rattle or drum, candles burning in holders at their feet.

A tall man in faded jeans and a plaid shirt stood near the door. He nodded to Nonny. “You all set here?”

“We're ready,” Nonny told him, nodding her head so her long, pewter braid swung forward across her shoulder. “You be careful out there.”

“Always,” the man said. “You call him out here, we'll deal with him out there. See you for dinner and some of those cookies.” He quirked one side of his mouth up in a half smile, gave her a wink, and left.

Nonny turned to Andi and smiled, her round cheeks crinkling and her blue eyes lighting up. “Don't you worry. We'll take care of this and get to those cookies quick as you know. Ready?”

Andi nodded, not feeling ready at all but wanting to please the old woman.

Nonny crossed the room and turned down the lights so the only illumination was from the candles set around the circle. She returned to her chair and picked up her painted leather rattle. She glanced at the others, and as one they began drumming and shaking their rattles, building a rhythm Andi could feel in her chest. They started chanting, and Andi felt her eyes closing. She leaned back into the cushions, feeling herself drift away from the room and the people surrounding her.

At first she fought to stay awake and pay attention to what was happening, but the drifting feeling and the chanting and drumming felt so good and so relaxing after so many weeks of stress and sorrow. She gave herself to the drifting feeling, noticing that it was almost like floating in a warm pool. She felt herself moving away from the room, the sounds receding as she floated away. She found herself in darkness, but then she found that she could see a faint light. She looked around and saw that she was in a forest. Beauregard, she wondered? She realized she didn't care that much. She looked at the trees as she walked through the woods. She felt very tall somehow, and one part of her brain wondered why so many branches seemed to be at eye level. She was sure they should have been above her head. She frowned a bit, trying to figure it out, but then she let it go as the forest drew her deeper in.

Ahead she could see a clearing. She slowed as she drew nearer, sniffing the air, vaguely noticing that this was a strange thing to do. Something in the air didn't smell right. It didn't smell like forest or like animal. She sniffed again, narrowing her eyes to try to focus on what was in the clearing. A house. People out front, facing her. That was the smell. People with black sticks. Guns, the still thinking part of her brain supplied. She growled, but this time no part of her brain noticed that this was odd. She pushed forward, and the people with the sticks turned to face her, raising the sticks. She opened her mouth and let out a roaring scream, and it felt so good. She felt a flood of desire course through her, the desire the scream and scream and then tear and rend and send those people flying out of her way.

Something inside the house was pulling her. She could feel it. She tried to shake it off, but it wouldn't

let go. She stepped forward again, roaring a challenge at the men aiming their guns at her. One in front was closer than the rest, and she charged at him, growling low in her throat and reaching for him with her claws extended.

The men shouted things at her, things she couldn't understand. She could only understand the sweet smell of blood that rose around her as her claws tore through the first man's arm. She could only understand screaming and letting the rage pour out of her.

She grabbed another man by his head and threw him toward the trees, then turned toward the man blocking her way to the entrance of the house. She pulled herself up tall, thrust her chest out and roared at him, but he stood his ground. She rushed at him, ignoring the loud sound from the gun he pointed until she felt a searing pain in her head. She stumbled a little but kept moving toward him. He fired again, and the pain became unbearable. She screamed again, this time in pain, and stopped moving forward. She looked up into the man's face, for just a moment thinking she knew him, for just a moment remembering that she was human. Inside, she could hear someone screaming, saying a word over and over again that she thought should mean something to her. And then she turned and ran for the trees, looking back once to issue another scream before she stumbled into the trees and fell to her knees, something hot in her eyes keeping her from being able to see the way out.

The man on the porch turned from the woods and ran back into the house. Leslie was in the center of the circle, wailing Andi's name over and over again, cradling her friend's body in her arms. Leslie broke into choking sobs as she rocked Andi back and forth. Outside, another scream from the beast sounded, weak this time. Leslie lay Andi back on the cushions, pressing a cloth to the bloody hole in her forehead, watching the light die in her eyes. Outside, the beast's scream rose again and then faded away into the night.

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