

# Threesome

*Leslie What*

Cara was sitting on the floor beside the bed when a barrage of green lights flashed from somewhere outside the dormer window. A whirring sound, like an insanely broken sprinkler, only louder, was her first clue that something terrible was about to happen. Her best friends, Kamala and Jessica, sat side-by-side on Cara's bed and pored over a magazine. Cara heard a car screech to a halt and heard dogs and cats bark, then silence. At first she thought it was the Rapture, but that didn't explain the green flashing lights. "Ohmygod!" Cara said. "I know what it is!" Aliens had landed and had started to round up all of the humans. "But we're still here," Cara said. "Isn't that weird?"

Kamala and Jessica glared down at her from the bed. They were reading her copy of *Seventeen* because two could share a magazine, whereas three could not. But since it belonged to her, Cara consoled herself knowing she could read it later. The reason she was angry had nothing to do with the stupid magazine. It was just that when her two best friends swarmed into her room, they had formed a clique on her bed and let her know she wasn't invited to join.

Cara, just thirteen, was the frail sort, small-boned, with translucent, almost blue skin. She had lost enough weight in the last two years, since starting middle school, that one might have described her as paper-thin. She had not yet started her period, which both frightened her and made her a target of pity.

At almost fourteen, Jessica was the oldest. She was muscular and short, with a head shaped like a boulder. Her teeth and skin were perfect, on her, everyone agreed, a waste. Why did all the ugly girls have good teeth and complexions while all the cute girls had uneven skin tone and overbites? Because when you were ugly, it didn't matter if you were even uglier, but when you were cute it was so easy to fuck up. All it took was a zit or a mole, whereas on an ugly girl, who would even notice?

Whereas Kamala, in the middle, at thirteen and one half, was tall and slender, with steel-hard and long dancer's legs. Kamala was fast and sharp-tongued. She could make Cara cry, which she did, as often as possible.

Cara heard disgusting sucking and screaming noises outside. "At first I thought it was the Rapture," Cara admitted. "Then I figured out it was aliens."

"What *are* you talking about?" said Kamala.

"Look," Jessica said. "We don't want to make fun of your beliefs . . ."

"We don't?" said Kamala. "I do."

"Don't listen to her," said Jessica. "She's just being a bitch. It's cool that you're religious. It's cool that you worry about Rapture and the end of the world. But you have to be tolerant of us and our beliefs and we don't think the world is going to end."

"I don't have any beliefs," Kamala said.

"It shows," said Jessica.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," Jessica began, but stopped.

"You keep telling yourself that," said Cara. But she forced herself to shut up. They'd made it clear neither

wanted to hear it and she was tired of arguing and trying to prove her point. When she concentrated, she could smell the hot rubber stench from when the alien ships had burned through the Earth's atmosphere. She stood and went over to the window seat to look out. The skies seemed to open up to allow bands of brilliant light to stream through the clouds.

On the sidewalk, a kid on a bike looked up, maybe expecting to see God, but instead surprised at what he was seeing: no doubt little horrible green flying bug-eyed monsters that appeared overhead and sucked everybody up from whatever they were doing in their cars or lawns or houses or fields or sweatshops. She tried to see straight above her but the angle was wrong. When she glanced back at the sidewalk, the kid was gone.

"We're all alone," Cara said, dazed. "Just the three of us."

"Well, sing a song about it," said Kamala.

"You don't understand," Cara said. "We're all that's left." Cara closed her eyes. The sucking up process was gross, loud whooshy sounds like when a dog snarfed up a hot dog, or the noises you heard at the sucking-machine drive-thru thing at the bank. She imagined green bug-eyed flying monsters baring their fangs, dripping slime all around, killing lawns and making snakes explode. In the distance she heard screaming and fear and anger as all the people got sucked up, except for the girls in her room.

"You can have your magazine back," said Kamala, and tossed it to the ground. The pages were splayed and dirty.

"Let's make crank phone calls," said Jessica. "You've got ID Block, don't you?"

"I hate crank calling," said Kamala.

"So, stay here," said Jessica.

"There's no point," said Cara, but the two of them had already bounced from the bed and run for the stairs. Cara followed them into the kitchen, where they could rummage for food as they called out on the portable.

"Let's call Roy," said Kamala. She gave Jessica his number.

"No answer," Jessica said. "I know. Let's call Mr. Fish."

Kamala opened the refrigerator and took out the milk. "Get the phone book," she told Cara. "Got anything to eat?"

Cara brought out the phone book, cheese and crackers, and a bowl of fruit. They always had fruit.

"Don't you have anything good?" asked Kamala. "Why do we come here when all they ever have is fruit?"

"Because they have cable with HBO," Jessica said. "Nobody's perfect." She dialed up Mr. Fish, but there was no answer.

"Where is everybody?" asked Kamala.

"No point in calling anyone," Cara said. "Nobody's home. Except us. Don't you get what I've been telling you?"

"Oh, shit. She's right. Let's watch TV," said Kamala.

Just then, the sun faded behind the clouds and thunder broke. Rain tapped like children's footsteps above them on the skylight and all three looked up, as if expecting to see someone running away. There was a loud pop and a crackling noise and a thud as a tree branch broke and landed on the roof. The power went out and the house went grave-silent.

"Oh shit," said Cara.

"I guess this means we can't watch TV," said Kamala.

"Let's go to the mall," said Jessica.

"How will we get there?" Kamala answered.

"We could take the bus," Jessica said.

"No way," said Kamala. "I am not taking the bus with homeless smelly people."

"Where's your mom?" Jessica asked. "She could take us."

"She isn't here," Cara said.

"Like, we didn't notice that?" Kamala said.

"When's she getting back?" asked Jessica. "That's what we mean and you know it."

"She's supposed to be here already," Kamala said.

"I don't think she's coming home," said Cara.

"Oh stop with the end of the world shit," said Kamala.

"Whatever," said Cara.

They would need to make a grocery run and stock up on everything. They might as well eat lots of burgers and shakes right away because pretty soon, they would all be living on Spam and saltines. She wondered how long it would take to grow bored with each other's company. When there were only three, that didn't allow for enough variables to make things interesting, and everything was too routine, too predictable. When there were only three, there was always one man out, so to speak. If she had learned anything from the alien Rapture, it was that someone was always left behind.

Maybe two of them would get hungry and eat the third. She hoped it wasn't her-not that she wanted to eat anyone-she just didn't want to be sacrificed for the others.

"Let's play a game," said Kamala, and the others dutifully followed her into the living room. Cara's father was an orthodontist. On the shelves were models of jaws and teeth molds, each identified by name. Cara had smashed her own mold the first time she came across it, preferring to pretend she came by her nice smile naturally. But Cara liked looking at the Neanderthal jaws of her former classmates. They had once made fun of her, but now that they'd been snatched, the joke was on them.

"I wish we had Pop Tarts," Jessica said.

"Remember how good Pop Tarts taste toasted?" Kamala asked.

"Umm, yeah, with the filling all hot and the crust all crispy and the sugar burning your tongue," said Jessica. "We better stop talking about food or I might have to eat somebody."

“Don’t you sometimes hate it that your parents won’t let you eat sweets?” Kamala said.

Cara shrugged. She was always worried about her weight and didn’t like to eat sweets anyway.

Kamala picked up a magazine and sighed. “What do you suppose is going to be in fashion for the summer? I mean, what do you think would be in fashion if there still was such a thing, since according to Cara, the aliens must have taken away all the fashion designers?”

“I think it would be the summer of full-frontal nudity,” said Jessica. “Simple yet tasteful. But only the girls would go naked. The boys would all be wearing sweats.”

“Oh, gross,” Kamala said. “I don’t want to see a bunch of naked porn sluts. But anyways, I doubt it. Nude girls will never be popular. People might be temporary but fashion was forever, which explains why there were still togas even though the Romans had been dead for a thousand years.”

“What game should we play? Cara asked. “How about Monopoly or Clue?”

“I want to play chess,” Jessica said. “Who’ll play with me?”

“I will,” Cara and Kamala called in unison.

“Who should I choose? Hmmm,” Jessica said, grinning ferociously.

“I’ll rub your back,” Kamala said.

“And what about you, Cara?” Jessica asked. “What will you do for me?”

Cara felt acutely uncomfortable. Her belly hurt like someone had socked her there. “I’ll rub your feet,” she said, though she didn’t really want to. She suspected that Jessica wouldn’t want her to either, so it was the perfect thing to offer.

“Euewweuee! Gross!” said Jessica. “Kamala, you be black.”

“That’s why we shouldn’t play games that only two can play,” said Cara, trying not to show her disappointment.

“You’re such a baby,” said Jessica. All the good games are for two, or maybe four. That’s just the breaks.”

“There’s lots of games for three,” Cara said.

“Oh, like hide and seek. Let’s play that. How retarded.”

“I was thinking of Scrabble,” said Cara. “Or *Parcheesy* .”

“I wish the bug-eyed monsters had left behind some cute boys,” said Kamala. “This isso unfair.”

“We don’t need any boys,” said Jessica. “I don’t know why you always say that. I like it that there’s only girls.”

“Oh, come out, already,” said Kamala. “Not that it will do you any good.”

“What do you suppose they’re doing up there?” Jessica asked. “Do you think the bug-eyed monsters ate them?”

“Probably,” said Kamala. “Unless they needed slaves. But if they needed slaves, why would they take

the old people like your mother? They can't work very hard."

"Why would they take the old people if they were just going to eat them?" Jessica asked. "They can't taste very good, either."

"You're *so* right," said Kamala. The two glared at each other and screamed "Experiments!" in unison.

"Why us?" Cara asked. "It doesn't make sense. They meant to take everyone. Why leave us behind?"

Kamala . . . sneezed and looked frantically around for some tissue. She wiped her nose and spit into the corner. "We're the Plus or Minus three," she said. "We're the mistakes that you have to ignore in a poll."

"You be plus one and I'll be minus," said Kamala. She tossed her dirty tissue on the floor.

"Oh, come on!" Cara chided. "How hard could it be to take that outside and throw it on the lawn?"

"You're not my mother," said Kamala. She inched toward Cara until she was close enough to jab her.

"Ouch!" Cara shrieked. "Cut it out."

Kamala made her hands into the blades of scissors. "Snip, snip," she said.

"Paper, rock, scissors!" yelled Jessica, and jumped atop Kamala and ground her fist into the smaller girl's scalp. "Noogie time!" she said with too much glee. "Kamala wants a boyfriend but has to settle for me!"

"Jessica wants a girlfriend but is deluded and thinks that might be me!" said Kamala.

Jessica applied enough pressure to leave a bruise.

"Ouch!" Kamala shrieked. "Stop!"

"You're *so* immature!" said Cara.

"Cara just wants to grow up," said Jessica. She pulled on Kamala's hair.

"Save me, Cara!" Kamala begged.

"Why should I?" asked Cara.

"She's killing me!" Kamala said. "You have to help! Or I won't help the next time she tries to kill you."

"Oh, God, this is so lame! Okay, okay." She rushed over to lay her hand over Jessica's back and said, "Paper covers rock."

Jessica ground one final intensely painful noogie into Kamala's head before rolling off in a fit of giggles on the carpet.

"I hate this game," said Cara.

"Well you better get used to it," Kamala said. "Because if we're all that's left and you don't want to be left out in chess, well, this is *sortait*."

"Paper, Rock, Scissors is a lot more fun when you get to be violent," Jessica noted, with a warning glance toward Kamala.

Cara's belly felt worse, hot and painful, like she had to go to the bathroom, only she didn't. She wondered if this meant that she was finally getting her period. What terrible timing!

"I have an idea," Jessica said. "If everyone else is dead and we went to a sporting goods store or somewhere good, wouldn't everything be free? I think we should steal a car and drive there ourselves."

"I want to go to the store," Kamala said. "I've got a huge zit."

"Why do you care about zits?" said Jessica. "There aren't any boys around to look at you."

"I care," said Kamala. "Who wants to go with me?"

"It's raining," Cara said. "I'm cold. Can't we wait and go tomorrow?" Once you got really cold and wet it was almost impossible to warm up.

"There's no need to be cold," Jessica said. "You have a fireplace. Let's burn something."

"It's a gas fireplace," said Cara. "Those are fake logs."

"That ought to make the fire easy to start," said Kamala.

"You guys!"

"It's so unfair," Cara said. "What did any of those people do to deserve to be abducted?"

"Life isn't fair," said Jessica. She kicked Kamala on the shin.

"You bitch!" Kamala screamed, and lunged toward her attacker.

They wrestled some more. Cara didn't want to watch, and got up to look out the window. "I'm scared," she said. "I don't know what's going to happen."

"You never knew what was going to happen," said Kamala. "And you were afraid then. Even before the aliens."

It was true.

"I'll go to the store," said Jessica. "Rain doesn't scare me."

"Me too," Cara added quickly. "I'll go with you guys."

The two older girls jumped up and ran outside, allowing the door to slam shut before Cara could catch them.

"Wait up," said Cara.

Kamala must have heard her but pretended not to. She took Jessica's arm. "Let's hide," she said, and the two of them ran away.

Cara followed them down the street. The rain fell in her eyes and she slipped on the sidewalk and scraped her leg. Her ass was cold and wet and everything hurt. "Wait up!" she said, almost begging. "Hey, I think I got my period!" She could no longer see Jessica and Kamala; maybe they were still hiding. "Olly olly oxen free!" she cried.

She sat still and looked around at the gray and quiet stillness of the street. "Where is everybody?" she called. Only a wiry, howling dog who jumped against his wire fence bothered to answer.

