



## **Eating Grass** Small Stories

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I'm standing in the rain, mashed on alcohol and pills, waiting for the door to open. Waiting to meet my new housemates. Hoping to start again.

The guy works in a supermarket, lives in front of a TV. The woman is a nature freak, loves crystal healing. I go to my room.

I wake in the morning, shower and put on a suit. I've got a job interview. I need to pull myself together. Really.

The cardboard cut-outs ask me questions at the interview. I tell them what they want to hear. Every answer is a lie.

At the house BBQ I share my Duty Free whisky. The woman wants to heal me with magic rocks. I'm beyond saving. I grin.

I get a phone call. They offer me the job. This is my first step. I'm thinking, I'm on my way. I have to get this right.

The night before my first day I have a nightmare - I'm walking across grass. An old man waves at me. The earth opens up and swallows me.

My first day at work. It's like I'm in a computer game walking through a maze of air-conditioned corridors. Trying to get to the next level.

The Rockmoore institute is modern, clinically clean, like working in a hospital. Security is tight. I can't go anywhere without my pass.

I attend a meeting. The atmosphere is uncomfortable. There's a heated debate about someone called 'The Professor'.

I meet my manager. He introduces me to Sophie. She takes me on a tour. We go onto the roof and take in the view across the city.

Sophie is pretty. She smiles but I'm not convinced she's happy. She asks questions. I give vague answers. I don't talk about my past.

That night I'm awoken by footsteps coming towards the bed. A woman's body slips in beside me.

What the hell are you doing? I say. I'm convinced it's my female housemate come to heal me with her body. When I turn the light on it's not.

Who are you? I ask.

She's beautiful with bright red hair. She says, My name is Luna. I'm here to please you, to do whatever you want.

I wake in the morning thinking, that was a weird dream. While I'm eating breakfast my female housemate tells me she saw my girlfriend.

I know she's joking but she refuses to admit it. This isn't funny. What colour is her hair? I ask. Red, she replies.

The office air-conditioning makes my throat dry. My manager gives me a pile of documents to process. Sophie smiles at me.

That night I wake to see two men in my room watching me sleep. I'm freaked out. The men glow like human light bulbs and then disappear.

Was I dreaming again? I ask my housemates. They have seen and heard nothing. I go to work, shaken. At least it's almost the weekend.

The weekend. My housemates invite me to a house party. I can't get into it but I act like I am. I meet a woman. She takes me to her room.

We talk about travelling, drink wine and make love. She falls asleep. I walk into the garden. Dawn breaks. I feel so alone.

Two men come to the house asking for me. They look like businessmen. They say they're from the Life Experience Corporation. "I'm not in".

I'm at work. My manager says I need to meet The Professor. Sophie says she is going to visit him and offers me a lift.

I go to a club, fuse with the music on pills. I talk to people but I remember none of them. The beat pounds in my head. I need to dance.

I dance on my own. A woman comes over. I go to the bar. She finds me. We dance and kiss. I've come here to lose myself, not find someone.

I awake at her place. She talks about herself. I pretend to listen. We have a smoke. She wants to meet again. Yeah, I say, maybe.

I go home and sleep. I dream of Luna. Suddenly grass grows over everything, even my skin. A hole opens up in the ground and swallows me.

At work I sit at my desk. Sophie watches me. You okay? she asks. We go for a coffee. She talks about Richard. Everyone is afraid of him.

Richard is the Associate Director. When The Professor retires he will take over. Whatever you do, she warns, don't get in his way.

The woman from the club calls. We meet up. I go back to her place. At breakfast she mentions her boyfriend. I leave and delete her number.

That night I have another nightmare. I'm in an earthquake. I can't breathe. My mouth is full of grass. I'm suffocating. Then I wake up.

Sophie gives me a ride to the coast. We're going to see The Professor. She asks me a load of questions. I dodge them or laugh them off.

What are you afraid of? she asks. I tell her, I'm not afraid of anything. Why don't you answer my questions? I grin. She's pretty smart.

Neither of us speak. I'm annoyed with Sophie and I figure she's irritated with me.

We arrive at The Professor's house, a old style country mansion. He comes across as polite but distant. We're not the only guests here.

The others are having drinks. I'm introduced. Sophie looks uncomfortable. I whisper, Fancy taking a walk on the beach? She replies, Yes.

Sophie is acting gloomy. We walk along the beach. I watch the waves coming in. What's the matter? I ask. Nothing, she says.

We get back to the house. At the evening meal Richard dominates the conversation. Sophie doesn't say a word. The atmosphere is awkward.

Richard has an argument with one of the guests. The atmosphere is tense. No one wants to say anything in case it provokes Richard.

I'm spending the night in a small room with a fold-out z-bed. There's a knock at the door. Sophie enters. She says she can't sleep.

We talk about the weird atmosphere at the meal. She wishes she hadn't come. We sit in silence for a moment and then I kiss her.

The next morning I wake thinking about her and the night before. We're both awkward at breakfast. We all go for a walk before lunch.

During the walk I chat to some of the other guests. They are uneasy about the way Richard has forced The Professor out.

While I'm talking I hear Sophie shouting. She's gesturing wildly at Richard. I glance at her. She looks at me, angry.

Back at the house I'm in a conversation with The Professor. Sophie has said a lot of good things about you, he tells me.

We return to the city. I'm not sure where this is going. I don't think she knows either. It's complicated because we work together.

I wake up at 3.00am. I can't get back to sleep. I go to the kitchen for water. The two men from the Life Experience Corporation are there.

What are you doing here? I ask. How did you get in? One of them reaches out towards me. Electric sparks explode from his hand.

I collapse in agony. I try to get up. Another blast hits me. I can't move. Painful, isn't it? the other one says. They laugh as I pass out.

I come round on the couch. Luna is peering down at me. I was worried about you, she says.

Who are you people? I ask. Aliens - she laughs. No really, I say. How can you appear and disappear and fire electricity from your hands?

It's magic! She gestures mysteriously with her hands. Tell me the truth! I demand. Yes, she says, We have special powers.

And where are you from? I ask. She shakes her head. What's the point you wouldn't understand.

I look at her, annoyed. What do you want with me? Are you from the Life Experience Corporation too?

I'm here to help you, she says. I'll do anything you want. Anything? I reply, grinning. Yes, she says with a straight face, Anything.

They obviously don't have a sense of humour where you come from, I say. We like jokes - she pulls a dry expression - when they're funny.

So ... How come you'll do 'anything' for me, I ask (refusing to let the subject go). Because I love you, she replies.

I laugh. You love me? You don't know anything about me. Not a thing. That's not true, she says. I've been watching you.

Watching me? I'm shocked. You've been spying on me? Do you spy on me when I've got no clothes on and ... I don't want to think about it.

I've been watching you day and night, she says. It's for your own protection. I laugh - For my own protection, huh?

How do I know I'm not dreaming this or imagining it? I could be crazy?

I'm right here in front of you, she says. You can touch me if you want? I laugh and grip her arm.  
She's real all right.

So, what have those men got against me? She shrugs. They can detect something in you, something that threatens them.

You can disappear now, I say, I'm going to sleep. I have to stay here with you, she says, otherwise they'll come back.

I'll take the couch. I need to be close to you, she replies. Don't

underestimate their powers. I smile - We'll have to share the bed then.

It's difficult sharing a bed with the most stunning woman you've ever seen. Even if she is an alien.

What's the matter? she says. You seem agitated. I sigh - Dont you think this is weird? She replies, What's so weird about it?

I wake up and I'm kissing Luna. I'm praying this is all part of a strange dream but it's not.

Sex with an alien is amazing, all those flashing lights and tentacles. Actually, there was none of that.

I say goodbye to Luna in the morning and go to work. I feel terrible when I see Sophie. I tell her, I'm not feeling great.

There's a big meeting at work. It's announced that The Professor is stepping down. Richard will become the new director.

I'm walking up the stairs to avoid a crowded lift. Richard is standing in front of me. He fires a blast of lightening. The pain floors me.

Luna appears. She throws a glowing ball at Richard. He puts up a shield to absorb it and fires a javelin back. It hits her in the chest.

She collapses beside me. I hear footsteps coming up the stairs. Richard has gone. I hold Luna - Are you okay?

Kiss me, she says. I kiss her. Her body becomes ghostly and fades. Tiny, fizzy particles rise out of her body and go into mine.

I feel a wave of energy surge through my body. I'm still me but I'm different somehow. I feel sharper, more awake. I get up and walk away.

My line manager is waiting for me back at the office. Can I have a word with you, he says sternly. Sophie seems upset about something.

Documents have gone missing. I've been accused of theft. I'm being fired. I tell him it's a mistake. Security escort me out of the building.

I go back home and sit in the tiny garden with a beer. My housemates arrive console me. I'm so confused.

Sophie calls. She's as shocked as me that I've been set up like this. We arrange to meet up.

I go out for a drink with my housemates. As we walk home the two men from the Life Experience Corporation appear.

They blast us with lightning. My housemates crash onto the pavement. This time I hardly feel a thing. Why am I not in agony?

I scream at the two men. Suddenly a blue ball shoots from my hand and hits one of them. He staggers back and sits on the road, injured.

The other one hurls a javelin at me. I put up a protective field to absorb it. He hurls another one. I bounce it back at him.

The javelin disintegrates him. He fades into nothing. The other one picks himself up from the pavement and runs towards me.

It looks like he wants to settle this the old fashioned way. He throws a punch. I manage to duck. I get ready to punch him back.

My hand feels warm. I glance at it. It's glowing like it's radioactive. The man from the Life Experience Corporation covers his face.

I don't know how I'm doing it but my hand is burning him. Moments later his body is completely incinerated. It fades away until he's gone.

I look down at my two housemates. They're all right. They ask me how I did that. I say, I don't know. I'm embarrassed they saw it.

They keep asking me questions. How did I get my powers? Who were those people? Why were they after us? Can I do more magical tricks?

I ask them not to tell anyone, then I sit in the garden. I want to be on my own. I can see them watching me through the window.

They think I'm some kind of hero, but I'm not.

I think about Luna. What happened to her? Is she dead? Did I take on her powers?

Richard is my only answer now. I need to find him before he finds me.

The next day I meet up with Sophie. I want to tell her what's been happening but it all seems too crazy. She won't believe me.

I end up going back to Sophie's place. She opens a bottle of wine. We stay up late, chatting.

I really like Sophie but things are so strange at the moment. Maybe when this is over we can get together? If I'm still alive.

Gradually I discover my powers. I can appear and disappear in different places. I don't know how I do it - it just happens.

I build up my strength. I work on my skills. When I face Richard I need to be at my best. I keep thinking about Sophie while I'm training.

She keeps calling me. I want to see her but I tell her I'm busy.

One morning I feel ready. I haven't planned this. I just know that today is the day. It's going to happen.

I disappear and reappear in a forest. There's snow on the ground. Someway in the distance there's a shadowy figure. I walk towards it.

The figure turns to face me. It's Richard. You think you know it all now? he says. You think you're clever?

I'm about to reply when he disappears and reappears behind me. The truth is, he says, you know nothing.

I spin around. He disappears again. I'm on guard. I sense he has moved location. He's playing a game.

I move to the next location. I'm in the desert. There are wrecked, half-

buried ships all around. He's near but not visible.

He's behind me. His arm is around my neck. I can't breathe. I move location. We're falling down a mountain, off a cliff face.

I move again and reappear on the rooftop of a skyscraper. He's moved location. I follow him. We're under water.

He took a deep breath before he moved. I didn't. Now I'm drowning. I need to get out of here - fast. I take a chance and move location.

We reappear on a motorway. I jump to one side, narrowly avoiding a car. Richard doesn't react as fast. A truck speeds into him.

He is killed outright, before he can switch locations.

I'm in love with Sophie but none of this makes any sense. There's no future for us together. It wouldn't work.

I will move from place to place. I will search out answers to questions. I will spend my life fighting the Life Experience Corporation.

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