

As I raised my rifle again, a ghost bird dropped onto the gargoyle. It was a nightmarish phantom. The monkey shrieked as the bird latched its claws. I felt wind on my face from the beat of massive wings. The ghost bird almost lost its grip, but the far leg flashed down and grabbed its prey securely. I could feel the sharp talons curling around my own rib cage. The gargoyle shook its head in howling disbelief. About to be lunch. With two wing flaps, the ghost bird rose and curled away, leaving a trail of the monkey's yellow blood across the rocks.

"Holy satok," Dhani breathed. "That could've been one of us!"

My breathing slowed down as I glanced back at the occupied whales. "We need to be vigilant," I reminded the others.

Esch threw down his bag and gun. "I've flicking *had it* with this planet! I want off!"

I couldn't have agreed more.

Before us, it was as if the whales and seals had heard the bell ding. *Pub's closing, out you go.* They all shuffled toward the surf. The show was over and they got to go home.

How about for us?