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S.O.B
(Son of Barney)

***** Chapter
One: Blueprint

The rain drizzled sloppily down the cavern walls, wiry ivy strung about the bricks and crumbling mortar. In the pale glow of a rusting street lamp, a tall, gaunt figure clad in a tattered raincoat steadily made its way down the clammy passages and tunnels. The figure clicked on a flashlight and made its way to a series of doors. Checking about to see that it wasn't being followed or watched, it turned to a door painted a sickly shade of purple and rapped steadily upon its rotting surface.

After a minute, a hinged-viewport opened from the inside. A raspy voice asked, "Who loves you?"

"I," replied the figure.

"And who loves me?"

"You," answered the figure a second time.

"And what are we?"

"A happy family. Open the damn door, I was told it was an emergency."

The thick wooden door creaked open, and the rain-drenched figure entered.

It was immediately greeted by a short, balding man with wiry spectacles.

"Dr. Copernicus, you didn't waste a moment! By all that is purple, I thank you!"

Dr. Copernicus wiped the water from his brow and produced a pair of glasses from his upper coat pocket. He slid them on and gazed about the concrete room uneasily. "You'll want to tell Merrick it may be a good idea to relocate the Assembly. I see more and more police and civil patrolmen in this area of town with each passing day."

"Noted, Doctor", the balding man answered. "Now come down to the central chamber, it's not looking good at all!"

Dr. Copernicus peeled off his raincoat and strode down the ramp after the other man, who clenched his fingers and was hyperventilating. Something was alarming him, no doubt about that. As the two men neared the central chamber, he became aware of screams and shouts of delirium. The noise increased as they closed in. At the chamber entrance, the bald man paused and looked into the Doctor's eyes.

"He was our best hope yet. Last week he was singing, dancing, exclaiming his love everywhere. But now," he said, opening the door, "this is what we have to work with."

Dr. Copernicus walked into the room. It smelled of ammonia. Gurgling, squalid creatures known as the Loved Ones wandered about frantically, dressed in surgical smocks and handling crude instruments. Several humans, also in surgical attire, were circled about a wide table. The whole scene was lit from a ceiling lamp, that teetered about on a frayed cord. The Doctor walked up to the table and pushed the surgeons aside. What he saw made him step back.

Strapped to the table was a large, fat, bestial creature that seemed reptilian in form, yet lacked scales. It rolled its huge dead eyes about the ceiling, while its perfect white teeth were clenched in agony. Dr. Copernicus lifted the clipboard off the edge of the table and read the print:

BARNEY PROJECT: Specimen #18, Gestation period 7 months
Examined by Dr. Krupper, Dr. Garrison, Dr. Gillman
Planned completion date: Within five years

The Doctor lifted his brow. "The finest underground team of medical specialists has gone through _eighteen_ specimens already? And this is the best they can come up with?"

"Dr. Copernicus," stammered a nurse from the opposite side of the table, "your background in genetic engineering and alliance to the Church of Purple Love compelled us to contact you tonight. This subject has been in the throes of delirium since this morning. Dr. Krupper and the rest have invested every ounce of their energy into making this project a success. Given what

we have to work with, I believe we have done an excellent job".

"Thanks for the opinion," grumbled Dr. Copernicus. "But this is still slop-work at best. Look at the poor bastard. He's not lovable. Hell, he's not even purple, more a sickly mauve. The skin's not plush and chubby, rather wrinkled, mottled, and those thick veins sticking out everywhere is a pretty long call from the one we all love and worship".

The next instant the lizard-like behemoth shrieked and tore off his upper restraints. All the humans and Loved Ones backed off, except for Dr. Copernicus. He turned to the nurse.

"20 ccs of Formula 14A," he ordered.

The nurse filled the hypodermic and handed it to the Doctor. "What are you going to do?" he asked.

"I'm gonna put this miserable creature out of his misery," he replied, and with that, stabbed the needle into the creature's shoulder. The beast bellowed tremendously, and struck the Doctor, sending him flying across the room. The monster rose upon its spindly haunches, and, tearing away the remnants of its restraints, began advancing towards a cluster of horrified Loved Ones, who retreated into a corner.

"Looo-looo-loovvvee....me.....loo-loo-loovvvee...." hissed the beast, staggering and shaking spasmodically. When it got within five feet from the whimpering mass of Loved Ones, it suddenly fell to the floor and died seconds later.

The nurse ran over and helped Dr. Copernicus to his feet. "Are you okay, Doctor?"

Dr. Copernicus stared intently at the bloated corpse on the floor. "His maturity was something your bio-engineering couldn't anticipate," he began. "The moment your precious little Barney Jr. hit the initial stages of puberty, those hormones of his began rejecting every chemical your crew fueled into his body. No wonder he was in so much pain. Practically every neuron of his body was on fire, his mind was pretty much gone as well." He dusted himself off and cleaned his glasses. "Take me to Dr. Krupper, we need to talk."

* * *

Dr. Krupper sat in his office, a dank, dismal cubicle of rock that was formerly a ticketing office when the caverns were still a subway system in upper Manhattan. Following the Purple Holocaust, the subway fell into ruin and was never re-established. When the initial rebuilding of civilization began again, he and some of his fellow cultists bought out the area and converted it into a secret headquarters for the Church of Purple. Worshipers of the Mighty Purple Plushosaurus congregated on a regular basis, and Dr. Krupper was pleased to see that so many were high-level officials. Were the need to arise, the Church of Purple could inflict more organized impact upon humanity than the initial Purple Holocaust. With all due respect to Barney.

Indeed, with all due respect to Barney.

For a moment, it had seemed that Barney was about to realize a second coming, with the generous aid of Disciple Thorton Marshall, a consultant of children's public programming. Marshall and his resources had brought the Beast of Purple onto the airwaves once again, yet the mighty plan fell through. Jeremy and Fran Phillips, long-time adversaries of Barney and his devotees, had somehow thwarted Marshall, leaving him, several dozen Loved Ones, Baby Bop, and most importantly, Barney.....dead.

Dr. Krupper closed his eyes and bowed his head. How could anyone do that to Barney? Didn't they see how much that wonderful Purple dinosaur loved everyone? Wasn't that what everyone needed?

Still, the Church of Purple endured, hoping for a miracle. Then, it came.

Several breakthroughs in genetic cloning, engineering, and cognitive implanting had occurred over the last decade. Thousands of dollars were invested into the collection of Barney articles, paraphernalia, and eventually, reputed blood traces of the Purple God himself from his last known refuge, were collected. The security and risk were phenomenally high, yet it seemed a small price to pay when given the chance to see Barney return from the lightless abyss and into real life once more. With some recent acquisitions from the black market, all the samples needed to recreate the Beast of Purple Passion were collected.

So far though, the results were less than encouraging. Initial attempts led to horrid mutations and unspeakable abominations. It was as if the genetic codes were dilated and unstable. Experiment after experiment only yielded horror and frustration. It had gone without saying that many underground scientists, including Dr. Krupper, were getting discouraged.

Dr. Krupper jumped at the unexpected knock at the door. A moment later, Dr. Copernicus walked in, a somber and disgruntled look on his face. He looked back at Dr. Krupper's round, pale, and bearded face. The two men stood in silence for a few, uncomfortable moments, then Dr. Copernicus spoke.

"My research into your last eighteen experiments show a lack of cohesiveness and organization. I'm not surprised you've had nothing but failures so far. Granted, this form of science is outlawed by mass society, but that's still no reason to be making monsters from Bunsen burners and third-grade chemistry kits. My good Dr. Krupper, I'm asking you to let me work on the next subject."

Dr. Krupper showed no reaction. "Please say what you would do different, Dr. Copernicus."

"You're working with genetically influenced embryos, based upon shaved

cells from those supposedly belonging to Barney. I think there's enough evidence to show it came from him. What I plan on, Doctor, is to invest those genes in a more, shall we say, developed embryo. One with a more stabilized hormonal and physiological level, so we don't run into any more systems-rejections. I'm talking about a hybrid, Dr. Krupper."

Dr. Krupper's eyes widened. "You mean crossing those genes with an active, fully developed organism?"

Dr. Copernicus relished Dr. Krupper's astonishment. "I'm talking about crossing Barney's recessive genes with those of an active, living _human_."

An empty, unyielding silence fell upon the dark, gloomy room. Outside in the rain, a pack of gibbering, cloaked Loved Ones carried a fat, squalid corpse down a small ravine and tossed the bloated body into a churning whirlpool. The bulbous head glistened in the hazy moonlight, its mouth hung open in an idiotic grin and its eyes rolled upward into the frigid night sky. The creature spun around in the polluted vortex of water for a few moments, and was then sucked down rapidly into the black inkiness of the depths below.

One of the Loved Ones produced a small, hand-held cassette player and turned it on as if in reverie. The tape hissed and spat static, and then a high, sweet lullaby broke into the night air. The Loved One held it out towards the whirlpool, swaying gently and cooing to the song upon the cassette:

I love you, you love me, we're a happy family
With a great big hug and kiss from me to you,
Won't you say you love me too?

A thunderbolt and flash of lightning shattered the violent night sky. The Loved One smiled, giggled, and returned to join his brethren as they returned to the secret caverns.

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Chapter Two: Genesis

The door shattered into splinters. The plump, blubbery Loved One technicians ran in terror as the bandaged and shrieking monstrosity tore into the room, flailing about blindly and destroying everything in its path. One unfortunate Loved One stumbled upon the steps, and was immediately clutched by the fat, purplish beast. It looked into the monster's dead eyes, partially hidden by blood-stained tape, and cried. The next instant the monster shoved the Loved One into its mouth and chewed it apart.

Dr. Copernicus staggered out of the central chamber, sirens blaring and lights flashing about him. Several humans emerged from the tunnel entrances with rifles.

"Shoot it!" cried the Doctor.

The humans levelled a frantic barrage against the beast, bullets ripping into its sagged, purplish flesh. It roared in agony and fell upon the stone floor, gasping for air in the smoke-filled chamber. It looked up at Dr. Copernicus.

"...won't you say you love me too....." slurred the abomination. It closed its eyes and went limp.

"Barney Project #22 didn't pull through?" quipped Dr. Krupper. Dr. Copernicus turned around faced the older, bearded man.

"Affirmative," replied Dr. Copernicus. He didn't like the smugness of Krupper's voice.

"You see now that it's not so easy," continued Dr. Krupper. "We are working on a forbidden project, and must make do with what we can acquire."

"This is the fourth Barney-gene/human hybrid I've developed," said Dr. Copernicus. "By my estimation the first one should've been a success." He scrunched his brow and thought a moment. He returned his gaze to Dr. Krupper. "Tell me, where have my human subjects come from?"

"Well," began Dr. Krupper, "to insure secrecy we obtain your specimens from half-way houses, homeless shelters, and occasionally right off the street. People who no one would miss, at least not immediately."

"That's the problem," snapped Dr. Copernicus. "You've been giving me subjects unfit for laboratory use. Those kinds of people are malnourished, poorly educated, sometimes mentally unbalanced. For this gene-splicing process to work, I need a more healthy, stable individual."

"Preposterous!" cried Dr. Krupper. "The Church of Purple Love must remain inconspicuous. We have teachers, lawyers, programmers, parents, even politicians registered within our clandestine ranks. Those people promise power to our Assembly. I will not risk it all just because you want us to go out and capture you a 'real' person. You will make do with who ever we assign you!"

"You will give me a better specimen or Barney, the Purple Lover and Savior, will not come again. I remind you that that is why all of your 'specialists' are down here, using up what little time and money we have. All I want is your permission, Krupper, Leave the specimen up to me. I'll find someone to make the leap."

Krupper sat and thought for a few moments. There was no other way.

"Who are you going to use?" he asked.

* * * * *

Barry Clements watched the last of his pupils leave, waving at them as they

left for the bus. He checked his watch. 3:30 pm. This was his fifth year of teaching the second grade and he still barely got the children out on time. Frankly, he loved the work and would keep the children around all day if he could. A dedicated teacher, he was well regarded by the faculty as well as the students of Brookburg Elementary.

As he thought back on his years, he realized that for one incident, his record as a teacher was spotless. He had never struck a child, lost his temper, missed an appointment with a parent, and evaluations were always favorable. As he drove home, he remembered with keen precision the incident that happened his first year that may have well got him kicked out of the teaching profession all together.

It was just a month after Jeremy Phillips had made a public appearance on television, announcing that Barney the Dinosaur had been vanquished a second time, this time forever. He raised an amethyst globe to the cameras, that revealed the semblance of Barney encased in the jewel, screaming in horrified silence. Cheers and applause broke out immediately.

When it was brought up by one of the youngsters in class, Barry had defended Barney, saying that no creature was evil who preached love and kindness. Rather, Jeremy Phillips and his sister Fran should both apologize for the hurt they had inflicted in banishing the dinosaur from the world. Barry then began to sing the opening chords of the Barney-theme song, until he realized his class was staring at him in awestruck silence and discomfort. The next day he was called into an emergency meeting with the PTA.

It was the most painful three hours of Barry's life. Amidst the accusations, personal attacks, and furor, Barry constantly apologized and restated himself. When it was over, Barry and Mr. Watters, the school principal, had a small talk. Mr. Watters told Barry that he was an excellent teacher, but one more mention of the Purple Horror in class would be inexcusable. Barry was put on temporary probation for the rest of the year.

Barry still felt the Purple Holocaust had been a massive hoax. That Barney and Baby Bop were acutally friends of all mankind. Wasn't love and caring essential to the world order? Even the reputed accounts of atrocities and cruelties Barney had inflicted upon the world wasn't enough to sway Barry. But yet he was forced to keep quiet about these beliefs.

As Barry parked his car outside his house, he noticed a tall, gaunt man standing outside his driveway. He was dressed in a purple trenchcoat and smiled at Barry. The two men approached each other and shook hands.

"Barry Clements," said the man, "I'm Ian Copernicus. I have an exciting proposition for you."

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Barry Clements looked about in bewilderment. Dozens of people danced around in mindless abandon, circling the statue that peaked near the ceiling. The idol bore an amazing resemblance to the one known as Barney, and its arms were raised in an inviting gesture to hug while its mouth hung open in an idiotic grin. Loved One musicians piped along in merriment, as the congregation of the Church of Purple Love giggled and pranced, clutching moth-eaten Barney and Baby Bop dolls. All Barry could do was stare on in astonishment.

Dr. Copernicus sensed the young man's surprise. He leant over and whispered in his ear. "You should see them when they get excited," he said with a wry smile.

"After that so-called Purple Holocaust I didn't think there'd be this many people worshipping Barney," said Barry. "I'm honored that you want to make me into his semblance."

Dr. Copernicus laughed out loud, causing Barry to jump. "I'm not going to make you into the semblance of Barney," he said, chuckling, "I'm literally going to make you Barney!"

Suddenly a gong broke the revelry, and the worshippers all returned to their seats. At the front of the pews stood Merrick, Head Priest of the Royal Order of Purple Passion. He held a few withered books in his hands and rested them on the podium.

"Dear Special Friends, in the name of all that is Purple, I love you," smiled the priest. "Won't you say you love me too?"

"We love you!" echoed the audience.

"Well, that's super-deeeee-duper," replied Merrick, who began flipping through one of the books. "Today's lesson comes from one of my favorite books, titled 'Baby Bop's Favorite Toys', and not only does Baby Bop want to show you her favorite toys, she wants you to know, that she loves you. As do I. Won't you say you love me too?"

"We love you!" screamed the audience again.

Content, Merrick began reading from the book while the audience looked on enraptured. Dr. Copernicus took Barry by the arm and led him out of the shrine. "You'll have time for this later, Barry," he said. "Now did you cancel your mail and put yourself on leave?"

"Yes, I did everything you told me to, Dr. Copernicus," replied the young teacher. "all this trouble just to don a Barney costume?"

Dr. Copernicus stopped in his tracks. He scowled at Barry. "We're not talking costumes, Mr. Clements. We're talking about a permanent transformation that will bring you such power and the world such love that you cannot even

begin to fathom its implications. Costume indeed, We're making you into a God!!"

* * * * *

Detective Riley looked at the corpse. Fat, bloated, purplish, thick-veined, and horribly grotesque. He knelt down for a closer look and shook his head.

"What do you see, Riley?" asked Sergeant Graham.

"Same as the first two," replied the detective. "Perfect teeth, big dead eyes, thick blubbery tail, shortened arms. Some sort of perverse cross between man and dinosaur. Haven't seen anything like this since the Barney the Dinosaur scare some years ago."

"But isn't that scare over with? Didn't Jeremy whats-his-name banish the Beast?"

"Apparently this is some fiendish facsimile. Not Barney as he's ever been known as, but close. Get the forensics boys down here, see what killed this freak."

"The others apparently died from some sort of shock to the limbic system," muttered the sergeant, poking the bloated skin of the dead creature. "I bet that may have been the same here."

"We need to set up more search teams in this area," said Detective Riley, perusing the area. "In the good old days, we used to bust Satanists or neo-Nazis. Those groups have pretty much disbanded or joined one of the Barney cults. Tell the records people to scan all files, linking possible cult-members to the immediate neighborhood. We'll land the people responsible for this."

* * * *

In the basement, Barry felt uneasy. He felt his arms. Since the injections began four days ago, he sensed his skin getting plump, plush, and an off-shade of violet. Dr. Copernicus didn't explain the procedure in great detail, yet seemed sure of its imminent success. But within a week, the doctor warned, the major operations would ensue. Barry would have to be at his physical and mental peak for the procedure to be a success.

Barry picked up a video and slid it into the VCR. Soon Barney and his friends blipped onto the screen. In this episode, Tina had just sprained her wrist and was worried about going to the doctor. Barney reassured her that all would be well, and sang many songs and did many skits about visiting the doctor. Within moments Barry found himself singing along and giggling. God I love this show, he thought. He danced and pranced the whole night long.

From a hidden camera, Dr. Krupper eyed Barry with a fiendish glare. He was angered that Dr. Copernicus had assumed control of the Barney Project, and

wanted to see him fail. When night had completely fallen upon the secret compound, he would sneak into Copernicus' laboratory and see for himself what desing was needed for probable success. All he needed was for this effort to fail. Disastrously.

Dr. Krupper's eyes fell to a thin bottle of red liquid on his desk. It was labeled FORMULA 7966-CC, and a sinister, glistening hypodermic lay beside it. Maybe it was time to "help" Dr. Copernicus in his project.....

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Chapter Four: Prototype

Loved One technicians hurriedly scrambled about the set, making final adjustments to the cameras and scenery. Just back behind the curtain, Barry Clements lay under heavy sedation. Dr. Copernicus wringed his hands together in anxious glee. Taping would begin in five minutes.

It had now been four months since the Doctor had taken the young impressionable school teacher in, and after various operations and therapy sessions, it seemed that Barry's transformation into the Purple Dinosaur of Love was complete.

Not that Barry knew it. The sedatives and front lobal implants kept him barely coherent of his condition. Were he to know the full extent of his situation, one could assume the man would go insane. His once thin and developed body had been mutated into a fat, plush, purple abomination. Mass graftings of fatty tissue had insured that aspect of the transformation. For the head, tail, and appendages, the brilliantly diabolical Dr. Copernicus literally reprogrammed Barry's DNA structure, cross-etching the fragmented DNA molecules of the Purple Beast himself. Endless hours of mind-crushing therapy sessions involving Barney videos had completed the mental processes. The final assessment and treatment was finished just yesterday.

When Barry lifted his plush arms upward and bellowed "That's stuuuuuppppendous!" from the operating table, Dr. Copernicus and the assistants shrieked in delight. Calls were made, technicians pulled out of their beds at ungodly hours to begin studio preparations. The Church of Purple Love performed a three-day mass, ending with Barry's baptism. Chalice upon chalice of sacharrine-saturated water was poured over his head, while he clasped his paws and chuckled in embarassment. A new age of Barneyism had surfaced, while the Outer World carried out its businness, unaware that the Purple Evil had been reborn.

The only person who did not take part in the celebration was Dr. Krupper, who sat back in bemused silence while the worshippers lavished praise upon Dr. Copernicus and his Barry-turned-Barney creation. If anyone were to watch Dr. Krupper carefully, they would see an occasional smirk cross his aging, portly face.

With Barry Clement's transformation complete, it was time to renew the studio equipment that had lain so neglected for so many years. By the end of the day the "Barney and Friends" studio set had been faithfully replicated, and Loved One musicians tuned and polished their instruments. Many members of the Church of Purple Love had volunteered their children to appear for the historic first episode which would be taped once the studio had been secured. Children of all ages fidgeted and squirmed, anxious to get on the air with the All-Loving Purple Plushosaurus.

And now that moment had arrived.

Dr. Copernicus injected a stimulant into Barry/Barney's temple. The creature gave a short cry, then groaned softly. Merrick, who had appointed himself as the director, approached Barry. As the stimulant kicked in, Merrick looked into his eyes while Dr. Copernicus restrained the dino-mutant's thick arms.

"You are no longer Barry Clements," began Merrick, talking in a slow, dreamy voice. "From this moment on, Barry Clements no longer exists, not even in memory. Not even his family, friends, or co-workers exist anymore. All that exists now is you. You are Barney. You will be Barney....forever."

"Barney" nodded his head drearily, as saliva seeped down his chin. He smiled stupidly and followed the two men out onto the set. The studio lights were blinding and set crews were taping down the last few set pieces. A group of twenty children all huddled and smiled at him as he took his place. The two men left him there, and prepared to cue the music. From a dark corner, Dr. Krupper looked on, grinning.

Suddenly the lights flashed on and the Loved Ones kicked into the music. The children gleefully danced in a circle, and sang:

Barney is a dinosaur, he lives in our imagination,
He's really what you might just call, a dinosaur sensation!

As the children sang, "Barney" staggered into the circle, waving and smiling, wagging his implanted tail to the music. So many children....such thrilling music....he was feeling happy...wasn't he?

Parents of the dancing children, among other members of the Purple Love congregation, watched on in mindless glee, tears of joy streaming down their faces. Barney was back. Jeremy Phillips was defeated once again. The world would come to know Barney the Dinosaur once again. Or else.

The music ended. The audience cheered. The children giggled and hugged "Barney". Dr. Krupper made his way out of the studio. "Barney" began to feel strange. Very strange.

It wasn't until a moment later when "Barney" bit off a toddler's arm that the blissfulness of the moment descended into an abyss of deep-rooted horror. As blood sprayed against the walls of the studio, children and adults alike

fled in terror, while Loved One technicians and musicians scrambled to subdue the deranged dinosaur. "Barney" fought on, plowing one of his thick arms through a Loved One's chest, then waving it about like a chunk of meat on a skewer. Several humans scrambled for their rifles, but Dr. Copernicus pleaded with them not to. Instead, he made a daring leap at his hellish creation, plunging a tranquilizer directly into "Barney's" thigh. The mindless beast roared, and flung the doctor across the set. The doctor's body toppled over set pieces, shattering glass and wood, increasing the panic.

"I love you!!" shrieked the monster, wresting a Loved One's head off of its shoulders. When the lifeless head only gaped and sagged in "Barney's" hands, the Plush Purple Beast flung it against the wall, shattering it like a pumpkin.

"Won't you say you love me too!?!?" it cried, then slowly sagged to the ground amidst the bloody carnage.

Dr. Copernicus knelt down beside "Barney" and shook his head in great frustration. "Why? Why?" muttered the stunned doctor.

"Why indeed?" chirped a low, moronic voice from behind Dr. Copernicus. The Doctor turned and stared at a tall, stocky, purple figure with a fat green belly and idiotic grin. Beside him stood the triumphant figure of Dr. Krupper, who had his arm wrapped firmly around the creature.

"Perhaps this," began Dr. Krupper, notioning toward the purple plush dinosaur, "is what you were trying to create my good doctor?"

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Chapter Five: Duel

Dr. Copernicus looked at Dr. Krupper and the flabby, brainless, purple reptile standing beside him, who looked identical to his own particular "Barney", who was now unconscious on the studio floor. There was a moment of astonished silence, then the younger doctor spoke.

"Where did you get this?" asked Dr. Copernicus, motioning at Dr. Krupper's "Barney".

Dr. Krupper chuckled, and leered at his rival. "Why don't you tell him, Barney?"

Krupper's "Barney" giggled and rolled his huge dead eyes. "Well, I'd say that my *special* friend, Dr. Krupper, regenerated me from scarce amounts of my DNA!

And a super-deeeee-duuupper job he did, too!" The purple beast wobbled his sagging frame in a childish wiggle of glee.

"You bastard, you stole my formulas and wrecked my own experiment!" hissed Dr. Copernicus, standing up and rolling back his sleeves. "You sabotaged my work and used it to your own interests!" He lunged at Dr. Krupper but was immediately shoved back by Krupper's "Barney".

"Temper, temper, Dr. Copernicus," chuckled Krupper's creation. "I must say, you need to relax. Shouldn't everyone celebrate my return, despite who brought me back? Let's all sing a song!"

"You sing, Barney, I'm taking Barry Clements back to my lab to see what Krupper's done to him. This isn't over, Krupper, not one damn moment!"

Dr. Krupper only shook his head and laughed at Dr. Copernicus. "Such a poor sport. Face it, I was on the right path all along. It just took time, is all.

Now everyone come around and let's sing the True Barney's return!"

From amidst the rubble, children, technicians, Loved Ones, and other devotees of the Church of Purple Love came out and slowly approached Krupper's "Barney".

The obese dinosaur warmly embraced his followers and motioned his servants to pick up their instruments and play. Noting the cue, everyone chimed in to sing the song that started it all, while Dr. Copernicus wheeled his "Barney" away on a rusty gurney....

I love you, you love me, we're a happy family...
With a great big kiss and hug, from me to you,
Won't you say you love me too?

* * * * *

Detective Riley stood up and searched the landscape. He and seven deputies were situated in a desolate meadow, searching for signs of a possible Barney compound.

"Did you hear anything?" Riley asked a deputy.

"Hear what, sir?"

"Would've sworn I heard singing....an old and notorious tune that eludes me...but it's associated with the Barney Cults...."

The young deputy closed his eyes and listened intently. After a moment he shook his head. "I'm sorry, I don't hear anything."

"Perhaps it's just the wind," muttered Riley. "But for a split second I really thought I heard singing....just wishful thinking, I suppose".

* * * * *

Dr. Copernicus spun the body fluid samples, separating the foreign matters from the plasma. Upstairs he could hear Krupper's Barney singing and dancing. He knew they were taping new episodes. The first in over twenty years since Jeremy Phillips vanquished Barney's second coming. But while he should have felt elated to have the Plush Purple Demon of Love back, he was angry. Intensely angry. Dr. Krupper was receiving credit and admiration that was not his to have in the first place. And he did so at the cost of Dr. Copernicus' own reputation and place among the Church. It would be payback time before long.

Meanwhile, Copernicus' "Barney" lay on the gurney, sedated and mindless, drool dribbling down its chin, muttering old songs and exclamations of love. It was hard to believe that not too long ago, this freakish beast used to be Barry Clements, a highly revered and trusted elementary teacher. But given Copernicus' skill at surgery and psychological reconditioning, every vestige of humanity had been stripped clean. Now only the essence of Barney the Dinosaur remained.

But something was still wrong.

Copernicus removed the vials from the agitator and began running them through the bio-filters. He plugged the samples into the main analyzing grid and began to sift through the many chemicals and plasms that composed the creature. Within time, he would have his answer....

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Merrick laughed uproariously at the zany antics of the fat purple dinosaur, who wobbled and skipped merrily with the entourage of children. Even the young child whose arm was bitten off by Copernicus' "Barney" the previous week was having a fun time. Merrick turned to one of his technicians and said, "It's that time. I can feel it in the air again".

The technician, a spindly middle-aged man with a ruddy face, smiled and nodded in agreement. "This is show #57, we're ready to bring this guy back to the real world, Jeremy Phillips or not. All we have to do is set up our satellite over-ride systems and we can plug this guy simultaneously across the world. The kids won't know what hit them, and if our computer experts can tap into the defense grids of the Pentagon, Kremlin, and related systems we won't even have to defend ourselves against police action. We're ready for the third and final Arrival of Lord Barney!"

"Hey kids," began Krupper's "Barney", "let's sing a song about how we want the world to be in a short while. Wouldn't it be super-dee-duuper special if I could go back out into the real world again, to share my love with all those people?"

"Yes!" shrieked the squirming mass of entranced children. "We love you Barney, we need you back!"

Dr. Krupper sat above the studio, grinning to himself and formulating ways to bring back Baby Bop and BJ. Now that the ultimate success had been achieved, he could relax a little and focus upon the resurrection of Barney's allies. The Triumvirate of Love, they would be known as. With all three beings back and united, there was no way that civilization could stand up against such combined might. Of course, Dr. Krupper ceded, he'd have to sneak back into Dr. Copernicus' laboratory and photograph his rival's findings. That wouldn't be difficult, as he knew Copernicus turned in just a few hours after midnight each evening. But until then, he would sit back and enjoy the merriment.

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Formula 7966-CC. Dr. Copernicus ran the scanner again. There was no denying it. The clear, red drug had been pumped into his experiment by Dr. Krupper. Of that there was no doubt. Originally designed for temporary blockage of neuron transmissions for aversive therapies, Formula 7966-CC could also cause permanent brain damage and insanity if administered in excessive doses. Which had happened to Barry Clements.

"You sick, twisted old coot," muttered Dr. Copernicus, pacing in the laboratory. He looked at his "Barney", still trembling and shaking on the gurney. "Barney, listen to me. You were of my own creation. You are actually known as Barry Clements, an elementary school teacher of high regard. I met you at your home one day, and took you here. Through numerous therapies and operations, I turned you into Barney the Dinosaur. Do you remember?"

The bloated abomination only giggled and drooled, rolling its head in mindless delirium. Dr. Copernicus was immediately filled with the desire to strangle the creature, but rational thought prevailed and he stalked off to the chemical rack. Moments later he removed a beaker filled with a pasty green fluid.

"I'm going to try to repair your mind, Barry Clements," said Copernicus in a soothing, nonchalant voice. "I'm going to inject this into your arm, so it'll hurt a little, but it may unblock what's keeping you from remembering. "

Dr. Copernicus filled a syringe with the viscous fluid and strapped a tourniquet around "Barney"'s arm. He slid the needle into the lumpy, purple flesh and the creature cooed, and giggled again. Dr. Copernicus checked his watch. He was up longer than usual. But if all went well, the drug would be taking effect in a few moments.

Suddenly, he heard a gate shut from the far end of the hall. Dr. Copernicus quickly darted across the room and shut off the lights. Only the lights of the outside corridor were on, and as Dr. Copernicus waited, he heard footsteps approaching. There were at least two intruders coming down the way. Whoever they were, they were not here to see Dr. Copernicus. They would've called for him, or called from the gate. Within minutes, two figures loomed into the laboratory, and turned on the lights.

It was Dr. Krupper and his variant of "Barney".

Copernicus' own "Barney" lay writhing on the gurney, seemingly oblivious to the visitors. Dr. Krupper anxiously looked around, unsure whether they were the only ones inside the lab space. His "Barney" teasingly bounced over to the restrained "Barney" on the gurney and giggled and waved his paws about the other's face.

"Barney, cut that out!" whispered Dr. Krupper. "We need to find those additional lab notes so we can recreate Baby Bop and BJ!"

"Just having fun," chuckled the Krupper-Barney. "This laboratory is really fun to visit! Especially seeing Dr. Copernicus' effort to remake me. Look at this one. Isn't he funny?"

"It's not going to be funny if we get caught, now please, Barney, help me look for those notes!"

"Oh, very well," sighed the chubby monster, still smiling emptily and wobbling about.

Dr. Copernicus stood his ground. He wasn't quite ready to confront Krupper yet. But as he stood hidden in the shadows, a devious and cruel idea entered his head. His hand slowly slid into his lab coat pocket and removed something that looked like a remote control device. He clicked it on and pointed it at the far end of the lab. A metallic clang and whir broke the still silence, causing Krupper to jump abruptly.

"What was that!?" Krupper asked, breaking into a minor sweat.

"I've no idea, let's investigate!" chimed the Krupper-Barney.

The two figures slowly approached the far end of the room. Dr. Copernicus snuck over to the restrained "Barney" and slowly unbuckled the straps.

Krupper and his Barney-variant stopped at the end of the room, and noticed some indentations along the wall. "My word, it's a secret panel or door," exclaimed Dr. Krupper.

"Very observant, my good Doctor Krupper," said Dr. Copernicus. The intruders turned around and saw the lanky scientist and the other "Barney" blocking the path. "Stay right there you two, the door will come open in just a moment."

"What--what are you going to do to us?" fretted Dr. Krupper. "You can't wall us up, people will miss us!"

"Yes, especially me, Barney!" laughed the fat purple beast. "I don't think you or your failed effort are going to get away with this!"

"Oh, we will, " replied Dr. Copernicus. "You see, I'm not going to wall you up. Too melodramatic for my tastes. But you will have hoped I did once you see what's behind that door."

"And what, praytell, is behind this door?" demanded Dr. Krupper.

Dr. Copernicus smiled wickedly. "Let's just say that when you failed in your attempts to make a Barney-clone, everyone knew because you disposed of their bodies in full view of the congregation and Purple Love community. When I failed, my good Dr. Krupper, I kept it all to myself."

More clicks and whirs sounded from inside the wall panel. Dr. Krupper's face took on an alarmed expression.

"You...you mean, that behind that wall....all of your failed attempts...they're inside....."

"Brilliant!" screamed Dr. Copernicus. "And I thought you were so *dense*, Dr. Krupper! I had you figured out all wrong!"

If Dr. Krupper had any reaction, it was drowned out the next second. The paneling suddenly receded, and out of the lightless space that loomed from behind, half-human, half-monster limbs and faces leered from the darkness. Dr. Krupper was pulled by pudgy, purplish claws and immediately his shrieks and cries filled the laboratory. The sound of ripping cloth and spattering blood accompanied the frenzy, and Krupper's "Barney" suddenly made a mad dash for the laboratory door.

Dr. Copernicus anticipated the plush dinosaur's reaction. "Attack him, Barry, attack him now!!"

The Barney-like creation that used to be Barry Clements followed his creator's command. Flinging himself at Krupper's "Barney", the beast opened his maw and bore his immense claws. In the ensuing carnage between the two Barney's, Dr. Copernicus fell back and gleefully listened to the dying cries of his rival, Dr. Krupper. Glee suddenly turned to fear however, as he suddenly realized that he had no immediate way to stop the frenzied half-creatures he had just released. In a matter of minutes, about a dozen mindless, half-humanoid, half-Barney monsters would be loose in the compound, killing and devouring with a mindless passion.....

S.O.B!!!
(Son of Barney)

Chapter Six: Descent Into Apocalypse

The children of the Church of Purple Love were the first to hear the bestial shrieks and growls coming from the lower dungeons. Confused parents hurriedly donned their cloaks and made their way to the corridors. Merrick, head priest and founder of the Church of Purple Love, was the first to reach

the damp and dreary laboratory of Dr. Copernicus, from where the noises came.

Before Merrick's astonished eyes, Dr. Copernicus came crashing through the door, his clothes torn and ragged.

"Get out!" screamed the Doctor. "They're loose, they're all loose!"

"Dr. Copernicus," began Merrick, helping the Doctor off the floor, "have you lost your senses? What have you done down there?"

"Run, just run, and get everyone out of here immediately!" Dr. Copernicus broke from Merrick's grasp and fled down the corridor.

Merrick stared after him and cautiously made his way to the door. Upon peering inside, he was met with a horrifying scene...

The laboratory was nothing more than a smouldering heap of broken glass, spilled chemicals, and shattered furniture. Amidst this wreckage were various mutated creatures, half-man, half-Barnoid. Most were purplish and pudgy, yet in varying degrees. Many of the creatures stupidly wandered about the lab, but then Merrick's eyes focused in onto two creatures in the middle.

It was Dr. Krupper's "Barney", and Dr. Copernicus' "Barney". The two purple plush dinosaurs were fighting each other.

It was hard to tell which was which at first, but it seemed that the creature who was winning was Krupper's. Krupper's was in full control of its mind and body, while Copernicus' seemed sluggish and half-minded. Definitely drugged, thought Merrick.

Then Merrick saw the arm hanging from the light rack. He sucked in his breath and suppressed a scream. The arm was Dr. Krupper's.

As if struck by an sudden instinct, the half-man, half-Barnoid creatures shifted their gaze at Merrick. The room went quiet. There were probably a dozen of the ungodly monsters clustered in the laboratory. Merrick's jaw dropped and he slowly staggered out of the room. It was just as he cleared the doorway when the first of the creatures lunged out with its claws and idiotic grin and began chasing Merrick. The others, save for the "Barneys" wrestling in the center of the room, followed suit.

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Dr. Copernicus cursed under his breath. As he looked out a secret panel, he noticed a couple squads of police surveying the area. They were only a few hundred yards away. Any disturbance would bring them over and the entire Church of Purple Love could be discovered. Very well, he thought. We'll contain the beasts here and now.

He called down the main shaft and got a hold of several guards and Loved Ones, who, armed with rifles and shock-prods, sealed off the exits to the compound and awaited the arrival of the monsters. All understood that under no circumstances, would either "Barney" be killed. Just the failed prototypes. Kill those with extreme prejudice, he emphasized.

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"My, you certainly are a playful sort," quipped Krupper's "Barney", as he pushed Copernicus' "Barney" down a flight of stone stairs. It was clear that the battle was nearing a probable end. Krupper's "Barney" was more alert and stronger than his drugged, half-minded rival.

The other "Barney", formerly elementary teacher Barry Clements, hit the stairwell with tremendous impact. The air was knocked out of him, and he could clearly hear the other "Barney" giggling with glee.

"Silly creature," beamed Krupper's "Barney", "don't you know there can only be one *Barney*, and that's me? Once I get out of this compound, I'll be sure to steal the minds and hearts of people all over the world! It'll be sttuuuppeenndouusss!"

The other "Barney", laying prone on the stairwell, said nothing. It was motionless.

"Hyuk, it appears that I've *killed* that impersonator, now there's just me, the True Barney!" With that, Krupper's "Barney", came down to inspect the remains of his fallen rival.

No more had the Krupper-Barney leant down over the other's body, than the other immediately sprang forward and clamped its perfect white teeth over its windpipe. The Copernicus-Barney had been clever enough to feign unconsciousness, and the hot, purple ichor pouring down its throat was a satisfying reward. The Krupper-Barney gurgled and struggled frantically, flailing desperately with its stubby arms, trying to break free. But the Copernicus-Barney pressed its teeth deeper into the plush throat of its opponent. Within minutes, the Krupper-Barney heaved a final breath and collapsed upon the floor, in a puddle of its own steaming blood.

As the Copernicus-Barney lay on the ground, drenched with the dead Barney's ichor, lights and sounds danced and rattled within its head. Vague images and faces floated up at him, and a curious realization crept upon the creature.

He was not Barney. He was a man named Barry Clements. And he was now a monster, a twisted creation of a berserk scientist. The horrid reality hit the man's psyche like a steam engine, and his anguish exploded in a blood-curdling scream that shook the foundations of the laboratory.

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Dr. Copernicus emptied bullet after bullet into the raging purple behemoth that lunged at him. This particular creature had a human head crudely grafted upon its thick reptilian shoulders, while it dragged a spindly, hairy tail behind it. It hit the ground and quivered, muttering, "Love me too" over and over until its final gasp.

Merrick turned to Dr. Copernicus. "That makes five dead, six more running about".

"Something like that," replied the Doctor. "Like I said, Dr. Krupper broke into my laboratory and set them all free. The poor man must've gone insane, to do something like that."

"I saw what was left of him," replied Merrick. "Poor fool must've suffered terribly, even if it was over within minutes".

Dr. Copernicus shielded his smile from Merrick. "Yes, he was practically torn limb to limb by those beasts. They're all incredibly strong and brainless, thank Barney we've kept these rifles as long as we have."

Before Merrick could reply, a scream broke the silence. The men advanced, accompanied by a few guards and a small pack of Loved Ones. When they cleared the corner, they saw another half-man, half-Barnoid creature munching on a hapless group of Loved Ones. The beast was a thick-limbed monstrosity with huge bulging veins and open sores over its body. Its jaws were way too immense and heavy for its head. It was clear the creature had trouble standing upright.

"Fire upon its neck, shoulders, and jawline," commanded Dr. Copernicus, "those are its weak and most sensitive areas".

The Loved Ones and guards followed his suggestions and within minutes the ensuing barrage cracked the Barnoid beast like a steamed lobster.

"Wonderful," said Dr. Copernicus, loading his rifle. "If we can keep at this we'll save the compound from certain destruction".

A cloaked minion of the Church of Purple Love made his way around the corner. "Dr. Copernicus, Reverend Merrick, I've just come back from the hospital area. We've killed seven of your creations, at the price of fourteen adults, twenty-nine Loved Ones, and five children".

"What of the two Barneys?" asked Merrick, "are they safe?"

"No one's been back to the laboratory area to see," replied the minion. "If we can put down the remaining mutations, that'll allow us to get back into that section of the compound".

"Good job, young man," smiled Merrick, laying his hands on the youth's shoulders. "In the Word of All That is Purple, I Love You. Won't you say you love me too?"

"I love you," nodded the minion. "Our fun and learning never ends."

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Barry Clements stared at his reflection in the shattered pieces of glass on the floor. Every vestige of humanity had been stripped off his lithe skeleton, now heaps of bloated purple skin and blubber had been deviously piled on. For the first time in months, he knew what he was and what it was to be Barney, the Purple Dinosaur. But as opposed to the time he felt Barney was all loving and sharing, he only felt horror and sickened repulsion at what he had become. A monster.

He looked at the Krupper-Barney on the floor, its throat shredded and stringy, thin wisps of steam drifting into the cold air of the cellar dungeon. Mortified as he was at his own act of killing, he felt little remorse at the other Barney's death. Its twisted, sick motivations would surface no more to warp the minds of innocent children and naive parents. He picked himself off and made his way towards the laboratory entrance.

As he neared the western corridor, he suddenly heard cries of frightened children. He quickened his pace and made off towards the commotion.

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"Dammit, man, fire!" screamed Dr. Copernicus, "they're almost on us!"

The minion and several guards frantically loaded their rifles and fired frantically into the advancing wall of Barnoid-mutations. It seemed that these few remaining beasts were the strongest and most terrible. A small group of children were trapped between the beasts and a collapsed barricade.

Merrick came running back into the western corridor with a small metal case, and unclasped its contents. The case contained several tightly wrapped bundles of plastique explosives.

"Don't let them at this case, whatever you do," said Merrick. "If these bundles get jarred, we're pretty much dead!"

"No promises, just get those charged!" yelled Dr. Copernicus, focusing his sights on a Barnoid-mutant's temple. His resultant shot brought the beast down.

The remaining beasts suddenly lunged away from the defenders and made an advance towards the children. The youths shrieked and huddled together, clenching their Barney and Baby Bop Dolls. As the gang of grinning, slobbering, ring Barnoid monsters edged closer, Merrick put the finishing touches on a pack of plastiques.

"We can't use those until they're away from the children!" said Merrick,

"even then, we can only use one at a time, for safety's sake!"

"There's no way to save them," muttered Dr. Copernicus, "no way at all".

The next instant, before everyone's astonished eyes, Dr. Copernicus' "Barney" leapt out from the shadows and flung itself upon the surprised crowd of Barnoid mutants. The resulting battle was relentless in its ferocity and grotesqueness.

Within moments two of the Barnoid mutants were dying, their innards spilling out onto the barren stone floor. A minute later another one had both arms torn off, and ran off into the darkness, spilling a pinkish trail of ichor behind it. Now the Copernicus-Barney, Barry Clements, set about destroying the remaining two beasts.

While the three monsters battled, the children, spattered with blood and fragments of bone, came running back to the defenders. Dr. Copernicus held back on the plastique and focused the minion's gunfire upon the last two Barnoid-monsters.

As Barry Clements fought, he felt the pain sear through his body like fire from the scratches and bites he sustained from the beasts. His plush, purple claws locked onto the skull of one and with his newfound strength, broke it like a pumpkin. The monster giggled, and as its brains oozed out of its nostrils, sank to the floor and smiled.

The last Barnoid-mutation frantically looked to escape. As bullet after bullet ripped into its sullen flesh, the Copernicus-Barney lifted it off its feet and flung it against the wall. Dozens of bones shattered like toothpicks, and within seconds the last creature lay dead on the ground.

Silence came like heavy curtain, smoke drifting lazily through the corridor. The creature that used to be Barry Clements fell onto its knees, gasping for air. It had been a terrible battle, and Barry was the ultimate victor.

Dr. Copernicus steadily approached his creation. "Barry?"

The bleeding, fat purple dinosaur lifted its head lazily. "Are...the children...safe....monsters gone....?"

"Yes, Barry, the monsters are all gone. Our children are safe. Where is the other Barney?"

The creature chuckled. "...not good....wanted to steal minds of.... the minds of your children....naive parents.....was evil."

Dr. Copernicus patted Barry on his shoulder, and noticed it was dislocated. "Barry, I'm going to take you back to the laboratory. You need help immediately. We're going to make you better, help you get your mind back. Don't you feel that's a good idea?"

"It's a super-de-duupper.....idea," muttered Barry. "What will happen to me then?"

"It'll be great, Barry," answered Dr. Copernicus. "We'll finish your complete transformation into Barney, and you'll be broadcast live all over the world. The Age of Purple Love will rise again, and those who do not follow your teachings will be purged."

"...Purple Holocaust..." groaned the creature, " ...like Jeremy Phillips said...."

"Your time will come again, it'll be incredible," assured Dr. Copernicus, helping Barry to his immense cushy feet. "Merrick, come here and help me."

Merrick put the charged bundles aside and made his way to help Barry. The three of them began heading back to the laboratory, as the surviving Loved Ones and minions began clearing the debris. When they approached the metal case of plastique, Merrick held the dinosaur back.

"Easy, big guy," said Merrick. "That's some sensitive stuff, one wrong move and we're outta here."

"Dr. Copernicus....I..am...the new beginning....another Purple Holocaust?" asked Barry.

"Such a loaded phrase, let's not call it that, Barry," said Dr. Copernicus.

"Children....slaves....adults killed....death," muttered Barry.

"Such talk!" laughed Dr. Copernicus nervously. "Please Barn- I mean, Barry, let's move on. This is getting us nowhere." He noticed the Loved Ones and minions began looking uneasy. "Let's sing a song, a happy song," he suggested.

"I love you, you love me..."

"...We're a happy family...." added Merrick.

"With a great big hug and kiss from me to you..." joined the Loved Ones and minions.

"..Won't you say you love me too!!" shrieked Barry, his huge reptilian face contracting into a purplish mass of agony, " Oh God, what have you done to me! What have you done!?!"

Before Dr. Copernicus or Merrick could react, Barry Clements, once beloved-elementary-teacher-turned-Barney, tore the metal case out of the priest's hands and flung it with unbridled strength against the compound floor.

The plastique exploded upon impact.

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Detective Riley thought at first the explosion was an ignited gas leak, but then he turned and saw the smoke. Huge pillars of concrete were flung into the air like pencils, and huge rifts formed in the earth.

Call in back-up on the double!" Riley barked at his deputies, "and call in search and rescue crews, advise heavy machinery for excavation!"

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Tons of dirt and rubble cascaded into the compound, the cries of Purple Love minions and Loved Ones drowned out by the sound of collapsing concrete. Under a shattered cement column, Barry Clements, his thick, blubbery, reptilian body slowly being crushed by the upheaval, smiled weakly. As he lay dying, the final vestiges of a Barney-cult died with him. The realization put him at peace, even amidst the raging torrent of earth and mortar. The next instant the world lapsed into darkness, an eternity for the Church of Purple Love and its twisted machinations.

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"How many are there, lieutenant?" asked Detective Riley.

"So far we've discovered forty-seven cultists," answered the policeman, "but that's just in this corridor. Blueprints of this old subway system reveal at least nine other possible links. This is one of the largest concentrations of Barney-cultism we've seen yet".

"Anything else?"

The policeman's face took on a grave look. "Yes, but don't ask me to describe it. It's beyond anything I've ever imagined. Follow me".

Riley followed the man to an open pit. He looked down and saw at least a dozen half-human, half-dinosaur creatures. All were purplish, with idiotic grins and plush talons.

"All the time, they were down here trying to recreate the horror," said Riley, wiping his brow. "Looks like they came very close to doing that, too."

"What should we do with those remains?" asked the policeman.

Riley sat and stared at the twisted and horrid corpses of the Barney-creatures.

He clenched his lip and nodded his head. It was very evident what the best thing to do was.

"Pour all the gasoline you can find and torch this mess," he said, averting his gaze away from the bloated purple flesh-pile. "Let no one excavate this site or examine those remains at any cost. Burn it here and now, and destroy

any other specimens you find. We can't let this happen again".

Within the hour a fuel truck had emptied its entire capacity of gasoline into the ghastly trench. Riley watched in sullen satisfaction as the fuel was ignited, immediately absorbing the reptilian bodies in flames. The smell of burning Barnoid-flesh was sickeningly sweet. How appropriate, thought Riley.

For a brief moment, the searing smoke and heat filled the sky and turned the sun an eerie shade of purple. The next instant it cleared, and disturbed the sky no more. In the distance, Riley thought he heard children singing.

END