

The clattering of the helicopter rotors was deafening. Raine tried to politely thank her pilot, Mercy Johnson, but instead had to yell, an excited and far too girly “thanks, this is gonna be so cool!!” Mercy nods and smiles. Raine notices that she sported a crewcut, nose ring and even several loops around her right eyebrow. If it wasn’t for the jacket she was wearing, Raine figured that Mercy probably had a decent collection of tattoos as well. Not at all what she would have pegged one of her dad’s friends to look like.

Mercy waves Raine into the helicopter and assures that she is properly strapped in and belted. Then she hands Raine a headset that helps with the noise. Raine, can’t believe how lucky she is to have the opportunity to fly in a helicopter. Her excitement is like the first time she rode a bike, or her first time on a rollercoaster. A thrill tinged with fear to keep everything in perspective.

Raine’s father, Danny, waves good bye as the copter starts to rise. “Thanks Dad!! See you later!!”

Danny waves them on. He is happy to see Raine so taken with the ride. Thoughts of her as a young girl flash across his mind. “My little girl.” He thinks. Then remembers that at 17, his little girl has become quite the young woman and in the last few months seems to have gained the maturity to match. Mixed feelings of pride, and fear swell up in his mind. He’s losing his little girl.

The helicopter rises above Farmingham. Raine sees her father standing in the middle of the old paper mill waving goodbye. Even as the distance between them grows she detects a hint of sadness in his eyes. Or perhaps, it is just a reflection of her own feelings over how their relationship has changed. Nothing can replace the love she has for her father and she hopes that someday soon, she will be able to share her secret with him in such a way that won’t freak him out totally but til then . . .

Mercy Johnson turns to Raine and over the roar of the copter engine she yells. “So, your father told me that he thinks you’re gay! . . .”

Raine looks down at the antlike figure below now walking over to his motorcycle. “I’m gonna kill him.”



Railroaded

The thrill of the helicopter ride was replaced by an entirely different set of butterflies in Raine's stomach. "I'm gonna kill him. Kill, kill, kill, bang, dead..."

Mercy laughs. "Don't worry about it Raine, your secret is safe with me. I've known Danny for a loonnng time. He's just concerned and doesn't know how to handle it, so he asked me to speak with you?"

"W..w..why?!" All sorts of thoughts raced through Raine's head. She never met Mercy before today and she thought she knew all of her dad's friends. Though she never did know of a girlfriend.

"Why? Cause you're some kinda of pseudo mom?" Dammit. Raine wanted to like this woman and now, hundreds of feet up in the air, all she wanted to do was lash out at her.

"No. Cause I'm gay."

Raine takes a deep breath. Last weekend she and her friends dealt with a psychotic vampire lady named Drusilla who was seeking her own family. In the process Raine fought vampire gangsters, was witness to a vamp being unceremoniously cremated, and eventually got help from a demon who had become a short order cook at a local diner. Raine hated it when Drusilla played with her mind, powerful hypnotic suggestions was what Jacqueline said it was. Yet, Drusilla's efforts paled in comparison to how much this Mercy Johnson woman was messing with Raine's head at this moment.

"That's nice for you. So are we supposed to bond and be best buds now? Cause it ain't happening."

"Ha, ha . . . no not at all. I just wanted to get your attention. Danny is really screwed up right now and I thought I should cut to the chase and let you know that. I love him very much."

"What about the gay part?"

"Honey, the whole package is gay, not just a part. It doesn't mean I can't have love for a friend. You think the gay operating manual is on the back of a business card? Uh, uh, girl. We're just as entitled to conflict, contradiction, confusion, carelessness, and idiocy as any hetero. Maybe more."

"Again. Nice for you. Listen closely as I change the subject . . ."

Raine sits back on the chair and looks outside at the rolling landscape below them.
"Where are we going?"

“Eagle Lake. I’m supposed to take some pictures of a couple of locomotives out there. I figured it was safe to take a rider along. You don’t seem bothered by the flight. Heights don’t scare you?”

“I don’t scare so easily.”

“Coulda fooled me. When I said the G word, you practically shriveled up into that leather-I’m-a-hard-ass-jacket of yours like some sort of teeny bopper biker turtle. ”

Raine was a bit shocked to be spoken to that way by an adult. She allowed herself to fume, yet was careful to not break anything. Of late, her strength was unpredictable and the last thing she needed was to break something important and plunge to her death. Now that would be an embarrassing way for a new vampire slayer to buy it.

“What do you do?”

“Get a clue Sherlock. I fly helicopters. This isn’t exactly something someone does for a hobby. I fly for the hospital and for the local news in Boston. On slow days, they let me get a few credits as a photographer for some of the stranger stories.”

“What’s so strange about a couple of trains?”

“Take a look.”

Down below, Raine could see two locomotives clear as day, in the middle of a clearing surrounded by trees. There was an eeriness to the sight. Each locomotive must have weighed tons, yet they were down there in the middle of nowhere-in-your-right-mind Maine. No tracks, no road, nothing. Just two old and weather beaten locomotives sitting in the middle of the wilderness.

“How’d they get there?”

“I’ll let you speculate on that, honey. We’ll land soon and then we have a hike in front of us. Plenty of time to think.”

Raine watched closely as Mercy operated the copter. The vehicle definitely required a lot of concentration and a trained hand. Raine had an itch to try it out, but did not want to get any friendlier with Mercy Johnson. The woman was too blunt for her tastes. How in the world did this woman and her dad become friends at all. What was Mercy like in High School?

Mercy focused on her flying as she brought the copter down in a clear area near a dock on what Raine figured was Eagle lake. Two men ran out of a nearby shed to the copter.

“That you Mercy?”,

The man was in his thirties with a Grizzly Addams hair do and gap toothed smile. The man behind him was closer to Raine’s age, though definitely not in High School anymore. He was about six feet tall, dirty blonde and athletic. His blue eyes gave it away that he was related to the older man.

Mercy unbuckles herself and steps out of the copter. “Who else would have the balls to land this critter on your land Torry?”

Torry gave out a bellowing laugh that made Raine sit up and seriously consider not leaving the copter.

“Who’s e yer ridah?”

Mercy starts pulling a couple of back packs out of a storage compartment on the side of the copter. “Danny Mack’s daughter, Raine.”

The old man’s eyes lit up and the young man behind him gave a big smile. “Danny Mack’s kid . . . whooooo! How the hell did that sunnavagun raise such a good looking kid? You coming out of there girl?”

Raine was liking this day hike less and less. When her father asked her if she would be interested in going on a hike she thought it would be a great way to get away from Farmingham for a few hours and to just be a kid. Then he told her that it would be with an old friend of his . . . but when he mentioned that it would include a helicopter ride, Raine was sold. Now she was having a bit of a northern version of a southern comfort feeling. She steps out of the copter and Mercy hands her a backpack.

“Raine is definitely Danny Mack’s daughter. She rides like the wind, takes no guff and seems to have a leather jacket implanted over her shoulders. - - - you going to be okay with that honey?”

Raine holds up the backpack, it weighs a lot less than it looks. At least to her. “I’ll be fine. “ So far she managed to ignore the mountain man and his son, maybe they’ll go away.

“C...Can I uh give you a hand?” the young man offers. He grabs the backpack from Raine and the weight of it drags him right down. “Oooff!” . Raine smiles, slayer strength comes in handy.

The young man persists and helps her get the backpack on her back. Mercy and Torry step away and talk for a moment.

“The trains have been there forever, what’s so special about them now, Torry?”

“They moved.”

“They what?! Moved? That’s impossible. You drinking your own brew these days Torry? We saw them on the way here, right where they’ve always been.”

Raine listens carefully while her bellhop in training double checks every strap on her backpack.

“How can you tell from way up there? You give yourself too much credit. Those trains moved Mercy. Darby and I were out there yesterday and I tell you Mercy, they’ve moved. They are in the same positions relative to each other, but the whole kit and caboodle has moved about two feet to the left. You can tell from the ground around the engines. Looks like someone moved them then put them back . . .but not quite right.”

Darby starts to check Raine’s straps one more time. Raine slaps his hand. “It’s fine . . . Darbeeee.”

Darby stops and steps away. “Pays to be careful you know.”

Raine starts walking over to Mercy. “Yeah. Remember that.”

As Raine approaches, Mercy raises her hands toward Torry to imply something large. “Torry, no one could possibly move two ninety ton engines out of a forest only to put them back! You see any crop circles lately?”

“Well now you mention it, we saw one last week in old man Weller’s farm. Strangest thing we ever encountered. Like something outta some sci-fi movie. For a few days we was all trying to figure when the aliens would come.”

Mercy stops in her tracks. “You serious? Cause I know all the weird crap in these parts. “

“Sure I’m serious. Turned out to be nothing though. That idiot Weller fell asleep on his tractor and next thing you know we had crop circles. Nothing alien bout it. “

“You are so lucky that we’re friends. I’ll get some photos for you and check the area out. You ready Raine?”

“Ready.”

“Then we’re off. Make sure no one mysteriously moves my copter, Torry”.

Raine was a little surprised at how well Mercy handled the hike over to the locomotives. She expected that Mercy would be an athletic type just from their initial meeting, but though Raine took care to walk behind her, Mercy’s pace did not slacken. Every now and then she would look behind her to see if Raine was keeping up.

“So have you given some thought as to why two steam locomotives would be stranded in the middle of the Maine wilderness 100 miles away from the nearest railroad station?” Mercy asks.

“Teleportation, aliens and possibly something to do with demons and inter-dimensional gateways. The standard stuff.” Raine figured that Mercy would just think that she was being a smart-ass. If Raine had said the same thing to her watcher, Jacqueline, each suggestion would have been researched and taken very seriously.

“Good ideas all, but not very original. Your father used to say that these were the ghosts of a couple of locomotives that were wrecked out here long ago when this area was huge with logging to support the lumber mills in Central Maine. He came up with some story as to how the train wreck caused the death of hundreds of workers and how their spirits rebuilt the engines as a gravestone to their memories.”

Raine stopped in her tracks. “Dad thought that up?”

“Thought it up?! Honey, for the first few years anyone would swear that he believed it. Your dad always did have a knack for the Stephen King side of life. He ever tell you any of his campfire stories?”

“No. He never did.” . . . probably because I’m a girl, Raine thought. Her dad never let it show, but Raine always felt he would have been much more comfortable with the single parent thing if she was a guy. Maybe that’s why she . . .

“Your dad was quite a story teller. He wasn’t far from the truth with this one. Back in the 1920’s this area was ripe for logging. The problem was that getting the logs to Central Maine was near impossible. Some Canadian industrialist conceived of setting up a railroad out here to make it happen. People thought he was crazy, but he had the bucks. So, in 1926 work started on a railroad from Eagle Lake, west across the Allagash stream and down to Chamberlain and Umbazooksus lakes. “

“Umbazooksus? Sounds like a demon to me.”

“Nope, just Mainers. Eventually they brought in the locomotives over the ice on huge steam powered snowmobiles. After the logging industry dried up, they pulled out everything except the engines. It was just cheaper to leave them stranded than to try and move them. So in effect, the engines are symbolic of gravestones, maybe even ghosts of a long lost era.”

“Cool.” Raine was quite taken with the story and for her, the reality was far better than her demon theories.

“So what does all this have to do with being Gay?” Mercy asks without missing a beat.

Raine decided that the woman would have to die now, however, an irritating little voice kept her from acting on the whim. “You have a problem?”

“No, honey. And neither do you. Your dad wants me to talk some sense into you so that after this trip you’ll start running around in sun dresses. You can do that if you wish, but it won’t change the fact that you are who you are. Just like these trains we’re going to see. People can make up stories left, right and center, but the truth is basic, plain and unchanging. You’re a virgin right?”

“Do . . . you . . . have . . . a . . . problem?” Raine was going to lose it soon.

“So you are. At this age most girls are thinking about guys, instead you might be thinking about girls sometimes. Awkward feelings all kids get, excepting you are getting them for the wrong gender. Am I right?”

Raine considered her situation. Here she was with a stranger, in the middle of nowhere, discussing her sexuality. Couldn’t her father have just given her a copy of Cosmo with some neat little “Are you Gay” sex quiz.

“Fine. Yes. That’s just one of my issues. You happy now?! This better not show up on the evening news, Mercy.”

Mercy stopped hiking and pulled out her compass to get her bearings. “Don’t worry about it. I’m quite experienced at being gay. I came out about five years ago, til then not even your dad had an inkling. I’m not trying to out you, girl. I’m trying to help.”

Raine was getting upset. She never openly spoke of this with anyone and she could feel tears welling up. Fortunately, there was no one that mattered around to see the tough slayer chick cry. She let the tears flow.

“Help me do what? Dad thinks I’m some kinda freak and without anyone’s help some of the kids in school have been talking crap! The only reason it isn’t worse is cause they know I can beat the hell out of them. I can only imagine that things are getting worse with Delia being among my friends.”

“Delia? She gay?”

“Not that I know, but hanging out with me, wearing cammies all the time and having some sick love affair with things that go boom doesn’t quite make her a candidate for being a Barbie. We’re friends and sometimes I have to give her rides to places on my bike. I worry that some people will get the wrong idea. She’s kinda oblivious to the whole thing, but sooner or later someone will say the wrong thing to her and I could lose a friend. I don’t quite have a whole lot of those to spare.”

Mercy holds Raine in her arms and lets her cry. “I’ve been through it, Raine. I’ve been through it. You’ve got Danny Mack on your side though. He was the first person I told.”

Raine composes herself. “He was?”

“Yeah. He doesn’t think you’re a freak, it’s not like him. Danny is the most understanding man you’ll ever know. You’re lucky to have him as a dad. Problem is, he is a dad and he is human. Both of those things cause people to react in ways they don’t control. The whole separation of head and heart thing. He’s more concerned about how he can handle the whole thing rather than what you are or aren’t.”

Mercy lets Raine go and turns back to their trail. “C’mon, we’re almost there.”

Raine could tell by looking closely at the pines in front of them that there was a split down the middle, probably where tracks used to be positioned. They passed an antique boiler of some sort, then straight ahead... looking as if it just stepped out of time they saw a locomotive. It was pointed toward them, ready to take another trip down the now phantom railroad.

When they get closer, Raine could see the second engine. Both appeared to have been inside some sort of shed that had been stripped away by age and weather. The immense machines, alone in the wilderness, hardened against all external elements, stood proud and secure. Maybe there was a reason why Raine learned she was a slayer around the same time that she started wondering about her other “problem”.

“Awesome.”

Mercy put down her pack and started to take out her camera. “We have to work fast if we’re going to make it back to Farmingham for dinner. Take a look around while I get the photos I need.”

Raine climbed up on one of the locomotives. Once at the top she waves her hands high up on the air. “Top of the world! Mercy!”

Mercy laughs. It was nice to see Raine loosen up. She snaps a few pictures of her young friend then returns her attention to the position of the locomotives. Her pictures will be compared to a different set of pictures taken the year before. When she is done she stands back and takes in the view of both engines. Raine has now gotten behind the controls of the engine and is playing engineer. “Woo! Woo!”

Raine jumps out and walks over to Mercy. “Hey Mercy, this is so cool. I can’t believe we’re the only people here.”

“It’s too much of a trip for most people. There are pictures of the engines at a logging museum somewhere.” She hesitates. “Raine, Torry was right. The engines have been moved.”

Raine turns to look at the powerful locomotives. Mercy points at the ground where clearly the weight of the engines used to be, then at their new position. “When the pictures are compared, there is going to be quite a flurry of stories floated about.”

The idea that these monoliths had been recently and mysteriously moved left Raine in awe. On patrols she deals with vampires almost daily and on occasion she and the others have to deal with bigger bads that definitely have supernatural written all over them. But the idea of these two engines, being moved just a foot or so and left there as a calling card that somewhere out there is a force that can do it . . . it was downright creepy. You can't stab it, kick it or explain it away. The mystery is just there and whatever caused it doesn't seem too keen on asking for attention. "Whoa."

"Whoa is right, honey. I'll have to check to see if there has been any UFO sightings or other phenomena like that. It'll help the reporter with their story, especially if Torry turns out to be their only source."

"UFO's? Are you kidding?" Raine was not so much afraid of the idea of extraterrestrials as the idea that she would have to add them to her list of worries while on patrol. She had homework to do.

"Not so weird. You collect enough of these stories like I do and eventually you start stringing facts together. Whenever weird stuff like this gets on the line, the folks at the station copy me on them for my collection of urban myths and legends. It's just a hobby, but I've become a bit of an expert."

Mercy starts packing up her gear. "C'mon, get your stuff together. We have to get back."

Raine is confused. "Waitaminute . . . aren't we going to investigate? Go into research mode and get to the bottom of this? Who's messing with our trains?!"

"Raine, sometimes a mystery is just that. Sooner or later more pieces of the puzzle will show up. For now we have to get home."

As they walk away from the trains, Raine finds herself more fascinated with Mercy Johnson than she did previously. The woman was impressive. "Mercy, you told Torry that you knew about all the strange stuff going on in our region. Is there anything about Farmingham I should know?"

"Oh yeah! Turns out that in the last several months Farmingham has been the recipient of the vampire killer legend. Years back, somewhere in California a few stories got out about some woman who was going around killing vampires. It was your typical urban legend. But over the years, and especially this last year, the myth has resurrected itself all over the country. Farmingham is one of the places where this reported vampire killer has been active. It's nice for scaring kids at night, but I wouldn't worry about it if I were you. Some of these things shouldn't keep you from going out at night and having a good time."

Raine adjusts her backpack, the straps were too tight. She takes a final look behind her at the locomotives. "Naw, won't stop me. Besides, if the vampire slayer is doing her job, I got nothing to worry about."

Mercy laughs. “Hey, maybe she’s cute? Speaking of which, what did you think of Darby?”

“Not my type.”

“My we’re so secure now.”

“How about you Mercy? You ever been with a guy?”

“Never. Just never had the urge. Sometimes you just know.”

“Got a Girlfriend?”

“Listen closely as I change the subject . . .”

They continue their hike across the Maine wilderness, laughing and sharing as a friendship is born.

Mercy Johnson

Type	White Hat
Background Description	Helicopter pilot working with the evening news and a friend of Raine's father Dan. Red head with a Crew cut, tattoos, piercings make her look pretty tough, but she is a sweet tempered person.
Age	35
Height	5' 10"

Sometimes a mystery is just a mystery. No need to go digging it up.

Attributes

Strength	2
Dexterity	4
Constitution	2
Intelligence	4
Perception	2
Willpower	2

Skills

Acrobatics	0
Art	0
Computers	0
Crime	0
Doctor	2
Driving	4
Getting Medieval	3
Gun Fu	0
Influence	0
Knowledge	3
Kung Fu	0
Languages	0
Mr. Fix-It	2
Notice	2
Occultism	0
Science	0
Sports	1
Wild Card	0

Useful Information

Life Points	38
Drama Points	20
Experience Points	0
Perception Roll Bonus	2
Resist Fear	1
Initiative Bonus	9
Lifting Capacity	100
Survival Test Bonus	4
Number of Actions/Round	1
Comments	Resistance 1 (to pain)

Qualities

Contacts 2	Provides reliable info and helps in small ways.
Fast Reaction Time	Willpower test +1 to Resist Fear (already applied)
Hard to Kill 4	Each points adds +1 to Survival tests.
Photographic Memory	Get +1 to Knowledge and Science rolls.
Resistance 1	To Pain

Drawbacks

Minority	Gay
Obsession	Urban legends and myths