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Writer/s: [Ellen Zweig](#)

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The sun was shining; the lake was shimmering; the mountain was visible for the first time in weeks. I sat at my kitchen table with maps spread out in all directions. I couldn't decide whether to go or stay.

It was fine in the daytime even when the rain poured down outside and flooded the front yard. It was fine to be indoors, reading a book of poetry or listening to music. It was just fine to be stuck inside. But at night, when they came, it was torture. Not because they hurt me, but because, you see, it was their last-minute plan.

I don't know where they came from. They looked human, but sometimes when they spoke in their own language, I thought that they must be from some other planet. Strange as that seems, that's what I thought. Their eyes were golden and their hair was long, hanging down to their ankles, tied up in a braid. They were beautiful, all of them, and I longed to touch them. But they wouldn't allow me to get that close. They paced around my house, picking up books and vases. Smelling flowers. Touching everything very carefully. The only thing that was odd about this investigation of theirs was that they never really looked at anything—they obviously had good hearing; they smelled everything, and sometimes, they would run their fingers over an object or touch it with their tongues.

The first night they came, I tried to talk to them, to ask them questions. 'Where are you from? What are you doing here? What do you want?' They heard me, I know they did, but they never answered. It was as though I wasn't there. 'What do you want from me? How did you get into my house?' They didn't come through the door.

By the second night, I had convinced myself that it was a dream, just a dream. But they came again. I think I saw them walk through the walls, but I can't be sure. There were three of them, wearing ordinary clothes. They did the same things they had done the night before, as though they were programmed to do it. They stayed until first light.

I never saw them leave. But sometimes if I sat at a particular angle, looking out the window, I thought I could see them disappear, one by one, as though they were only the rain.

In the end, I felt compelled to act. When they came, I stood up and followed one of them—the tallest one—from room to room. When he was busy, licking a small ceramic statue of the Empire State Building, I moved quietly close behind him. Then, in a flash, I grabbed him around the waist. He groaned, a horrible sound, as though my touch had hurt him irrevocably. It made me let go.

I shouted at him: 'who are you? what do you want? why are you here?' And this time, he seemed to hear me. He didn't speak. He answered me another way. I can't explain it. I just know what it was that he would have said.

'It's a last-minute plan to save our skins. We three...if we taste this world, it will feed our world. Don't touch me again.'

'Taste me,' I said. And he moved like the wind. He was suddenly so close to me, I felt his cold tongue on my cheek.

And so, for all these nights, I have had an alien lover. He has tasted me, but I can't save his world. The others don't come anymore. Just the one tall male with skin like ice. Did I say that already? He was cold as a snake.

Strange dreams are not uncommon in this part of the world. The mountain rarely visible; the lake a dark expanse of deep water; the rain, always the rain. Things loom up out of the mist, penetrate the damp walls. The sound of water dripping into buckets. The soft cold throat of a sudden storm.

I decided to drive to town, get out of the house before the rains came again. I parked on a side-street behind the grocery store. After I loaded my car with bags of food and other supplies, I noticed a store window, bathed in a blue light. I went in.

There were all sorts of interesting objects, antiques and exotic animal skins, stuffed to look real. I was drawn to a frame on the back wall—inside, a human skin, stretched out, laid flat, covered in tattoos. As I came near, I felt his tongue, slowly, methodically licking my skin. Outside, it began to rain.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ellen Zweig.