

Breath

Budge's girlfriend Tracy was throwing a Halloween party when it all started coming together. She and a couple of her girlfriends lived in a house a few blocks away from our apartment. The costume party had been planned for weeks and the theme was villains and bad guys. Daniel had the LSD lined up and it was a really potent batch cooked up specifically for this occasion. I have never been very good at picking costumes. I dressed myself as the cliché zombie/ghoul. Face powdered white, fake blood on my forehead and dripping from the corner of my mouth, a ripped flannel shirt and torn jeans. I looked more like a lumberjack jelly donut than a ghoul but I suppose jelly donuts and lumberjacks could be considered villains in some arenas.

Budge and Tracy were going as a doctor and nurse because they considered western medicine to be evil and they thought people would recognize them as villains of misdiagnosis and malpractice. No less villainous than a jelly donut. Anyway, me and Budge were sitting already in costume getting high in the living room when Daniel showed up with the goods.

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“Are we ready gentlemen?” Daniel asked not dressed in his costume yet.

Budge got up and followed him into the kitchen. I heard Daniel say, “Here you go doctor, take it in good health,” then he called out to me, “Hey Alex, dinner is served.”

Budge came back out as I went to the kitchen to get my serving. Daniel had gone to his room to get dressed. My dose was left on the counter sitting on a piece of unfolded aluminum foil. It was slightly larger than the blotter that I was used to taking. Daniel had been working on this batch of LSD for weeks with a couple graduate students he met in the chemistry department. Supposedly, one hit had the strength of four regular blotter trips with the added twist of a special serotonin amplifier Daniel had been working with. Instead of paper it was on something that looked blue plastic with four little indents on it like it was made to hold tiny frog eggs or something. I put it on my tongue and got a beer out of the fridge. I went back to Budge who was looking every bit like a surgeon preparing to operate on his purple bong.

After a couple rounds the living room was filled with smoke and Daniel came out of the bedroom. He had his entire head wrapped in an Ace bandage with sunglasses covering his eyes. He was wearing white gloves and a black satin robe. A decent rendition of the invisible man that suited Daniel and his fascination with chemistry and illicit drugs. He practiced a maniacal laugh for us.

“Wow,” Budge said exhaling.

“That seems right for you,” I said.

“Thank you,” Daniel said and went into the kitchen to get a beer before we went off to the party. He called out from the kitchen to us, “Where’s the rest of it?”

“Where’s the rest of it?” Daniel the invisible man said again stepping back out of the kitchen.

“What?” Budge said frowning and putting his hand over the top of the bong trapping the swirling smoke inside the cylinder.

“There was only one there,” I said.

It dawned on Budge first. “Holy shit,” he said.

“How many indentations did it have?” Daniel asked me seeming concerned beneath the Ace bandage.

“I don’t know three or four, maybe,” I told him.

The invisible man and doctor Budge exchanged a quick glance and both of them said, “Holy shit,” in unison.

“What?” I said.

Daniel explained, “That was four. Nobody takes four. I mean I saw a guy take two once and it was pretty ugly. Nobody takes four. Four is just...”

“Just fasten your seatbelt,” Budge said cutting off Daniel. “You’re in for a great time, Mr. Zombie. This is where you become a legend.”

Daniel caught Budge’s implications and said, “Yeah, don’t worry about it. Just sit back and relax. We’ll take care of you.”

Budge passed the bong still filled with smoke in my direction. I took it and inhaled the full cylinder. They were right. What could I do now? I wasn’t going to go to the student hospital and tell them I accidentally took too much LSD. A forced vomit would be futile because acid

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goes right into the blood stream as it dissolves in your mouth. There wasn't anything I could do. Sit back and watch the light show. I wasn't that concerned, I considered myself an experienced tripper and had taken massive doses before.

"Hey, Budge, can you give me a hand with this before we go," Daniel said.

"Sure, man," Budge said and got up from the couch. They both went back into the kitchen where they thought I couldn't hear them.

"What should we do?" whispered Daniel.

"There's nothing to do," Budge whispered back.

"He's gonna flip."

"He'll come down. We just need to keep our eyes on him."

"It's a fucking huge dose," Daniel whispered.

"Yeah."

They came back out. I pretended not to hear.

"Alright Mr. Zombie, let's go party," Dr. Budge said and tucked the bong back behind the couch.

When the bathtub is about half-way filled with water I turn off the water off and step in. My foot is still bleeding and taints the water a pinkish hue. I leave the hospital gown on and slide down into the warm water. The bowl of ingredients floats at my stomach. I let my head rest down on the white porcelain floor of the tub. The water level rises to cover my ears. I close my eyes and listen to the emptiness of the water. I remember Master Lee from years ago and how he used to always talk about being water. I understand that this was why

he was put in my life. For this one moment I must become the water. I know it will take ten seconds without thought to loosen my mind enough for the alien beacon to be expelled. I close my eyes and it begins. I start to lose all bodily sensation even the hot sting of my foot fades into the nothing. It is completely black and silent. The water is the same temperature as my skin and I lose the defining line between myself and the water. I am the water. There is no water.

We left our apartment and walked the couple blocks to Tracy's house. Even before we got there I could feel it had started to take hold of me. The leaves on the trees lining the sidewalks were starting to take on a vibratory quality, shimmering in the evening light and swaying as if they were underwater. My stomach felt like I had swallowed a thousand butterflies that were just peeling themselves from their cocoons and getting ready to explode out through my chest and pour like a psychedelic river down the street and into the October night.

We were the first to arrive at the Halloween party and I was glad because my head was already starting to itch on the inside. It would take a bit to settle into the size of this dose. Tracy opened the door in her nurse costume. She looked more like a nurse from a porn movie than a hospital. Black fishnet stockings beneath her white skirt. A pierced eyebrow and little nurse's hat. She invited us in and we sat in the living room that was in the process of being decorated by her roommates.

I could never tell her roommates apart. There were two of them and one was probably named Heather

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and the other maybe Jessica. Either Heather or Jessica was dressed as a devil with red spandex leotards with a barbed tail pinned to her ass and tiny plastic horns on her forehead. The other one was dressed as a vampire. Her costume didn't seem too different from mine. White powdered face and the same drip of fake blood coming down the corner of her mouth. The primary difference was she had some fake vampire teeth that she would spit out and hold in her hand whenever she had something to say.

All three of them were busy with party preparations. The devil girl, maybe Jessica, was putting up fake cobwebs and hanging rubber bats from the ceiling. The vampire girl had her teeth in her hand and the other was holding on a phone which she used to call about beer and ice. Tracy was placing candles throughout the room. Budge joined in with the prep as me and Daniel sat on the couch watching the room transform into a Halloween party. It's impossible to tell how long this process took, it seemed like hours but it could have been days.

After the living room had enough cobwebs and candles, they turned off the lights and went into the kitchen to do presumably the same thing. Me and Daniel were left on the couch in what now looked like a flickering candle lit version of a dungeon with college textbooks and binders tucked in the corners.

A little TV and VCR sat next to Daniel and he said through his Ace bandages, "Let's see what we have here." He hit the play button on the VCR and a black and white movie started mid-scene. A mad-scientist in white lab coat, Dr. Frankenstein, just starting his experiment.

Dark gray walls in his laboratory basement. White electricity flashing between gray metal posts. Gray stitched together monster strapped onto black table.

It was no accident that this scene was pre-set. Nor was it an accident that Daniel was the one who turned it on. It made sense. Daniel was the mad scientist and I was his experiment. I was to be his creation. I realized that I hadn't seen either Daniel or Budge take any of the drug from the kitchen counter. It all could be a set-up. I had never met any of the graduate students that Daniel had been working on this batch of LSD with and it was likely they were part of the consortium too. They probably had been assembling and modifying this special dose for years now. They knew my body chemistry and had this special batch constructed for this occasion. All they had to do was prepare Budge and Daniel for me to knock at their apartment door looking to rent a room. Then a few short months later they would administer the chemical and set they're plan in motion.

Other people started to arrive at the party. A mummy, a caveman, a nun, a pirate, a couple more zombies or jelly donuts. Budge came back in and switched with Daniel. They were tag-teaming me.

"Just what the doctor ordered," Budge said and set a bottle of beer in front of me.

"It's going to be a great party," Dr. Budge said.

"It's been planned for a while, huh?" I asked.

"Oh, yeah. A whole lot of planning," he said with a hint of exhaustion. This was his admission that this night had been set up in advance for me. Then I noticed the bats and I knew that they had done their footwork.

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Everything was in order. They knew about the bat and the shed from little Ricky's horror show back during the weekend of my baptism.

"What the hell is this?" Dr. Budge said to the TV where the gray Frankenstein monster was kneeling next to the gray child who was offering him a white flower.

"Be right back," he said and went into one of the bedrooms off the living room.

This was when the mummy came up to me, black paint around his eyes and more Ace bandages. A lot more Ace bandages. He said, "You must be the One. Wow, you're my idol. Can I shake your hand?" and he held out his wrapped hand.

"Hi," I managed to say and I knew that the end was coming quick. I could feel something bubbling up in my chest. This was the first time I felt the beacon getting ready to explode out of my rib cage and send the signal into space to wake them. I put my hand in his outstretched palm. I couldn't feel any skin or flesh underneath the bandages just his small hand bones and I pulled my hand back quickly. The mummy knew something was about to happen and stood there staring at me, waiting with his bony arms and hands dangling at his sides. I knew then that they were all part of it. Even their costumes were designed to illustrate how the Nephilim have shaped humanity. The mummy showing me poor Khufu's misunderstanding of immortality. The vampire roommate represented a lust to live forever and the devil was the sabotage of the alien's genetic experiments.

Budge came back. He had turned on some music that was playing through speakers disguised as grave-stones.

“Be careful with him, Dave,” Dr. Budge told the mummy.

“Of course, of course,” the mummy said and added, “Fucking four. Amazing.”

Budge sat back down and I recognized the music was the Gypsy Sun. The song was about the bees and how they swarm to their hive and I understood they were talking about the Annuki and the glory of returning into the Sun. It was a call back to our origins. I could feel it in my spine. The desire to merge back into it once and for all. I had never felt a desire as strong as this. Every cell and molecule in me yearned for this release back to the source. I felt like my body could rise up at that moment and propel itself through the ceiling and out into the atmosphere, disintegrating and merging into the infinite mind.

“Great song,” Budge said.

I couldn't answer him. The thought had me and trying to follow it was like tugging at a weed connected to a larger deeper root system. It was so extensive that every event and thought I ever had was linked to this one idea. The house suddenly seemed too small to fit the concept, I couldn't think it through because the room was too crowded, there were too many people saying too many things. Maybe if I was outside I would be able to see the whole thing. My eyes began to sting from the smoke and there were masks and painted faces in every direction I turned. I looked at Budge and uttered the only word I thought would convey my feeling about this shrinking living room.

“Out,” I said.

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He smiled a bit at this for some reason that I would never know and said “Alright.” We got up and found our way through the music and people to the front door.

When we stepped outside, I felt my face tighten with the cold air and my senses exploded into the evening. I lost all concept of my own body, I couldn't tell where my skin ended and the evening air began. I was stepping into the night as if it was a canvas with the Halloween neighborhood painted onto it. There was no separation between me and the world around me. It was me and I was it. I was a part of the canvas and the canvas itself. And I knew then that this was the place of No Thought and if I stayed with the experience for another nine seconds my core would dissolve into it. I would once and for all fall into the eternal. But even as that thought came to me, I felt something shiver inside me. There was something repelled by this dissolution. Something that tightened in my gut as I approached the moment of liberation. This was the seed of the Nephilim. I knew it as soon as I felt it. The image from the balcony in Germany, the creature lusting for immortality and growing more contorted over the eons. This was its seed twisting inside me. The thing wanted to keep me from No Thought and send its message back to the slumbering aliens. I knew it had to be removed. I knew that if it sent out its signal all of mankind would be bathed in fire. I knew what my role was and I knew how my whole life had led me to that moment.