

IF YOU DON'T SLEEP, YOU DON'T DREAM.

by William Pauley III

I

Gunshots.

Gunshots!

I hear men screaming!

I can hear them!

Three at least!

They are dying!

Screaming for God!

Gordon?

I'm scared.

Scared.

Scared.

What do they want from us?

What is it they want?

What do they want from us, Gordon?

Where are you?

Do they have you?

Are you there, Gordon?

Are you there?

Gordon, please God, Gordon?

Gordon is gone.

Gordon is gone.

This room is empty.

Gordon is gone.

I need to leave.

I'm leaving.

I need to find Gordon.

My eye!
Where did I leave my eye?
False, it is. Pure white.
A gift from Gordon.
Now where...
The cupboards?
The stove?
The mug!
Yes, the mug is where I left my eye! Haha!
Cold, it is... icy water.
Goddamned winter.
Freezing my socket.
Goddamn this room.
Goddamn this building.
I'd kill just for the body heat.
It's so goddamn cold.
The front door is frozen shut.
I beat the piss out of it.
I beat the living hell out of it.
Ice is breaking.
Falling to my boots.
The letter.
I see the letter.
The letter from Gordon.
I see the letter.
I never want to read.
Gordon always leaves me.
Gordon always leaves me *here*.
I never want to read.
Never.
Forever in my pocket.
Never will I read.
I break open the door.
There is a box outside.
Lazarus.
My name.
Written on the box.
It's from Gordon.
He's left me again.

Gordon is gone.
In the box?
Happiness.
Enough to last while Gordon is gone.
I hope.

Dear God! Help us!

There is a man lying down in the hall, screaming.
He is bleeding.
Dying.
But is he asking for me or asking for God?
I should leave.

...

Gordon?
I must find Gordon.
I turn and look at the man, bleeding, terrified, cold, but I
must find Gordon.
I cannot stop.

Hey, you! We need help! Call an ambulance!

...

Please, old man, help us.

I look back.
The man is pointing a gun at me.
I walk toward him.
He is young.
Much younger than me.
Maybe thirty... forty years-old. He is not alone.
In Gordon's room there are two others. Neither are
moving.
Blood pours from their lifeless bodies.
Did you do this Gordon? Did you take these lives?
There is a gold badge hanging from the dying man's belt.

He grabs at his chest.

*Look, I don't want to hurt you...
it's just we need help and you were walking away.*

Are... you... a police... officer?

My voice.
Raspy and weak.
Always out of breath, I am.

*Detective. John Gray. We came to bust this guy... Gordon.
Somehow he knew we were coming.*

He clutched his hand over his heart, as if he could touch
his pain and remove it
violently tearing it away.
Shot three times.
One in each leg and another in the right side of his chest.
Walking closer to Detective Gray,
I notice him wince.
He can't stand the horror of my malformed face.
A hideous beast, I am!
Unworthy to breathe, I am!
Gordon, He never winced.
Gordon, my only friend.
I touch the cavernous trenches of my scarred face.

I know... a wretched beast... I am.
But I... I wouldn't be... alive...
if not for... Gordon. He saved... me.

The detective traces the scars with his perfect-working
eyes, trying to make sense of their placement. *What
happened to him*, he wonders. Forever wonders.
His eyes clamp shut.
His chest... the pain is too much.
He clenches his fists.

*Agghh... God! Can you find a phone?
I think Dodd had one, he's the one on the left, check his pockets...*

I walk over to Dodd.
Stone-cold Dodd.
Half his head blown across the room.
Parts of him stuck to the walls and ceiling.
I dig my hand into the pockets of dead Dodd's jacket.
I find a toothpick, a wallet, a bag of pistachios, and a cell phone.
Before taking the phone back to Detective Gray, I walk over to the closet and grab Gordon's toolbox.
The toolbox has everything needed to perform an emergency surgery of any kind: scalpels, hammers (of all sizes), a chisel, clamps, a staple gun...
Anything a doctor would ever need.

Gordon... Gordon... is a good... man. He... helps me.

Dear God, what has he done to you?

I walk back over to Detective Gray, his skin growing pale,
I hand him the phone.
I open the toolbox and shuffle through its contents.
The detective dials for help, eyeballing my every move.
The detective is having trouble speaking. He pauses.

Thanks...

*This is Detective John Gray. We need an ambulance...
Three men down. Possibly two dead.
200 Archer Avenue The old Peterson building.
We're on the seventeenth floor.*

I walk into Gordon's kitchen and grab a glass of warm water and pour in a cup of salt. I quickly walk back into the hallway.
Detective Gray, no longer on the phone, is now applying pressure to the wound in his chest, taking in quick, deep

breaths.
He coughs and blood fills his mouth,
his tongue drowning, sloshing within the gore,
his teeth pale pink.
He spits on the carpet.
The detective looks up at me.

Did you get... help?

Yeah... an ambulance will be here in five to ten minutes.

I fumble frantically through the toolbox, looking for
tweezers.
The detective coughs again, spitting more blood on the
carpet.

What are you doing?

You need... help.

*I'm getting—
I'm getting help.*

You need help... now... or you will... die.

Frustrated with searching, I dump the contents of the
toolbox
onto the floor of the hallway.

Here... we go.

I hold up a large pair of surgical steel tweezers.
I dig the tips into his chest wound.
About two and a half inches deep, I can feel the metal of
the tweezers scraping against the metal of the bullet.
Metal on metal.
I can feel it, hear it—blood seeps and now I even even
taste it.
I let up on my grasp, allowing the tweezers to pull apart

the wound just enough for me to slide the tips down each side of the bullet.

Blood pools and I see nothing but mirrored red, bright and blinding.

I feel around with the end of the tweezers, get a grip on the bullet, and pull it straight out of the wound.

Detective Gray, who held his breath for the entirety, finally exhales at the sight of the flattened shrapnel exiting his body.

Gore gushes from the wound with each heartbeat, splattering across my grey trench coat.

I don't mind.

Never do I mind.

I pour the warm salt water into the wound.

Detective Gray howls.

Jesus.
FUCK!

The salt... it will clean it. Slow the... bleeding.

I pull out a needle and thread from Gordon's toolbox and begin to sew the detective's chest wound shut.

It is silent now.

The detective tries not to look down at my crooked fingers working away. Instead, he speaks.

I look up at him, puzzled.

My fingers slow. My eye wide.

Gordon.

Why were you going to leave?
Why weren't you going to help us?

Detective Gray looks at me. He wants me to speak.

The detective looks into my eye, my left eye, my one good eye.

He nods then loses consciousness.

Gordon, where have you gone?

Gordon.
He is all I have.

A door swings open violently down the hallway behind us.
The doorknob buries itself into the deteriorating sheet
rock, serving as an anchor, allowing the paramedics and
police officers to scuttle through the doorway like a raging
stampede.

Immediately I am thrown belly down onto the floor by an
enraged police officer.

He thinks I'm Gordon.

Two of his kind are dead.

I understand his frustration.

I don't resist.

The paramedics surround Detective Gray.

The police officers surround the cadavers.

You'll go to Hell for this!

You'll go to Hell for this.

It's the last thing I will hear tonight.

The officer plows an elbow into my face.

The impact causes two of my rotted teeth to tear through
the soft tissue of my cheek.

My eye, my left eye, my one good eye
sees only white.

II

I am awake in a cell.

Jail or prison? I do not know.

The stone walls are wet with night air.

A massive iron door is placed between the world and I.

A massive iron door protects the entire human race from
me.

Me! Lazarus!

Ha! An old fucking man, I am!

This impenetrable cell wasted on such old bones!
Of all the hatred, terrors, horrors in the world,
This cell is wasted on me!
Time has no presence in this place.
The sun, the moon may as well not even exist.
I count the days as they pass by the number of meals I am
served.
So far seventeen... nearly six days.
I haven't had any medication.
My stomach churns.
I never eat the meals they bring me.
Only the bread.
A migraine pulses through the tiny nerves in my brain with
such violence I fear my skull will split in two.
The only relief comes from vomiting water and bile when
the pain becomes impossible.
Gordon warned me about not taking my medicine.
But I didn't forget!
I just don't have it.
I may never have it again.
I may never see Him again.
Get used to it, I should.
So, I lay here in my cell.
I shouldn't expect anything, I know, but I find myself
waiting.
For Him.

The heavy metal slot on my iron door unlocks and slides,
revealing the tired old eyes of the night guard.

You have a visitor.

Who?

Gordon.
Gordon.
Gordon.

Just get on your feet, old man.

I obey his request and the guard slides the lock and opens the heavy door.

He takes me from my cell down a long and dark hallway. There are a total of eight other iron doors, just like mine down this hallway.

In the distance, a guard calls for lights out.

Then it hits me.

Lights out...

It's too late for visitors.

Gordon would never see me here... a wanted man!

He would have to be insane to show His face here.

Gordon is no loon.

Panic sends its death shock through to the tips of my every nerve.

I scream, as loud as an old man can, and am quickly silenced.

The officer hurls me face-first into the stone brick wall and presses cold blue steel to my temple.

*Look, fuckface, if it were up to me I'd splatter your goddamn brains
out right here all over this wall.
But it ain't up to me...*

He pulls his gun away and shoves me down the hall.

Now shut the fuck up and walk.

The officer leads me into an empty interrogation room: a two-way mirror, a swinging light fixture, just like on television.

I take a seat at the table in the middle of the room.

Another door opens.

It's Detective Gray.

He is in a wheelchair with a bandage across his chest and a cast on each leg.

Hey, buddy... remember me?

I remember.

They tell me your name is Lazarus.

They are... correct.

The detective laughs at my awkwardness.

*Well, first I want to say thank you... you saved my life.
The doc said if you hadn't been there that night then I would
have been buried on Tuesday along with my partners.*

I nod, staring blankly, concentrating more on the painful swelling of my brain than to the detective's words.

I move my eye to meet his.

The detective sighs.

*And second... I want to apologize.
They didn't tell me that you were arrested until earlier today
when I was released from the hospital.
I've already spoken to the warden and he is filing
the necessary paperwork to get you released as soon as possible.*

I can go... home?

*Uh... not quite.
The experts here feel you aren't capable of living on your own.
There are also a few doctors who are very interested in your...
you know, 'condition'.*

My condition?

*They want to know what Gordon has done to you, Lazarus.
They can help you.*

Detective Gray's face begins to melt.
His skin liquefies and slides off his skull,

streaming down his neck and soaking into the collar of his shirt.

My vision blurs.

I close my eye tight and reboot.

His face is restored.

I need my medication.

Medication?

'Happiness', Gordon has me take it... every day.

Happiness?

It keeps visions away... I have demons.

Where would one find this medicine?

In my room... there is a box...

Lazarus, it will say. LAZARUS.

In heavy black ink.

Written by the pen of my father,

my only friend...

My eye wells and a tear streams down my cheek.

The detective raises a suspicious brow.

Gordon.

Gordon is gone.

Gordon is your father?

Yes.

How old are you, Lazarus?

Fifty.

Fifty? Won, really?

Don't take offense, but I had you pegged at about eighty or ninety.

*Fifty. You know, I'll be forty-five next month.
Are you saying that you are only five years older than me?*

Questions, questions.
Always questions.

Fifty.

*Fifty... okay.
Well, the reason I ask is because this guy Gordon...
he's fifty-nine years old.*

My eye meets his and quickly pulls away to the left.

*So that would have made Gordon nine years old
when you were born, does that sound about right?*

I don't answer his questions.
Always with questions!
His suspicious, perfect-working eyes!
His motor-mouth!
I want him silenced!
No answer, you fool!
Swine!

*I call bullshit.
You're much older than you're leading on and there is no way
in hell that Gordon is your father.
You're hiding something, Lazarus...*

*Look, I understand I owe you.
But I still have a job to do, Lazarus.
You got that?*

Stupid, pig-fucking mule!

*I'm going to get you your medicine, but if anyone asks,
you didn't get it from me.
I'll do this one thing, but that's it.*

*I'm going to find Gordon and have his ass fried
even if it's the last goddamn thing I—*

I leap across the table and dig my nails into
the never silent throat of Detective Gray.
For three full seconds I feel a rush of adrenaline
flowing through my veins and emptying out through my
fingertips.
Two officers burst into the room and pull me off the
handicapped detective.
Skin beneath my nails.
Bloody fingers.
I had his life in my hands!
Bastard wants to kill my father!
My only friend!
Gordon...

The officers force me to walk down another hallway,
different than the one I came through just minutes before.
A feeling of terror calms my rage.

Where are you... taking me?

*You're going to solitary.
You've got to be the dumbest motherfucker alive, old man.
Assaulting a police officer! Are you serious?*

The two officers push me into a dark room and slam the
heavy door shut.
The lock snaps in place.
I hear their laughs grow faint as they walk away.
Again I am alone.
Always alone.

Gordon?

The dark, she plays tricks on the eyes, she does.

Night is the earth's eyelids.

So many sights I've seen in the night!

First the frogs...

They poured down like heavy rain from the pipes above.

Giant bullfrogs with three rows of teeth.

Razor-wire teeth, they had.

Hungry for the blood of the weak.

Me! I was the weak.

I was able to squeeze the life from the first few, but as the numbers grew, I wasn't able to kill them fast enough.

It was over at first bite.

That first taste of blood was enough to drive them mad!

They ripped every tendon from its bone.

I collapsed to the wet floor, no muscle to stand.

They leapt onto my back, ripping into flesh like lions feasting.

Finding my face, they dug fangs an inch deep, pulling muscle and gore from the bloody skull that lay beneath.

One frog plucked out my right eye, not knowing it was false—choked and died.

I laughed at the sight, grateful for this one small victory, before finally submitting to the enemy.

Then I awoke, as I always would after such strange visions, laying still in the dark.

Another of these visions occurred shortly after the first, this time taking me out of my darkened cell entirely and into a colder world surrounded by mountains of snow and ice. Standing in front of me, eyes frozen, almost glass, was Gordon.

He wasn't combed or shaven.

He was smiling. Eerily smiling.

He was calm.

He never blinked.

We both stood and stared at each other in silence for several moments.

Finally He spoke:

*Sleep...my mind begs for it, but my eyes..
they always seem to wander... endlessly... aimlessly...
I'm not certain why the world focuses on such petty matters.
We all should be preparing for the future.
Beasts, that as of now only exist to us in fairy tale,
will be stampeding the earth with a hunger for blood.
The Devil is in the waiting.
Surely someone feels his presence.*

In the vision, I knew exactly what Gordon was trying to tell me.
In the real world, I wasn't sure.
Gordon spoke of the Devil as if He witnessed his decent into Hell.
Gordon spoke of God as if he were dead.
He always spoke of a revelation, a rapture... but never in those words, and never in the typical Christian perspective.
Instead He spoke of the Devil's reign on Earth as if it were imminent, within our lifetime.
How demons would dig up the earth, out of Hell and through the yards of our neighbors to devour their sons and rape their daughters.
Sometimes I was convinced He was an angel—Gordon.
He knew the design of the human body as if He Himself had helped God create us.
The miracles... the miracles this man has performed!
As if He had the specific blueprints in his head, it was!
Complete knowledge of anatomy and physiology, He had.
Like no other doctor before Him.
And the miracles He has performed on me, Lazarus... I was born again.
My scars all necessary.
I would not be here without Gordon.
I would not be.

Gordon not only had the blueprints, he improved them.
He enhanced my body in ways no earthly doctor could.

Through all the surgeries and medications, Gordon gave
me everlasting life.
And Detective Gray hopes to kill this blessed man.
*I will bury his black bones before I ever let him bring harm to
Gordon.*

Returning to the vision:
After Gordon spoke His last word, He began to
decompose.
His skin and bones rotted before my eyes.
His jawbone was the last to fall, landing on the pile of ash
that was quickly taken by the wind.
He was gone.
Gordon... always gone.
Always leaving.
I was again left in the dark.
The dark.
Such vile, rotten things come from the dark.

I lay on stone now.
My cell is cold.
I don't feel the walls, or even sense their presence.
I feel removed...from myself, my body, and this cell.
My eye starts twitching, peeking, focusing.
Finally there is light.
Dim, she is, but still light.
A dark figure stands before me, unfocused.
The dark, she lives inside me.
Focusing, focusing... but the dark is still inside me fighting,
trying to kill it.
The figure, she is a woman... crying, full of fear.
She puts a hand to her mouth.
The dark pulls its shade and I sleep.

Adam...

My mind becomes electric.

IV

I am awake and alert.

I am in a hospital room surrounded by noisy machines, the smell of coffee, 3AM.

I am nervous.

I am nervous because I am in pain.

I am in pain because all my scars have been reopened.

I have a beard and slightly longer hair than when I first fell asleep.

Something has happened to me.

A nurse walks in.

The scene curdles her blood.

She turns and walks out the door.

A doctor steps in moments later.

He is prepared to look at me.

He does not shudder.

How are you feeling?

I'm so nervous I'm trembling.

*That bad, huh? Well, you're going to need your rest, so I'll make this
brief.*

You've been drifting in and out of a coma for nearly three weeks now.

*In that time we've run a few tests and found many peculiarities with
your condition.*

My condition.

Again, 'my condition'.

*This guy, Gordon, he has really done a number on you.
We've found foreign materials in nine areas of your body,
many serving no mortal purpose, but rather seem to have
been placed for his own amusement.*

...

*Are you aware your body was wired to be
accessed and controlled via remote control?*

R-r-r-remote... c-c-c-control?

*Yes, there were mechanisms, which we've disabled,
located in your hands and feet
that were equipped to receive radio commands
and were cabled throughout your body via a confusing and
complicated hardwire setup.
We also found peculiar machine parts located in your heart,
your left forearm,
your inner thigh on your right leg,
between your shoulder blades, and your brain.*

A living autopsy.

*Although we weren't able to pinpoint the exact
function of many of these machines,
we were able to quickly identify the purpose of and remove, what
we've been calling, the 'spider implant'.
The body of the spider implant was located in the frontal lobe of
your brain with several 'legs'
reaching across and pinching sections
responsible for retaining long-term memory.
We simply traced your scars when making our incisions,
as to not cause any further scarring.*

W-w-w-hy w-would I c-c-care about sc-c-carring?

The doctor laughs.
I'm confused.

How am I... alive?
How could I have possibly...survived this?

I don't honestly know. But here you are.

You risked me dying?

*To be fair, you are in far better shape now than you were when you arrived. You were not well when you came into this building.
For that, you're welcome.*

The doctor gives a half-smile and sighs.

*Okay... okay. This is a lot to take in all in one sitting.
Why don't you get some rest and I'll come check on you after a bit?*

I nod.

The doc gives me the other half of the smile and exits the room.

I study the seeping faults interrupting my skin in disgust.

Such a wretch, I am!

To be beaten and burned, I deserve!

It's then that I notice the neatly wrapped box sitting on the table next to me.

I reach over and pick it up.

The tag reads: "*To Lazarus... Now we're even.*"

I rip off the wrapping and beneath, a familiar box.

LAZARUS. It reads.

LAZARUS. In heavy black ink.

Written by the pen of my father, my only friend... Gordon.

I remove a syringe from the box and push out the air bubbles.

I take out my right eye, my glass eye, and inject 40mL of Happiness directly into my frontal lobe, through the empty socket.

My body begins to convulse and spasm!

Never once has this happened!

I am supposed to be free!

The machines that surround me begin to howl and soon doctors and nurses enter.

They poke and prod at me, this living corpse, in hopes to find an answer.

An answer to silence the machines.

An answer to what they've found beneath my scars.

An answer that must be given by *me*.

V

Gordon sets his suitcase down on the armchair.

He looks at me with fire.

We are in a seedy motel room—the air is thick with mold.
A voice in my head whispers the year, 1978, but the month
escapes me.

Gordon, always smiling, bends down and snaps open the
suitcase.

He steps back.

The two halves of the heavy suitcase separate about an
inch, then fall shut again.

Something is living inside it, someone.

He takes perch behind the armchair so He can see both
me and the case, His smile sometimes slipping into
marvelous, excited yelps.

The suitcase opens again slightly and a woman's frail,
delicate hand slides through.

My eye widens with shock, shifting between Gordon and
the hand and back again.

I don't know what to do, I am frozen with fright!

Gordon, hardly able to contain Himself, speeds the
process by lifting the suitcase top away for her.

The woman lifts her head slowly and looks around the
room, somehow overlooking us both.

She pushes her upper body up and out of the case; her
long dark hair falls onto her shoulders.

She is silent.

Her head bobs and jerks as the anesthesia Gordon gave
her slowly begins to wear off.

She is wearing nothing but a short white silk nightgown
and a pair of pale pink panties.

Her legs are numb.

She carelessly throws herself to the floor, suitcase
tumbling after.

She throws her head up and wrenches herself forward
with her hands, collapsing after only one strenuous pull.
Her body lays limp.
Finally she gains enough strength to pull up to her knees,
but is still paralyzed at the legs.
Gordon steps out from behind the armchair, slowly
walking towards her.
He looks up at me and places a finger to His grin, signaling
for me to keep quiet, as He reveals an ice pick menacingly
clutched in His hand.
The woman weeps.
Her innocent wail plucks at my heartstrings, falling silent
now by Gordon's insensitive hand.
He pushes the pick into her, hard and quick.
It digs deep into the back of her skull, but somehow does
not kill her.
Gordon is precise in His ways.
If He wants her alive, she will remain alive.
If He wants silence, then silent she'll be.
If He doesn't want her to remember, you better believe
she won't remember a thing.
Gordon grabs a hold of the woman's long dark hair in His
fist and pulls her to her feet. He turns His attention to me.
Smiling again.
Always smiling.

*Ready?
Are you ready, Laz?*

Ready for what... Gordon?

Gordon howls and tosses the woman onto the bed.
The woman looks at us in horror.
Gordon crawls on top of her and drags His slimy tongue
across her cheek.
He grabs a handful of her hair and breathes the stench of
her sweat into His lungs.
Gordon looks into her eyes, revealing His intentions
without saying a word.

I hesitate.

Gordon whips His head around and stares at me with wicked eyes and immediately I cower and give in, hoping if I comply He'll return His attention to the girl.

A coward, I am.

I loosen the button on my pants and they fall to my ankles. Gordon takes hold of the woman's silk nightgown in both hands and rips the material from her body exposing her naked breasts and torso.

The woman is screaming inside.

I can see the fear in her eyes.

Gordon rips the panties from her trembling hips and spreads her legs open wide.

And now to plant the seed, Laz;

Completely powerless, I am.

I obey His command.

Gordon, still holding her legs, watches as I penetrate her.

I'm raping her.

She's raping me.

Two people having sex against our will.

The blood trickling from the hole in her head soaks the sheets as I pump my hips.

She's paralyzed.

Tears run down her temples from the corners of her eyes.

Abbbb...

When I finish, I run to the bathroom and vomit into the commode.

I'd like to think this was only a dream, but the doctors here tell me these dreams and visions are actually memories releasing into my conscience as my frontal lobe heals.

And believe them, I do.

They are too real.

Too terrifying.

I am ashamed of the memories that have returned over the last week.

More than ashamed, completely disgusted.

The hospital transferred me here to the sleep clinic after I had complained of severe nightmares, one of which lasted for seventeen hours.

Unable to awaken, I was!

Memories tear out from the depths of my brain and alter my reality and self-perception.

Torture, it is!

Pure Hell!

Put an end to it, I will!

I will never sleep again!

It takes over two hours for a doctor to see me.

The clinic is much different than the hospital in that way.

At the hospital I was able to get a nurse or doctor at any given notice.

Here, they couldn't care less.

If I were to die here in this room, I likely wouldn't be found until hours later when room service arrives.

I'm exaggerating, of course, but at times it felt like a ghost town.

The doctor finally walks in, keeping his arms crossed so that he can easily glance at the face of his watch without making it too obvious to me.

Wasting his time, I am.

I understand you wish to speak with me?

Yes...

I want to be... put on medication.

Oh, really? What sort of medication?

Something to keep me awake...

Awake?

*You did good, Laz, my boy!
You made Daddy proud!*

Lazarus, this is a sleep clinic!

I know this... but I'm afraid... of my dreams.

The doctor laughs.

*Our purpose in studying your dreams is
to find out more about this... Gordon.
There is absolutely no way we can do that with you awake.
If you don't sleep, you don't dream.*

Yes... exactly. I am afraid.

*Look, I'm sorry.
There's nothing I can do about it.*

My eye sees only red.

*I have other patients to attend to.
Is there anything else you need?*

I shake my head.

*Try and have a nice night, Lazarus.
I'll be speaking with you when you wake up tomorrow morning.*

The doctor exits the room.

The thought occurs to me that perhaps they are lying.
Perhaps the dreams are only dreams and they are just
trying to get me to turn against Gordon.

Pulled me away, they did!

He may have come back for me!

Inject me with drugs and speak into my ears as I sleep, they do!

Turning the cogs while I dream!

*Making me feel in control when I have no control...
I will show them!
Find Gordon on my own, I will!*

Later that night a nurse comes to prep me for the sleep exam.
Just before she injects me with the prescribed sleeping meds, I leap to my feet and jam the syringe into her neck.
The nurse falls limply to the floor.
I drag her body into the bathroom.
I walk down the many empty hallways, dodging two night watchmen standing by the door.
They are talking, laughing, watching TV.
They don't even notice as I exit the building.
This is my escape.
Much easier than I'd anticipated.
But again, this is no prison, just an ordinary understaffed clinic.
I set out on the dark streets of the city.
Gordon is out here somewhere.
Find him, I will.
I reach into my pocket and pull out the letter Gordon left for me on the night of the gunshots.
The night I saved the life of that unappreciative Detective Gray.
My hands tremble in anger as I unfold the letter.

Only seven words appeared on the page, scrawled by hand in black marker:

I will wait for you in Hell.

VI

*I am drawn to the bright lights of a gas station convenience store,
much like a moth to flame.*

Surrounded by such awful darkness, my breath is short.
I'm growing tired.

Inside the store, I collect a variety of caffeine-fueled products: *pills, energy drinks, coffee*.
I can feel the spying eyes of the cashier clerk like hot breath on my neck.

Why has this hideous beast come into my store? he is thinking.
What business does it have here?

My stomach is empty.
I crave a hot meal, but must settle for a bag of beef jerky.
The clerk refuses to look at my face [my grotesque, malformed face].
Even at the counter, as I'm presenting my purchases, he turns away from me.

That'll be five dollars.

Five dollars?

I ask with some confusion. The jerky alone is more than five dollars.

Five dollars.

But—

Goddamn it, just get out of my store, you wretch!

I pull out my wallet.
This wallet hasn't been open since Gordon found me... nearly 28 years ago.
I pull out an old twenty and place it on the countertop.
As I gather my purchases, I notice a rack of maps by the doorway.
I take a city map on my way out the door.

Out on the street, I take a handful of caffeine pills and wash them down with hot black coffee.
I walk the wet city streets, finally finding a park bench on which to rest.
I pull out the map.
Gordon's note only consisted of seven words:

I will wait for you in Hell.

In Hell...

I remember a time when Gordon took me to a place called Hell.
It wasn't the same Hell from the bible, but He still called it that all the same.
This place was underground.

Yes! I remember!

Poseidon!

Dig, dig, dig!

Steen!

I look at the map, frantically searching for the words Poseidon and Steen.
I trace every street with the tip of my finger, finding nothing.

A droplet of rain taps and soaks into the map.

Tap... tap, tap... tap.

I fold the map and tuck it into my pocket.
I need to find shelter.

Across the street, I spot an electronics store.
TVs glow brilliantly in the front display window.
In the alleyway next to the store, I spot several large empty cardboard boxes.
I turn one over and slip inside.
Settling into my home for the evening, I grab a day old newspaper from the trash bin and crack open an energy drink.

Thirty minutes later, despite the copious amounts caffeine tripping through my bloodstream, I fall fast asleep.

VII

The brightness of the room burns out my eyes, closed lids and all.
I can hear rustling coming from somewhere nearby.
Blindness fades as the light slowly dims, allowing me to open my eyes.
The room is large with tall ceilings.
The floor is nonexistent.
Only dirt lay beneath my feet.
Hanging from the ceiling are one thousand light bulbs, burning dim.
I walk slowly through the sea of electric glass, searching for the origin of the rustling.
I search until I am face to face with it.

It's Gordon, but He has changed.
Many of His bones are exposed through tears in His skin.
Half His face is machine.
Sparks shower through His teeth instead of speech.
His grin is permanently fixed through gashes in His cheeks.

I am dreaming again.

Gordon pays me no mind.
His attention is directed at the ground below.
He drills His left hand into the soil, scooping what He can into His hands and forming the collected dirt into a packed ball.
He takes a bite as if it were an apple.
He swallows and looks up at me.
The seriousness on His face panics me.

He takes another bite of His dirt apple and the room steadily becomes darker.

*Death is simple, my son. It is life that is Hell.
But Hell is what you make it, Laz̄; You do not have to suffer.
You do not have to be in pain.
I've taken the pain from your Hell before, I can do it again.
I can free your mind, Laz̄arus.
Come to me.*

I walk toward Him.
Once I'm close enough, He grabs me by the neck.

*All you have to do is give it to them!
Give them your mind!*

Gordon points to two figures in the distance.
Hulking white beasts, they are.

Brutes.

They whip their long-lashing tongues, swallowing light bulbs.

The broken glass gashes their tongues and blood gushes from their mouths like heavy syrup, spattering across the chest of their otherwise perfect, colorless bodies.

As they approach me, I'm able to make out finer details.
They only have one eye, located on the left side of their heads, so they must turn to see where they're going.

As each light bulb is ingested, the room becomes increasingly darker.

The two creatures separate and stampede through the glass.

It's getting dark, dark, dark.

I'm hardly able to see them now.

I try to break free from Gordon's grasp, but struggling only seems to make Him stronger.

They are close now.

Gordon forces me to the ground.

*Lazarus! You will be born again!
Just give it to them!
Give them your mind!*

One of the beasts wraps its slimy tongue around my ankles
and pulls my feet into its maw.

It gnaws.

I feel everything as I fill the spaces between its teeth.

Skin is pressed so tight it splits.

Bones shatter.

Blood becomes the mighty river from which the beast
drinks.

The pain is excruciating.

Gordon will not set me free.

The beast pulls me farther down its throat, till I'm waist
deep.

I beat my fists into the crown of the brute and discover it
is surprisingly soft.

The thing has no skull.

I dig my crooked fingers into its scalp, ripping the skin
apart like a jelly-filled balloon, exposing its wet insides.

The beast squeals in pain, but continues to swallow me.

I push my fingers through its brains and rip away handfuls
of meat until its stiletto teeth, now at my chest, cease
mastication and the creature falls into death.

Gordon loosens His grasp.

That's when I notice the other brute is devouring Him.

He is wildly ranting.

Tk tk tk! Shelz bun on lititio! Shelz! Shelz! Tk tk tk!

The brute has swallowed all but Gordon's screaming head.

Gordon turns toward me.

It hides from which it spews! Never forget the persecutor of O—

The brute crushes Gordon's yipping skull with a final bite.
Blood, brains, and bits of bone ooze through its wicked
teeth.

When I finally awaken from my terrible dream, I find I'm
still inside the cardboard box, down the alley beside the
electronics shop.
It's damp and the cardboard is collapsing on top of me.
Outside it's still dark and still raining.

VIII

*The sweet taste of rat meat absorbs into my taste buds and causes me
to salivate like a wild dog.*

There isn't much else to eat here on the streets and the
jerky didn't last but a few hours.

In the last few days, I've adjusted to the pungent taste of
rodent meat.

Truth be told, I've more than just adjusted, I've actually
acquired the taste.

Sometimes a rat will cross my path and I will snap its neck
and suck the meat off its bones, even without the
need...without hunger.

I like how the taste lingers on my tongue long after.

So much so I don't think I'd ever not want to taste it.

The succulent juices should coat my lips...always.

Lucky for me, there are plenty of rats in this town.

I've been cautious in the ways I travel:

walking the streets by night, and covering my face with a
scarf and resting by day.

I've walked the many streets of this city ten times over
looking for any signs of familiarity, but finding nothing.

Then something catches my eye.
A woman.
A young woman, maybe thirty years old.
She is buried somewhere behind two heavy scarlet curtains
hanging in a window.
I am only able to see her through an opening between the
two curtains, no more than an inch wide.
She is sitting on her bed, completely nude, painting her
toenails.
Her toenails and her lips are as red as the curtains hanging
between us.
After she finishes, she turns on her side [facing me] and
falls asleep.
I stand at her window for nearly six hours, just watching
her breathe and studying the contours of her perfect body.

Something inside me stirs.

I fall in love. I have to have her. She is mine!

Now, I am no dreamer.
I don't expect anything to come of this.
I don't ever plan to approach her with these feelings.
I know I'm nothing but scarred skin above and old bones
beneath.
Still, something inside me wants to watch over her.
I want to be there for her if ever there is a need.

So that's what I do.

I follow her.
I follow her to her work [The Corner Diner].
I follow her shopping.
I watch as she meets a group of friends for drinks and
even help her to her door when she is too drunk to walk.
She does not remember when I do.

She even saves me from my dreams!

Rarely now do I ever dream of Gordon!

Most of my dreams revolve around the night I first saw her.

I lose track of her and decide to fall asleep just to dream of her.

I awaken with a fierce hunger.

I swallow the last bit of rat meat and pitch the bones into a nearby dumpster.

It's sunset.

She should be home by now.

Walking the street to her house, I notice an unfamiliar vehicle parked in her driveway.

My suspicions fuel as I hear her screaming!

I run to her window and look through the opening between the curtains.

There is a man.

He is hurting her.

I run to the door and kick it in.

The man looks over at me.

GET OFF OF... HER!

Who the fuck are you?

I run over and pull the man off of her.

The woman screams at the sight of me.

Such a beast!

Such a hideous, monstrous beast, I am!

The man, much stronger and younger than I, plants his fist into my face, sending me straight to the floor.

He picks me up and rears his fist back, wanting to hit me again.

Wait! David... STOP!

The woman screams.
I'm slowly losing consciousness in his grasp.

It's my father!

IX

Shadow people surround me.
Their eyes and mouths glow red electricity.
I can feel the vibrations of their speech.
The shadow people fade and become real people: doctors,
nurses.
I'm tied to a gurney and they're pushing me down a long
hospital hallway.
One of the nurses places an oxygen mask over my nose
and mouth.

The shadows return and the mask becomes a muzzle.
I thrash about trying to free myself from my restraints.
One of the electric mouths speaks.

Hold his head down!
He will be out any second now.

The shadows once again fade and I'm able to see the
woman from the window [my daughter?] walking at my
side.
Mascara is streaked down her cheeks from tears.

The shadows cloud and blind me once again.

The sedative is kicking in, doctor.
He should be out within the minute.

And then there was peace.

X

A woman speaks, wrapping her arms tightly around my waist.

*Look at them, Adam...
I've never seen them so happy.*

I'm suddenly a younger man standing at the edge of the world looking out at the vast sea.
The salty breeze combs through my hair and I am free.
Two children, a boy and a girl, are playing in the sand.
Their laughter warms my heart.
We watch as the children take turns burying each other in the sand.

Ah, to feel such life again!

Sadly, the moment is short lived.

I'm back in the hospital room and it is slightly larger than the one I stayed in before...and more decorative.
Images of familiar faces stare at me from all angles of the room, hanging in tiny glass frames.
I stare at the photos trying to remember a name...*anything*.

A doctor and a nurse enter the room and disrupt my thoughts.
The nurse begins her routine of checking my vitals without even acknowledging my consciousness.
The doctor studies and writes on his clipboard, also seemingly ignoring me.

Lazarus...

The doctor speaks.

His eyes still focused on his clipboard.
I hadn't noticed before, but the door is iron and the
windows are barred.

*Where do I begin?
Well, as you've probably noticed, your room is...
well, more or less a prison cell.
You've been placed under arrest
on suspicion of multiple rape charges.
It turns out the semen sample we took during your first visit match
samples taken from several rape victims
linked with the case against Gordon.*

This hardly comes as a shock, given the nightmares I've
been having lately.
Still, the very thought of me being capable of such a
heinous crime makes my stomach turn.
Forever a nasty beast, I am.

The nurse pretends not to hear any of this.
She puts away her instruments and leaves the room as
quickly as she can.
She is nervous.
Terrified.
Of me.

And I am not in prison?

*Well, the police feel it is necessary to continue testing...
especially the dream studies.*

It is clear I'm their only link to Gordon.
*Such fools!
Gordon can never be captured or contained.
Gordon has created flesh! LIFE!
Such a God cannot be defeated by men.*

*We had a discussion with the young lady who brought you in...
your daughter, Joan.*

*She told us your real name is Adam Argyl.
It seems to us, the medical staff, that Gordon has given you the
nickname 'Lazarus' as a reference to the biblical tale of Lazarus,
the man who was given a second life.*

This man is a doctor?
Such an obvious “discovery.”

*Also, during your last stay you experienced a perplexing seizure fit
that came as a direct result from a self-injected dose
of an unknown chemical.*

Happiness.

The doctor pauses, puzzled.
He scribbles something down on his clipboard.

Happiness?

That's the name of the chemical.

Oh?

*Well, we've discovered that 'happiness' was created to keep your body
from rejecting the 'spider implant' we found in your frontal lobe.
It created a certain sense of euphoria, am I right?*

Euphoria?
Yes, I guess that's right.

Again, he writes.

*However, when you last took this 'happiness' drug,
it was after the spider implant had been removed.
This is why your body rejected the chemical.*

Silence now.

Do you have any questions?

I am the one who should be asking this, not him.

Absolutely not.

Okay then.

*In about an hour, we'll be putting you to sleep to begin testing.
Just ring the nurse if you need anything before then.*

The doctor exits the room.

I sit up on the side of my bed and pull myself to stand.

The floor is cold against my bare feet.

As I make my way towards the window, the tubing of my IV gets snagged on the bed, tearing my skin.

I curse the needle and rip it from my hand.

I open the window and stick my bleeding hand through the bars.

It's raining still.

This goddamn world.

XI

A beautiful woman enters the room.

It's the same woman I've been watching for the past week.

The same woman I fell in love with.

This woman is my daughter.

She stands in the doorway, silently asking my permission to enter.

I'm sorry.

She puts her hand to her mouth.

The sound of my dreadful voice terrifies her.

I thought he was... hurting you.

Her eyes are pink and full of tears.
She walks into the room and takes a seat at my bedside,
reaching into her purse for a tissue.

*I'm sorry about this.
I promised myself I wouldn't cry,
that I was strong enough to do this...to see you.*

She dabs the tissue to her eyes.

Do you remember me?

She holds her breath.
I don't remember her.
My own daughter, and for the life of me I can't remember
being her father.

No. I'm so sorry.

She closes her eyes and exhales.

The doctors told me you wouldn't, but I was certain...

Her tears now a steady stream.

*I mean, after all these years, you've found me.
How can you not remember me?*

I don't know how to answer her question.
I avert my eye.
She reaches for another tissue.

How did you know me?
Back at your house, I mean.
How did you know... I was your father?

Surely you didn't recognize me, the hideous beast I've
become.

It was your tattoo.

I look down at my wrist.
There is a small black tattoo of a cricket.
Joan pulls back the cloth of her blouse that lay at her wrist,
revealing a tattoo that matches mine exactly.

You got your tattoo after Seth—well...

She chokes up again.

*It's a memorial.
Seth loved insects.
He was always so strange.
Like you, I guess.*

Joan laughs.
Her eyes are red and welling.

I got my tattoo much later, as a way of remembering you both.

She stares at her wrist a moment.

*You know, he looked just like you.
Mom says that every time Seth comes up in conversation.
She always said how proud you were of him.
Ab, mom... you know, I told her about you finding me.
I guess she's really upset.
She hasn't spoken to me since.
But, you know, that's just how she is.
I think it would really do her good to see you.
Hopefully, she'll come around.*

Joan smiles brightly and walks toward the bed.

I'm just so happy to see you, Dad.

She wraps her arms around me and weeps again.
I return the gesture, but without feeling, just as anyone
would holding a complete stranger in their arms.

XII

*And then there it was, like a goddamn white rabbit pulled from my
skull: Jellit Osborne!*

Two minutes ago, I wouldn't have even recognized his
name, but now my mind is plagued with it.

Jellit Osborne was a stain.

A hideous beast of a man, full of rage and fear.

Jellit Osborne was *another me*.

But he ran from Gordon...

Ten years ago, Osborne was on the front page of every
major newspaper in this God-forsaken land, spreading
stories about Gordon like a fucking pandemic.

The blood...

The scars...

The machine parts... complete with pictures labeled '*not for
the squeamish?*'

His scars frightened, they did, though hardly comparable
to the horrid seams that now hold my broken body
together.

Everybody and their brother went looking for Gordon.

They were determined to run Him out of the hole He was
hiding in.

To burn Him at the stake, they wanted!

Or maybe hack Him to pieces with an axe to match the
grotesque body of the man they had all come to pity.

But they never found Gordon.

And after the sudden disappearance of Osborne, it didn't take long for the public to withdraw their fear and deposit it into the next major headline.

Detective Gray may be the only hunter left in the chase.

As for Jellit Osborne, Gordon silenced him in the most awful of ways.

Gordon always gets what he wants.

My pulse beats wildly.

XIII

A shiver breathes throughout my nerves.

I've been gagged, bound, bagged
...and drugged, though I suspect it's beginning to wear off.
Someone is dragging me by the collar through an
impossibly rocky terrain.
Stones tear away at my skin.
I try to yell, but it only comes out as a moan.
The drugs.

We stop moving.

I'm released and my head falls to the ground, violently
colliding with the sharp edge of a rock.
Then I'm blinded by a bright light as the cloth bag draped
over my head is quickly removed.
Strange the light is, when used to seeing only darkness.
A figure stands before the me, before the light.
A silhouette towers over me.
A cold steel blade slides along my cheek.
The gag is cut and removed from my mouth.

What have they done to you, Laz?

Asks a stern, booming voice.
Gordon's voice.

I want a comprehensive report.

Gordon?

I want a comprehensive report, Lazarus!

He says with great impatience.

Gordon...

I couldn't tell if it was the drugs, my sheer happiness, or complete shock that kept me from saying anything other than His name.

Without warning, He digs His fingers into the not-quite-healed scar that runs along the width of my forehead. The pain is surprisingly tolerable thanks to whatever chemical is flowing through my veins. Blood drips from His fingers, onto my cheeks, and slides down to my chin. He's looking for the 'spider implant' that was removed weeks ago. Gordon withdraws his fingers and grabs hold of my chin with alarming force.

What do you know, Lazarus?

My name is... Adam.

CHRIST!

Gordon leaps to His feet in a rage I've never seen before. His silhouette grows as He moves closer to the light. Then He swings His fist, takes hold of the light [a

flashlight, I can see it now] and throws it against a nearby tree.

The flashlight blows apart, leaving us standing under the moonlight.

I can see now that we're in a field and that there are two other figures standing beside Gordon.

I feel a tightness in my chest when I see them.

One of them is carrying a briefcase.

Gordon paces in an attempt to calm Himself.

It seems to be working.

After a minute or two, He slowly approaches me, His anger reserved.

What else did they tell you, my boy?

I hesitate, terrified to respond.

And at the same time I'm terrified *not* to respond.

They told me...

Yes?

They told me... you used me.

Gordon furrows His brow.

Used you? How?

His madness returns.

I can see it in His eyes.

To commit crimes... to rape...
for your pleasure... for your amusement...

Gordon slugs His right fist into my jawbone with remarkable force.

*For my amusement?
Lazarus, those women were essential sacrifices.
The plan called for it!*

Plan? What plan... Gordon?

*You fool! You know nothing!
What have we been doing these last twenty-eight years?*

The shock of not knowing who or what I am leaves me unable to speak.

*Those doctors must have botched an operation or two, Lazarus.
You should have remembered this!*

Gordon walks toward to the two figures standing in the distance.

One of them reaches inside the briefcase and pulls out a small box, handing it to Gordon.

Gordon tosses it to me.

After this...

He opens the box in my hands.

...you will remember everything.

From the box, He removes a brick of confused cables, a spaghetti-mess of wires, the size of a fist, and holds it prominently in his hand.

*When you're ready, you'll know where to find me.
I'll be waiting.*

Gordon shoves the wire brick into my mouth and forces me to bite.

Electricity surges throughout my body, sending waves of paralysis into every exhausted muscle.

I see a darkness, then I see it all.

XIV

Memories swirl...

There's a raging sea in the distance.

I watch as the waves leap and crash into one another.

Standing on the shore, the waters rush towards me and I stand with arms outstretched.

I welcome it.

I take a breath just before the dark water swallows me whole.

But something stops it, pushes it away.

A woman.

She touches me softly and wraps her arms around me, pushing her body against my back.

A familiar voice speaks to me.

Oh Adam, have you ever seen them so happy?

To my left, two children...

my two children, Seth and Joan,
are smiling, laughing,
playing in the sand.

My wife, Mary, and I ... *are happy*.

My two children... *are happy*.

But somehow...

they...

got away...

Two hours later the police found Joan at a restaurant about 50 miles from the beach.

Blood covered the lower half of her face and neck and there was a dark purple imprint on her forearm, the shape of a hand.

She told authorities a man had taken them, but couldn't offer a description.

She was in shock.

It's a wonder she was able to speak at all.

She said she had to tear a chunk of flesh away from of her abductors arm with her teeth in order to get away.

She said Seth wasn't so lucky...

Police found his severed head a week later.

They never found his body.

The fifteen years that followed his death are still hidden in a fog of pills and alcohol.

One thought always remained, though, the thought that somewhere out in the world the man who killed my son is walking free.

I became disgusted and suspicious of all men, and it only got worse with every passing year.

I became a recluse, ignoring the world, including my family, trusting only the pill, the bottle, and the gun.

All three led to my eventual arrest.

Walking along the side of the highway [I was headed to buy more whiskey and no longer owned a vehicle] and a wicked thought came across my mind.

I couldn't quite explain it, why this thought popped into my mind at this particular moment, after all, I have never been a wicked man by nature.

Still, that didn't keep me from wondering...or acting on impulse.

I wondered what it felt like to just be driving by and see a man, such as myself, standing on the side of the highway, just as I was, aiming a gun straight at my face... at my children... husbands... wives... loved ones.

Surely the taste of death would linger in the back of your throat, if even for an instant.

It must be exhilarating in a way, to think of how lucky it was you and your family got away, able to live life when all in one second you thought it was over.

You'd appreciate life more, the things you have and the people you share it with.

It could be a good thing, I must have told myself that.

Maybe I thought I wasn't being wicked.

Whatever the case, I withdrew my gun from the waistband of my jeans.

The power of God pulsed through my veins as the vehicles screeched and swerved across the road, that much I remember. For that brief moment, I had the world at my mercy.

For the first time since my son's death, I felt in control.

And it felt good to be in control.

Not long after my arrest, I was visited by a man.

He only went by one name... Gordon.

He said He read an article about me in the newspaper.

About my son.

About his murder.

He could sense my complete discontent with the world.

He told me justice would soon be served,
that the blood of those who sinned will soon flood the streets.

He asked me to join His army, promising me eternal life.

Eternal life!

He said He would come for me that very night, to break me out of prison.

I won't lie, I said sure and shook His hand, but secretly took Him for a fool and thought nothing more of His visit.

But then that night seven prison guards and several prisoners were killed in a violent explosion.

He came for me, just as He had promised.

After that, I believed every word that leapt from Gordon's lips.

The surgeries began soon after.

I was Gordon's first subject.

He was creating miracles!

He started with the women.

He collected them at night, one at a time, and injected a fertility drug into their bloodstream every morning.

Once he had enough, He would lay the women in rows across the bunker, naked, with their legs fastened taut in stirrups.

He would have me empty *my seed* into each of the women.

No matter how long it took, He always waited patiently.

Gordon said it had to be my seed, because I had a gift, and that gift needed to be shared with the world.

He said by doing this, we were speeding the process of evolution by what could have amounted to millions of years worth of *chance*.

I just did as I was told.

The fertility drug was necessary, not only for easy conception, but also because the women were having up to six children in one gestation, all born with my DNA.

Again, speeding the process of evolution.

I didn't know it at first, but Gordon was manufacturing an army.

This army would be raised by Gordon, from birth, allowing them to know nothing of the outside world.

These beings were superior to humankind, even as babies.

They were all gifted with an immortal gene, just like their father.

Of course, there were mistakes, those born without the immortal gene.

Those children were discarded.

Gordon stabbed every child in the heart when they were born, and those that didn't survive were ground into chow for the others.

This wasn't because Gordon was cruel, or because He was feeding some sick inner desire, it was out of necessity. The children would not be cared for, so they were disposed of. It was more humane than keeping them alive, believe me.

Gordon and His immortal army resided in a bunker below the city, until Gordon had built His army so large He had to build a new one.

Hell.

It was the only place big enough for us. Hell was just outside the city, beneath a place called the Steen Boneyard, a graveyard for unclaimed and unknown bodies. The entrance was hidden, accessed only through the mouth of Poseidon, a stone fountain located in the center of the yard.

This is where Gordon is now, where he wants me to follow. It's the only place I belong.

But before I go..

XV

*I am standing at her door,
Mary's door, afraid to knock.*
I've been standing here for an hour now.
I have so much to say.
I have nothing to say.
The hour of silence has built up inside of me,
I feel as if I could explode with emotions, with words to speak to her,
my dear Mary,

but I fear I will never knock.
When I finally find the courage, I shout at the top of my
seventy-eight year old lungs.

I remember!

Startled birds scatter to the sky from the treetops.

Mary! I remember!

There is terror in my voice... fear, shame, embarrassment.
I begin to weep.

I remember, Mary!
I remember...

My voice is consumed by emotion.
Time passes... seconds... maybe minutes...
Then a voice calls from behind the door.
She speaks to me.

Adam?

I push my ear to the door.

Mary?

Adam, what are you doing here?

I remember, Mary!
I remember everything!

*Do you remember how long it's been?
Do you remember leaving me here to raise our daughter alone?*

Yes. I know... I am sorry, Mary.

You have some nerve showing up here, Adam!

Her voice has aged so much I don't even recognize it.

*You know, I visited you in the hospital
when Joan first told me you showed up at her house.
You were asleep.
I had every intention of going up there to confront you,
to let you know how much you've hurt me...
how you have hurt Joan...
but your scars...
it looks like you've already gotten what you deserve.*

I keep quiet.
She's still in so much pain.
The best I can do is to listen.

*You know, all this time I hoped you committed suicide.
I mean, what kind of person does the things you've done?
Abandoning your family.
Pulling a gun on innocent people.
You're sick.
He was my son too, Adam, and I didn't allow the Devil inside me
like you did.
There's no excuse for the things you've done.*

She's right, and she doesn't even know the half of my sins.
She loses control.
We're both weeping
on opposite sides of the door.

You know they found him...

She speaks soft and slow.
Regaining control.

Found who?

The man who murdered Seth.

What? When?

R A G E.

*Two years after you disappeared.
Brogan Spivey.*

Have you seen him?

*Only in the papers.
The only time I ever mustered up enough courage to confront him,
I had a panic attack and went home before I even
got to the prison gates.*

We have to see him!
We have to go!
Come with me, Mary!

Adam...

Mary, we have to do this!
We need to do this!

When... now?

Yes, now!

*Adam, you can't just expect me to leap into your arms and go...
I can't do this... I haven't been able to do this...
in all these years, Adam...*

Mary, I'll never forgive myself...
for what I did to you and to Joan.
You're right... I let the Devil in.
I don't deserve this... family.
But this is about... more than just us, Mary... it's about
Seth... our little boy!
We deserve to have... our questions answered.
If you don't come with me today...
you'll never get that chance.

You won't allow yourself to.
I know, I've been gone...
for so long, but I am here... now...
and we'll be strong enough... together.

I'm staring at her door.
Her silence causes my hands to shake.

The door opens.

XVI

We are in a car.
Mary is driving.
I'm not exactly sure where we're going
but we're going there together.
I can't stop looking at her perfect skin
her green eyes.
Through her peripheral vision, she notices me staring.
She smiles.
Without turning her head, she speaks.

Can I help you?

I smile.
She turns to look at me.
Mary's face ages thirty years in an instant.
Her body changes shape, her skin... her perfect skin, hangs
now in folds from her bones. Her hair thins, but her eyes,
her beautiful green eyes are still as young and full of life as
I remember them.
It is then I realize I was daydreaming again.

Well?

Mary is still waiting for an answer.

You are... a very beautiful woman, Mary.

Her cheeks flush.

I don't know what I was thinking all those years ago.

Instead of following Gordon, I should have went after her.

I let the pain get to me.

I felt helpless.

The weight of the guilt causes me to turn away from her.

I can't look at her now.

Our bodies are too old for sadness.

We've seen it all.

We're supposed to be stronger than this.

Our skin should be thicker than this.

But here we are... breaking down.

When we get to the prison gate, she tells me she is scared.

I hold her hand as the guard waves us through.

There is nothing I can do to heal the holes I've torn in
both of our hearts.

There is only [I squeeze her hand tightly] this moment.

And this moment... is nice.

We are sitting now in the visitor's room.

The heat is sweltering and I'm overdressed.

I have my face wrapped to hide my scarring and the hood
of my jacket pulled over the back of my head.

Sweat starts to soak through the cloth covering my face
and neck.

I'm not nervous.

Anxious, yes, but not nervous.

Mary is terrified, squeezing my hand with such strength my
bones ache.

I say nothing.

Minutes later, he walks through the door.

Brogan Spivey.

I've never seen the bastard before today, but somehow I
know him when I see him.

This man has haunted my dreams for nearly fifty years.
I could identify him by his smell alone.
He was exactly as I'd envisioned in my dreams.

Exactly.

He is an old man now, but still younger than the two of us.
Thin body, thin hair, thin skin... the handcuffs they have
him in tear into his wrists.

He doesn't seem to notice.

He sits down in the booth across from us, and between us
now is only glass.

He picks up the telephone receiver.

I look over at Mary.

Are you okay?

She has a terrified look on her face.

Yeah, it's just hard, you know?

I'll be okay.

I nod my head and pick up the receiver.

Spivey has a smirk I'd love to cut clean off his face.

Control.

So...

Spivey speaks into the receiver.

Who the hell are you people?

You killed our son, you bastard.

Seth Argyl.

Refresh my memory...

Refresh your memory?

How many children have you killed?

Twenty-seven...ish.

Jesus Christ! You fucking monster!

Well, they don't lock up gentlemen.

Spivey laughs.

Mary stands.

She's getting anxious.

Look, you abducted both of our children while we were
vacationing at the beach.
Our daughter, she got away, but our son...
you killed our son.

*Oh yeah, I remember your boy.
Whatever happened to that daughter of yours?
Is she still around? She was a cutie.*

Now I'm standing.

Listen you crazy bastard,
we only came here today for closure.
We want to know where you buried our son's body.

Spivey chuckles at this request.

*You want to know where I buried your son's body?
Well... that's easy. I didn't.*

What? What do you mean?

I ate your boy.

Shock floods my system and rage takes full control of my
body.

I throw my chair through the glass window, the only thing
separating us from that killer, that murderer of children!
I thrust my right arm out, and a twelve inch blade tears out
from the skin of my wrist. *A weapon of Gordon's design!*

I leap through to the other side, gouging the blade through
Spivey's windpipe.
Prison guards rush in and try to pin me to the floor.
I release the blade in my left arm and rampage through all
that surround me...

...including Mary.

When there is nothing left to kill, my rage finally settles.
At this moment I am not human.
I have become something different entirely.

XVII

A disgrace!

A poor excuse for a living, breathing soul, I am!
I've killed people!
There's blood on my hands!
I'm powerful, but fucking weak!
I can't control my rage!
I'm a beast, not a man.
I'm running away again...
I'm going to Hell.
I'm leaving this world, again for the comfort of Gordon's
protective wing.
I run along the wet streets, making my way to Steen
Boneyard.
I see a pay phone.
Stop. Breathe. Dial.
I am terrified, defeated, and alone.
An innocent voice funnels down my ear canal.
Mary's voice. A recording. Voicemail.
Her voice stings me.
My broken ear must suffer this.
BEEP.

I speak in a voice unlike my own.
I speak in a voice swollen with sadness.

Mary... I am sorry.
I don't belong here. I don't belong here, Mary!
Adam Argyl died that night on the beach... with his son.
Mary... Adam is gone.
It's just me, Lazarus, now.
Gordon, He gave me this life...
I wanted to escape, but he gave me this
and took away all I've ever loved.
ETERNAL LIFE, MARY.
A curse, it is! A goddamn curse!
To watch my loves die.
To live forever is to live alone.
I'm leaving, this time for good.
And Joan... if you're listening..
Know that I love you...
And know that this is the only way I can ever show you.
I'm so sorry about your mother.
I'm so sorry.

I hang up the phone and find myself standing before the
graveyard.
A familiar figure is brooding along the edge of the
fountain of Poseidon.
Gordon.
He is welcoming me home.

XVIII

Hell is cold, dark.
Water trembles faintly down the walls and glitters when it
finds light.
The air is thick with mold.
The clean air beyond the surface must have spoiled my
lungs.

Gordon and I weave through a labyrinth of pipe and wall,
finally reaching our destination: the warehouse.
In my time with Gordon, the warehouse had only served
one purpose: it was the breeding ground, the room He
used to manufacture human life.
But instead of rows of naked women held up in stirrups,
there are now rows of uniformed soldiers.

*Well, what do you think, Laz, my boy?
Isn't it exactly as you dreamed?*

Gordon speaks as if we never missed a step.
As if the death of my son and my wife do not tear at my
heartstrings.
As if their deaths could not possibly cause me to turn
away from him.
*Or maybe that is it?
Maybe Gordon again sees the fire that burned in me so long ago?*
It certainly feels as if it has returned.

I look around the room at all the bodies, young men and
women.
Some covered with fresh scars.

You did it, Gordon...
You've created your army.
There must be thousands here.

*144,000 to be exact.
It only took me thirty years.
Jesus, Lazarus, we're old men now.
Look at us... brilliant and strong.
And to think, in just ten short hours... the world will be ours!*

He is ready.
His army is ready.
Oceans of blood will flood the Earth when He is finished.

Gordon... where do I fit into... the plan?

*Attach your wings and bring your marvelous blades down upon the
world.*

*Make them feel your pain.
Just like that day on the highway so many years ago...
Do you remember that day?*

Yes.

Do you still feel that same hatred within you?

Yes.

*Do more than just feel it... act on it.
Slit the throat of every man, woman, and child,
for a superior race is born!*

But, Gordon... only sinners, right?

*They are ALL sinners!
Every last goddamn one of them!*

But, Gordon... this isn't the plan...
We punish only the wicked.

THEY. ARE. ALL. WICKED.

Let God pass judgment on them.

I AM GOD!

Gordon grabs my throat, digging his nails deep.

I... am... God.

Gordon tosses me aside like a rag doll,
then picks my flesh out from beneath his fingernails.

It's your daughter, isn't it?

You want to save her.

Yes... will you spare her life?

Gordon looks into my eyes.
He's become a different man.
He sees me now as a stranger.

No.

No life shall be spared.

But... I am willing to make you a deal.

Yes, anything..

I need you to implant this inside my brain.

Gordon holds up a contraption much like the spider
implant, but far more advanced.
I've never seen such a complicated device before.
I'm not even sure of its primary functions.
However, I do know how to install it.
Gordon has trained me well.
I'm the only person, other than Himself, with this
knowledge.
He needs me.

And in return?

In return... I'll let you get a head start.

A head start?

*I'll let you try to find your daughter,
but know this, once we find her, we will stop her heart.
So enjoy these last few moments with her, Laz;
I promise you, it's all you've got.*

I take the deal.
I must find Joan.

The operation is at least a seven hour procedure.
That leaves me with only three hours to find Joan and
bring her to safety.
I waste no time.

An hour into the operation and a question enters and
distracts my mind:
Why don't I kill Gordon right here on this table?
His brain is exposed.
He is at my mercy!
I can put an end to this all!
But Gordon is too clever to allow it.
It seems all of his creations have been implanted with a
small chip that disables rage within a certain range of him,
and I am no exception.
My hands are of no use, other than to operate.

It takes a full eight hours to complete the operation.
As soon as Gordon is sewed up,
I run like hell.

XIX

Joan is inside her house.
She refuses to come with me.
She is yelling and screaming at me through the door.
I've mistakenly murdered her mother, my wife, and she'd
been informed by the police no more than an hour before
my visit.
I try to warn her about the war.
She is screaming obscenities, claiming the police are 'on
their way.'
I try everything to get her to come with me.

Why, so you can rape me like you raped all those other women?
What the fuck is wrong with you?

She screams in a fit.

My heart breaks.

Sadly, I have no choice but to leave her, but before I go, I force a blade out through my wrist and carve a map into her door.

The directions lead to the only place in the world where I know we will be safe: the original underground warehouse.

It has been abandoned for over two decades now.

Gordon will not look for us there.

I hope Gordon will not look for us there.

The old warehouse is exactly as I remember it.

Gordon hardly took anything.

Papers are still stacked high on His desk, cabinets, furniture all in place, albeit covered in a thick layer of dust.

I walk into the control room, flip a switch.

The surveillance monitors all seem to be intact.

All six of them.

The cameras are all hidden in various places, up on the surface.

Gordon has always been paranoid of being caught, raided by the law, before His attack was ready.

Twenty-three years ago, this was the best surveillance system on the market.

Top dollar and well worth it.

Now, not so much, but it will do.

I continue my tour throughout the warehouse.

Memories are fading in and out.

There are a lot of lost years—

An earthshaking explosion sounds from above.

Soon followed by another.

I run to the control room and take a look at the surveillance monitors.

I watch as Gordon's army slaughters people on the surface.

Bodies are ripped in two and thrown aside.

Their entrails are scattered across the pavement and hanging from tree branches.

I turn off the cameras and vomit on the floor.
Faintly, a voice calls for me.

Dad?

I turn around and Joan is standing in the doorway.

Joan!

Tears stream down her cheeks as she reaches out for me.
We embrace.
This time I don't try to calm her.

XX

It's been quiet for an hour now.

Joan has fallen asleep.

I've been sitting here, next to her, trying to build up
enough courage to turn the surveillance monitors back on.

Finally, I stand and walk into the control room.

I take a deep breath before flipping the switch.

It appears that four of the cameras have been destroyed,
their monitors only displaying static.

The other two monitors are fogged by what appears to be
clouds of dust.

The fog is so thick that I'm unable to see anything.

I turn the monitors off again.

Hands to face, I take in another deep breath.

I have to know if it is over.

The silence is causing my skin to tremble.

I open the hatch and walk out onto the surface.

The dust clouds sting my eyes and fill my lungs.

The sun is setting and casting the strangest colors upon
the land: purple and green.

It's as if the sun is dying.
The wind begins to slow a bit and some of the dust settles
to the earth.
Finally I am able to see the aftermath:

Everything in sight is dead.



WILLIAM PAULEY III *does not exist, nor has he ever existed.*

If You Don't Sleep, You Don't Dream.

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