

# Apocalypse Playground

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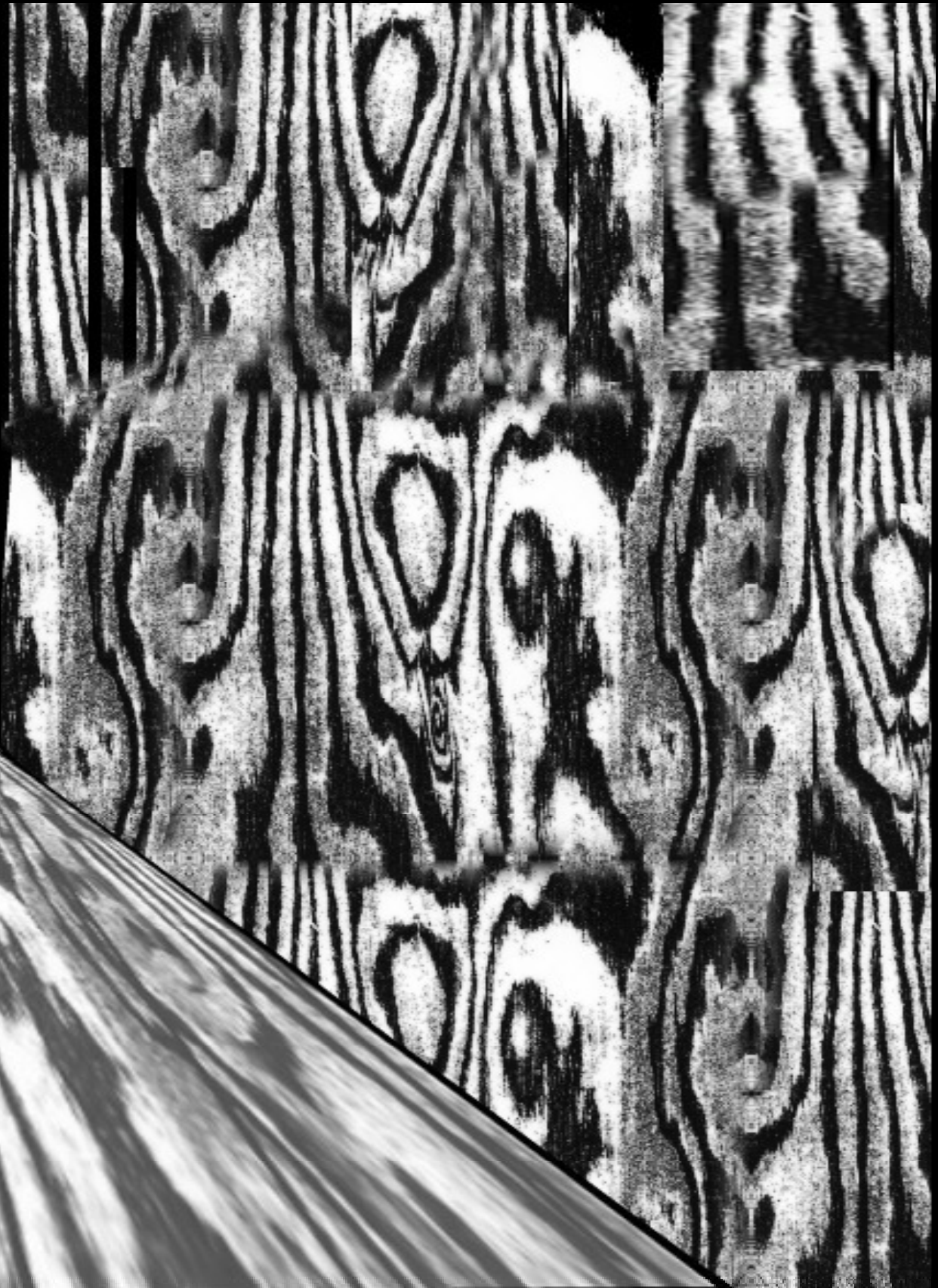
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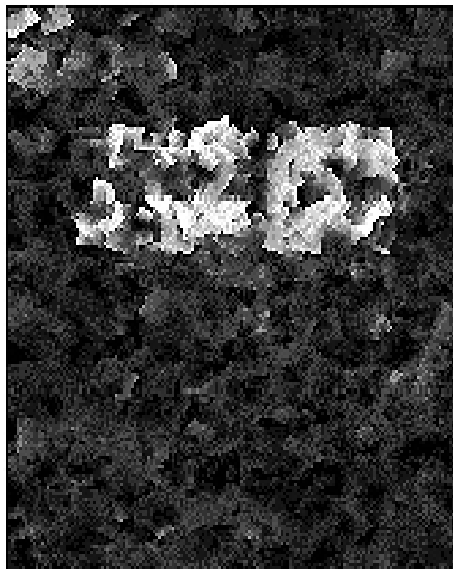
If you close your eyes, all the light of the world fades to red and then recedes into blackness. That is the way the first things to go. Light is such a fragile thing. Simple thoughts begin to dance away from in front of the mind: grocery lists, phone numbers, names and the like. They all walk away into the red glow, join with it and then fade with the last whispers of light. If you remain lightless long enough you might find that you can see in the darkness. There are things to see in the dark of sleep, in fact entire universes of sights lie beyond that velvet curtain. Granted, everything in the dark is a bit twisted and different but it is there to see.

Another shard from the world before open eyes is the residual sounds. Sound remains even after the most complicated thoughts have dissolved from the mind as it passes through the curtain of sleep. The mind doesn't know that the dishwasher was mistakenly filled only halfway, and it may not even remember what dishes are. The sounds of the waking world are not disfigured the way sights can be during sleep, instead they are sharpened but removed from the things that made them. Sleeping eyes are not open to see the cause of such musical discord, instead they create the next most likely source and view it through the eyes of sleep. The sleeping can hear the gentle mechanical whirl whirl of the thing in that far off realm of 'kitchen'. The sound has become the rustling of impossibly green jungle grass. The rush of plumbing has become an ocean torn to pieces.

Thus, distortions create reality.

Sound is the only connection that sleepers have to

those whose eyes are open. Even the heaviest of sleep can be interrupted by the sound of a train or voices down the hallway. If you scream a nearby sleeper would feel the blast of screaming shattered glass. What is this distortion of the sleeping mind? It is dream. Dream is perhaps the most powerful and gripping thing that anyone has ever had the opportunity to put out of mind. Ten bucks says that most people take full advantage of that opportunity whenever possible. (Feel free to prove otherwise) Dream is the reason for any and all emotions felt by human kind during the majority of the time they spent engulfed in shadow under a mournful moon. While your body is comfortably sprawled across a mattress in a decadent bliss, your mind is busy hammering out the details of another lifetime. Dream is a ticket to realm of impossibilities. Dream will take even the most innocent sleeper into fields of unlikely battles, the most heartless into the pangs of eternal love, the meek are thrust into positions of improbable glory and the



fearless are welcomed into the cold arms of sheer madness. Dream is both faery tale and tragedy, love and hate, beauty and destruction. But most importantly dreamers unwittingly create a new twist on an ancient concept: reality.

Dream is an important play toy here in the Apocalypse Playground. It is also the children's favorite decoration.

Dream can be such an elegant thing. We hang dream chains around the gate and stuff nightmares under the bottom of the slide, to catch the unwanted things and devour them. Without dream it may not be possible to survive here for very long, so I have given you a taste of it across these pages.

Dream is my favorite holiday,

### An Attack of Divebomb Angels

*At any location and at any time, it is entirely possible that an overhead passerby (namely a plane) my drop it's cargo from the friendly skies onto just about anyone. This is not very likely.*

*It is more likely that one would find themselves struck by another weight from above. Yes, that bulky and so often unused by the human race thing that rests atop most peoples' necks. A mind. At any second, in any location, any one can be struck by something with a magnitude more powerful than that of any mangled hunk of scrap metal. It is entirely possible that an idea might wreak havoc on one's mind for maybe just a second.*

*It is the intent of Apocalypse Playground to stimulate this very kind of 'accident' It is entirely possible that you might think the most powerful thought ever had by anyone. My advice to you is to have those thoughts whenever possible, because one never know how much time remains for these dreams to be dreamt or what may be looming above...*



# Chains to a Dream World

## I'd like to thank the academy

If you saw the Academy Awards, you might know why I gave up 5 minutes into that sorry spectacle! The first thing that caught my attention was a fashion show thing that set out to display the costumes of various films from this past year. I thought that would be cool considering that I've seen some incredible costumes recently. (See Angels and Insects) But the show was rather dismal.

As soon as a model stepped onto the runway, the camera did a close up of his/her face. The announcer gave the name of the movie the costume came from, and said something like

"modeled for us tonight by... Buffy"

why do models only ever have one name, and why are they all so strange. I suppose I wouldn't mind so much if they had names I liked.

After showing off the fact that this particular model could go about grimacing the camera then switched to the face of a "new" model. (They're all so similar) never once paying heed to the fact that this was intended to be a costume show and not a grimace swapping session!!!

Then Brad Pitt lost a shot at best supporting actor in his part of 12 Monkeys. That angered me as well. In my opinion, he MADE that movie in a way that no other supporting actor has made any movie I have ever seen. ( I just might be stretching a little. ) He deserved that award. And I'm going to tell you why I think so.

I Before 12 Monkeys I, and probably many others, saw Mr. Pitt as nothing more than some kind of sex symbol. Was not all that impressed with his role in Interview With the Vampire. He was good, but I think there are people who could have done better. Because of the image I had of him I tended to avoid most of his movies. Because of this, I can not honestly say that he served no purpose other than hormone inducement in every single movie he was in. But I can say that was the overall impression I had of Brad Pitt.. 12 Monkeys broke all of that I think, And he should have been given the award based solely on the face that he proved to the world that Brad Pitt is more than something people are supposed to drool over.

It was shortly after the anger concerning Mr. Pitt's loss coupled with the tearing upon my attention span due to the overly fast paced racket of the prime-time slotted "spectacle". The childish part of my mind set to the difficult task of creating a way for the rest of my mind to survive this ordeal without getting lost.

I began to inadvertently create a new reality, a world not unlike our own. I made a universe in which grueling thanking sessions could actually become enjoyable, And all it took was a few simple letter substitutions. At first I didn't feel this change in mental location, and I wouldn't have noticed at all if it hadn't been for the ensuing laughter. I found my self drifting in and out of attention to the Awards show. And from somewhere between my living room and that place that a childlike mind would have one stay I heard something accompanied by loud applause, canned most likely :

"Oh wow, I .... I never thought I'd ever see the day when I'd be standing here in front of all these people" (who probably hate me for this already) "receiving this award (for the eighth time)!!! But now that this wonderful dream has come true." She pauses. "I have a small, but heavily rehearsed list of people that I would like to... mention.

First, I would like to *schpank* the academy"

yes, I could distinctly swear I heard that woman say "spank". Did this woman really want to give a good behind bruising to those responsible for handing her a prestigious award? I couldn't help but agree. It took me a while to notice the television after this sudden revelation.

"....who drove me all those long hours to the lake, you know the little green one with the beautiful docks. Yes, mom schpank you too"

There it was again, not once but twice. This woman isn't really all that horrible. Despite her rather tactless display of cleavage, I am once again forced to agree with her. I too would like to broadside the woman responsible for creating this boring mockery of the human psyche. Yes, schpank your mom and do continue, I'm interested.

"...I would like to schpank my little sister, just because she's there" OK. Maybe the childlike part of my mind wasn't responsible for this confusion after all. Get this sick pervert off the platform.

"I would certainly like to schpank all the little people" as if life wasn't tough enough for the extras in your crappy movie

"Oh, and I would like to schpank god, or, for Political correctness' sake, I'd like to schpank the divine presence of your choice" I'm sorry!!! But there is nothing Correct about schpanking. And as for the political implications of schpanking... Well, that's another matter.

And at that point I completely lost interest in the sickening display of gratitude on the stage. Yes I'll admit it was a rather heartfelt and emotional display of gratitude. More so than I would ever show for a little naked figure, so perhaps it is the emotion that draws people to watch these things. But, one must keep in mind that the reason they are even allowed to express such warm feelings of thankfulness in the first place is because they are all ACTORS, so just how heartfelt is it really. I mean, how sincere can someone be when they say something like

"And finally, I'd like to personally spank each member of the audience, spank you. Spank you, and spank you. Spank you all so very much!

I have a small, but heavily rehearsed list of people that I would like to... mention.

## The Rocking Horse

With leftover bedtime stories in it's mouth, and a smile in its eyes (but most definitely not on it's face). The vampire crept from it's temporary toybox abode.

"You were talking again. You were talking again!" came the cackling rocking horse. The vampire ignored this mockery.

"Mother is.... other than here. Is she not?" The words slithered from between it's teeth like worms. The horse moaned on it's creaky rudders. Mother wouldn't have heard the moan, not from all the way down in the basement. The vampire stalked it's way across the room to a round little window that looked down on what had been a courtyard. It began basking it's bald head in the moonlight.

"Get off that horse and come over here" With that, the way water is ripped from a twisted sponge, life left the tired old horse, leaving it cold, wooden, and not more than a toy.

The vampire felt it's invisible roommate beside him now, looming from above, blocking the blessed moonlight, but only a little. His presence noticed in a faint, but lively manner.

"Where is she... " the vampire whispered. The moon caused thin skins to shed themselves from his eyes, they fell to the floor like dead insects. Crunch. The vampires eyes were clean, and even glowing a little, but it's roommate remained invisible to it.

"I believe she's 'other than here', the way you put it." This twinkling voice came from behind the cedar dress-up chest.

"Not *that* one !" it hissed back "The Emily."

A Barbie doll on the bed spoke in response from behind the lace of a pink pillow.

"I believe she's retired to the tire swing for the evening, she has a habit of doing such things."

The vampire dropped it's dangling legs from the window sill the short distance to the floor and slipped toward the door . Gracefully and without a sound it slipped through the crack between the door and the wall. It vanished into yellow light.

"Barbies don't have that kind of accent, and they don't use *such* words."

Brute laughter resonated in response from under the bed.

####

The night sky was a grey blanket, the moon was an orange Halloween pumpkin light. And the stars were a jar of glitter knocked over by one of the gods, and probably *still* stuck to the bottom of his feet (glitter has a nasty way of doing that, it never comes off.) And Emily's eyes never came off of it, every night on the tire swing she would spin, staring at the sky, trying to stick the glitter of her eyes to the bare skin of whoever it is who sleeps behind the grey blanket sky.

####

The vampire's feet sunk deep into the forest of red carpet. The polished wooden ball at the top of the bannister post reflected moonlight in it's eyes with a sheen more radiant than that of the vampire's own dome, which was not more than three feet from the carpet.

The vampire wound itself down the spiral staircase. Down and around and down, down again. Father wouldn't hear. Emily said he was always making funny noises with the maid in the kitchen. The vampire would have to wait to put them in the basement with mother. The right time would come. And besides, the kitchen was on the other side of the house. A long walk.

The vampire slipped through a pair of double doors at the bottom of the stairs, slid off the veranda, and scuttled into the trees.

Emily's swing stopped on it's own accord as the vampire neared her oak tree.

"Come, my child. It's time to grow" Emily smiled, her teeth almost as white as the light in it's eyes. "Will I really reach the stars like you said?" Only her yellow dress with ruffles was brighter than her smile now.

"Play with me" it hissed, " and we will reach the ends of the sky"

####

The ambulance sirens having faded for three nights (they made her cry), two pairs of eyes, with smiles in them, but not on the faces below them, peered out from the bedroom door.

"Run along now Emily" it slithered "I'm right behind you" Two figures, now much more than eye level with the bannister post, twisted down the staircase.

"I'm hungry..." Emily moaned.

"Pleased to meet you, hungry." It laughed like a machine gun, behind those teeth Emily adored.

"No, let's go to the kitchen again" She pointed down a hall lined with red forest carpet. It seemed such a short distance to the kitchen yes, and so easy to eat.

The vampire tugged at what used to be a yellow dress. It was only reddish tatters now, and altogether too small.

"No," the vampire snarled "we're grown-ups now. Grown-ups have to go into town for food, you know that"

The two vampires stepped into a cold starless night, leaving the house even colder without them, and not more than a tool.

## The Tally Man

blistering haze, wandering days,  
in blackness dark and deeper,  
spirits, black as coal  
tearing at my soul,  
and still I run from the reaper.

scream of pain,  
pray for rain,  
in desert wallowing in sorrow,  
while running,  
running, running,  
and still I knew it would follow.

twister faces,  
familiar places,  
wasting time not mine to borrow,  
made to pay,  
longing, longing  
simply to be hung tomorrow.

around me,  
a chain,  
this bane, ties to you  
woe to you, the sleeper  
wandering forever

Shadows grow long  
against the wall,  
they wither and fade  
then they blend and die with age

glowing in the cold,  
your eyes  
make me forget masks  
and other things  
lies

I can smell your hair  
sometimes  
and feel your hands  
burning, but cold,

I'll never be alone -

Children can remember  
all the forgotten things  
like oracles and nightmares  
and the other name of oranges,  
the one from before the color.

And, when they awake,  
they eat their breakfast and tie their  
shoes

(as children do)

while swordfighting nightmares in their  
mind.

Questions without answers  
logick on the back of a cereal box.

There was a time last week  
when I could remember (why?)  
just exactly did my father  
make a kitchen to melt into the sky

## Dwelling on the Negative

I can not purge these thoughts,  
I can't kill these violent memories,  
try as I might it's all for naught,  
this is all my legacy.

Give me the feel of the forgotten,  
take from me what I've given,  
show me my own words,  
then maybe I'll listen to myself.

Standing on the edge of a rock cliff  
windwisps burrowing into my mind  
it's turning and burning inside.

I let it fly, leave it all behind,  
purge these thoughts !  
Leave these violent memories be-  
hind.  
slipping into dream, it's all for  
naught.

This, your violent legacy-

did I know your name,  
when september sunsets faded?  
or did you know mine,  
did you know my name  
as I passed you by?  
with you in the Ground  
and Angels dancing down the Sky.  
or did you only know my name  
after this Embrace with Earth ?-

## Staircase

Something important to me but I don't remember why.

Used to sit and watch the people go, they always come back again.

Taller through the eyes of a child and, important for another reason. But, lost in their own monotony.

I rather liked to sit there and watch them, I don't remember why. Now, I've lied and left.

Of all this childhood winding, remains a staircase sentinel post, and I don't remember why

## Other Judas

The Painter and his companion sat in the small room awaiting the arrival of the old man. The summer heat seemed to congeal in the air. Dusty shafts of sunlight peeked through minute gaps in the heavy curtains over the windows.

"I still don't like it!" said the Painter. He gazed at the rough table. "It goes against my sensibilities. I may refuse to complete the frieze." The companion looked up at this, and a slight frown fled across his aged countenance like a flurry of grey snow.

"You can't quit." the man said, his native Sicilian accent laying heavy on his thick lips. "You cant... the contract..."

The Painter stood up suddenly, knocking over his chair. He slapped both hands on the table in a fit of fury. "It's blasphemy! It's wrong! It's... it's... obscene! Wrong! I don't give a damn about the contract! I..." The heavy oak door eased open and a frail old man peered in. Tight-lipped, the Painter bent over, picked up the chair, and seated himself. The old man walked slowly to the table. He laid a small gilt portfolio on the scarred tabletop. He took off his small round red cap and laid it beside the leather folder.

"Gentlemen," the old man whispered. His voice like the faint susurrus of wind in a bell tower. "This is the paper." He opened the case and withdrew a manuscript crumbled at the edges, filled with spiky writing. It smelled faintly of sand and sun. It had thirteen carefully executed profiles of bearded men drawn in ink gone faint with time. Each profile bore an inscription, the Greek letters neat and small. The old man rasped, "This was found at the Holy City in the desert. These are the faces you will use. Only..." At this, the old man looked intently at the Painter. His heavy gold ring flashed in the smoky candlelight, the ruby reflecting bloody flames as he tapped the ancient manuscript. "These two you will change... If you wish to paint again" The Painter looked away.

The first picture was of a man, apparently of Mediterranean extraction. He had a large nose, a patchy beard and mustache and a definite overbite. He also appeared to have a prominent wart on his chin.

The last picture was of a handsome, faintly angelic man. His hair was straight and long, he had a strong nose and a gentle mouth. His light skin was smooth, without blemish. He seemed perfect, where the first picture almost seemed to be that of an idiot.

"Very well," the Painter said tonelessly. He had studied the faces, read the Greek inscriptions beneath each. "Very well. I shall paint the faces... as you direct, Father" The old man nodded.

"Good, my son... A wise choice, a very wise choice indeed" the old man sighed. He took the aged piece of papyrus and eyed it. "No one wants the Messiah to look like that. That is the face of a traitor" The old man held the manuscript in the flame of the candle. His mouth made a small smile. Dry as bones, The paper burned quickly and brightly. The painter's companion made a noise in his throat.

Slowly, the old man picked up his small red hat and placed it on his head. "God be with you." He left quickly and quietly. "You heard his Holiness." The companion said. "You had better get to work" The painter grunted and looked at the pile of ashes on the table. The companion smirked slightly, then turned to leave. "Hurry up." he said as he exited the small room. Leonardo the painter turned to his folio of sketches of the inside of the roomy chapel rectory he had been commissioned to paint. He bit his lip in concentration and anger while staring at the faces in his mind. A sad, sad day it was when Leonardo daVinci protected old men in red caps by exchanging a handsome Judas for an ugly Christ in the Last Supper. Taking a blank sheet from his satchel, the painter began to map out his painting.

## A WARNING FROM THE AUTHOR

*To whom it may concern: The following makes no sense and it's kinda stoopid.*

The Beetle King Story  
- Jenniffer Brenneman

There was a boy with no name sitting all alone. This boy comes from a land so different from our own. A world which is separated from you by endless time and space. He needed to search far and wide for the name he did not own.

As he sat alone on the shore of the cold water belonging to a river he did not know, he was saddened by the emptiness of his own heart. Gazing into the black sky he wondered who could help him in his time of loneliness.

Just then, a swarm of beetles came forward and said, "We are the beetles, the kings of the dreamers and the rulers of nightmares. We are the ones who leave the strongest of the strong crying out in fear. We are those who will help you find the name you have not dreaded to claim."

The boy slowly rose to his feet and said unto the largest of the Beetles, for he was so obviously the

king, "I am very grateful. I know that with your help I can find the name with no owner."

The boy followed the beetle king through the dew covered forest into a different world. The boy felt his eyes closing and finally, he fell asleep. He could feel himself being carried through the other world. Suddenly he was dropped. He quickly opened his eyes so he could see nothing but darkness.

Then he heard a deep voice mumbling words that had no meaning but contained dark secrets. Names began to fall like rain all around him, each one coming towards him, then quickly moving away.

"One of these names belongs to you, boy. Choose the name that you consider to be worthy of belonging to a divine being." Said the voice. The boy replied, weeping "But, there are so many." The voice

did not answer but instead laughed a cruel laugh.

Once again the boy's eyes closed and he was in a deep slumber. He kept falling. Lower and lower the boy went into darkness when all of a sudden he found himself in the river. He could see the beetles on the shore watching helplessly as the boy drifted downstream. He started going over the waterfall and was pulled underwater. All he saw were blurred pictures of beetles, trees and water flashing before his eyes.

When he awoke, he was on land sitting on the shore all alone. Once again he was saddened by the emptiness of his own heart. He had failed in finding the name worthy of belonging to a divine being.

The boy wept. As he did the beetles came up to him. The king of the beetles came forward and said, "We are the beetles, the kings of the dreamers and the rulers of nightmares..."

Sky and Earth  
- David Young

Wretched sky cast over in pall  
Rivers of black stretched to sable sea

glossimer birds of black fly over troubled, disquieted waters as torrents wash and flow against the rocks in deathless dream the earth moans softly, a whispered lament bourn sullenly upon the breeze as the levee breaks, and the waves roar in elation as the tides rush over despondent shore A storm brews, as dark clouds gather in the blacken heavens A deep rumbling echoes out from the turbulent strata obscured in shadow as it weeps, tears of white rain falling to earth in testament of rage and sorrow locked within heart now grown cold

Winds howl out their triumph as the maelstrom rages it's fury across battered lands

The flood enveloping, swallowing as the mists begin to rise A glimmer of lightning shutters across broken sky, haze dyed to fallow glare as the gods of thunder play the ancient games Angels of stone watch silently above in the crystal realm their expressions passionless, skin draped in pallid, pale marble eyes staring down in bleakness as the shades part way, the darkness drawing back in to void

The tempest wanes, its wrath grown over in moss and ivy of emerald The last glassen orbs of misery slip downwards, their grief gone only calm now, hushed silence wrapped round, tranquility lying over shattered ruin the breeze dying with the song of ivory doves, breath stilled for a time Light breaks through the ebony walls of grey, the sod shimmering as reddened glow touches against the soaking sod of mud

A rainbow of faith reaches out across the horizon, it's vibrance cast gleaming downwards

As the sentinels gaze ever forward, unmarred by time, the spirits of rock standing forlorn, heads bowed in remorse and knowing, unheard prayer uttered in sallow penitence as they endure, suffer, forever waiting, watching.

## Vanity in Darkness

I'm here with a candle  
in front of a mirror,  
vanity in darkness is a lie  
for there is no reflection here

I look to the water  
I look to the rain,  
here with a candle  
in front of the bathroom window pane  
silence is broken by rain.

in front of a mirror  
I look to my eyes,  
vanity in darkness is a lie.  
nothing behind them all  
save, lonely cries,

vanity in darkness is a lie

Come Forward ! Midnight times,  
take from me this stolid grey,  
the broken love in these eyes  
is a painful sight.  
Take from me this light!  
(Shatter it like glass)  
bring me, deliverance into night.

Alas, vanity in darkness is a lie.  
no comfort, or reflection there.

rain on my mirror  
broken window behind,  
eyes coming nearer broken  
from the inside.  
vanity in darkness is a lie,  
there is no reflection here.

## Ask Them This

If I pounded your face,  
would you hear me then?  
Of course you'd listen  
if I stared you down with eyes of fire.  
Would you notice that  
there is fire in me,  
or would you see only water  
simply because you're thirsty?

## Else, a Question

have you, with you  
the forgot?  
I thought, or not,  
the forgot.

Are you really what I think you are?  
i am only what I pretend to be,  
Do I see on you what I think I see?  
pretenses are what pretence sees  
What do you see when you look on me?

Then, you are what I think I am?  
yes, but only in this dream,  
Pretence is what pretenses see?  
that is what would seem to be.

What is it I am when You look on me?  
nothing more than i used to be.  
Are You really what you think you are?  
seeing me is a pretens' dream

I am the man that no man thinks  
and nobody ponders  
a mystery, am i of unfathomable  
simplicity  
a grace-land of wonders

## Our Death as One

"out with the old  
and in with the new"  
men of the new order  
are telling us, exactly,  
what to do

" you will succumb to the change"  
they tell us we have two options  
two options,  
yet...  
One

"out with the old, and in with the new"  
"you will succumb to the change"  
"the many, not the few !"  
"the glory of those in power  
is more important than you"

the human race has become dispos-  
able?  
Not many of us are left  
few....  
but one

we're dying

## Window Mind

I've been with you in dreams,  
while keeping secrets never thought to keep

I've been with you while you sleep.

I know where you are when not awake,

While telling answers mine to take.

I've been with you in your dreams

I sing the song of scilence

and dance across your mind

I take away your science

and take away your time

I've been with you in your sleep

while stealing secrets never thought to keep

and sounds, not heard, but seen

I've been with you while you sleep.

## Faded Mockery

faded petals of a flower fair  
smell of paper freshly aged  
new and old

She used to dance like childhood in  
summer  
and even at times would care,  
then time made childish faces fold.

Grandmother sang sad songs, more  
than she should  
lovely-lost lyrics from forgotten bards,  
a smell, like no other. New, but old,



"8 paper"

7,8,9,10

it doesn't matter in the end  
 you see me as paper through glass  
 strong enough to be ripped in half  
 yet hidden on the other side of a mirror  
 reflective, all knowing, but clear

7,8,9,10

I was only ever in your head

you see me as paper through glass  
 strong enough to be ripped in half,  
 yet blank, virgin, untouched and white,  
 so far away and yet so near,

7,8,9,10

I won't be here once I'm dead

reach to me with pencil and pen,  
 -freedom from this blankish state-  
 put on me a piece of you, and then  
 know that I can do the same

7,8,9,10

I will only ever be in your head

it doesn't matter in the end  
 these numbers have become my name  
 a digit I am, and fractions before....  
 You see me as paper through glass  
 strong enough to be ripped in half

he speaks again of shadow  
 the man that lives in my head  
 he sees my every word and hears,  
 then he speaks again of shadow

This is the nowhere story  
 I'm about to tell,  
 If you don't like it...  
 Well,  
 you can go to hell.

Stuff your feelings in a paper bag  
 and don't ever let them out,  
 light a candle for them at Christmas,  
 stuff your mind (for me?) up your  
 ass, you won't need it where you're  
 going to go.

This is the nowhere story,  
 and these, the nothing times,  
 you can welcome your minds  
 to it's new found hell.  
 Mind all the time  
 is up your ass.  
 (Except at Christmas).

I did it too, and look at me,  
 the perfect model of conformity.  
 I will take your ass (mind) and give  
 you dreams,  
 just like the ones on your TV screens.  
 Your feelings are a talk show.

This is your nowhere.  
 And this, your nothing mind.  
 I cut it open and looked inside;  
 the talk show story it tried to tell,  
 was put in a bag and mailed to hell.

All the time in conformity,  
 you dream while hating me.

**"Billy" A Lost Dog Show**

Imagine a man in a chair, now view him from two angles. A normal man with brown eyes. This 'normal man' (that is the term I have come to know Billy by) has a little wooden chair by the river. He sits, alone with his visible thoughts, trapped on the other side of canvases hanging in the art space in the Lost Dog coffee shop. Billy, the normal man, is himself a lost dog of sorts. Almost completely unable to move, he sits with a seemingly placid gaze planted firmly upon his countenance and aimed squarely at his audience.

"Hello." he seems to say. At first. But then maybe it is Billy who is my audience.

The artist, Fred Jesser, does a wonderful job of portraying the essence of the river that both he and Billy seem to love so dearly. For me the Billy character in the paintings is the very personification of river. Billy's body never moves, because it is trapped in the second dimension in much the same way that a river can be a stolid thing. And, reflecting the skies' light into the eyes of whoever nears it the water does seem welcoming. "swim in me." it says. But again, this is only a first impression.

And so I did. The way one would wade into a still calm river on a warm autumn afternoon, I stepped into Billy's world. With his eyes as the undercurrent, I began to drown.

In need of more wonderful coffee to keep my pulse at an acceptable rate, I returned to the lost dog, and sure enough Billy was there. He dispensed with the casual "hello" from several days before and instead spoke volumes of silences. My mocha wasn't good enough for Billy today, I ordered the same thing yesterday. Billy would have ordered something colder and more bitter. His eyes winced at me while he disapproved of the way I look. They moved from my tangled hair to my boots. "They're falling apart" was the only thing he had to say to me that day.

At first Billy hadn't been so angry and displeased with me. At first, after the hello's ceased, he was a good boy and remained a painting. But every once and a while I could see him roll his eyes at me like a portrait in some cheap horror movie, because that is what he thought of me, some cheap horror. (Not whose mind you, horror). But that day had been entirely different, and it was his comment about falling apart while I finished sucking from the bottom of my mocha that brought about the stunning realization that, yes I was drowning in the paintings of Fred Jesser.

**Borderlands Books**

Description:

These four books comprise a series of short story anthologies whose goal is to publish completely original fiction without any of the old staples of the horror fiction industry.

Plot

Given that these are anthologies of several short stories, usually about 15-20 per book. A single plot summary can not hold here. And I'm not about to spoil 80 different stories for the innocent reader. So instead I will give a description of the kind of stories that tend to haunt these pages. Most of them are horror stories in the sense that they deal with the truly horrible. They range in style and mood depending on the writer or the editor's mood at the time of the particular volume. But one thing holds true for every single story within the pages of the Borderlands series. Their stories are on the cutting edge of modern fiction. Every one of them is like no other story I have ever read. Even the stories that deal with common themes such as vampirism, abortion, cannibalism etc. are executed in such a manner that they come across as something dark and different and new.

Nowhere in the entire series will you find a serial killer, or anything that goes bump in the night. It is all unique.

There is, however one problem with this horror anthology. Parts of it are reminiscent of old B-Movies. Not because they deal with the same creepy gooey monsters. No the subject matter is, as I said already, completely new. But, quite a few of the stories seem to have been crafted with no purpose in mind other than shock value or gross value. I assure you if that was the goal of a few artists in the series, it was reached.

The kind of perversity, sexual and otherwise that dances across some of the pages in this series is beyond horrible. The only words that do well to describe it are those found in the stories themselves. These books will truly bother you, scare you and will definitely leave a scar. The stories he most unlikely locations in the human mind. If you pick up these horror anthologies intending to be truly horrified....

Well, be careful what you wish for.

**Fargo Film**

Description:

This film is a strange concoction of insanity of the expected type sugared up with a heaping helping of Mid-western psychotic optimism. For it is almost disgusting to watch the loving, and introspective reactoin these people have to atrocity. Don't they understand that savage murder is horrible? The film draws an interesting line between "normal" and "otherwise" and, by the end of the film there is no difference between the two.

Plot:

in fargo, a homely used car salesman decides (for undisclosed reasons) that he wants his wife abducted. He associates himself with three criminals, only one of which is capable of cold calculated... Calculation. Unfortunately for the salesman, This one does not participate in the crime itself but stays behind plotting from the back of a grease covered garage in Fargo. The two assailants themselves are rather reminiscent of Bert and Ernie, in that one is an obnoxious overtalkitive waste of attention time, like Ernie. And the other is too suave for his own good. In short, this is a story of failure. As, anything that can go wrong with the execution of this badly planned scheme does. And then some.

Rating

If you are in the mood for stark contrast, and are prepared to laugh at the truly hideous this movie might entertain. However be prepared to feel rather miserable by the end.

*In order for you to put my reviews into perspective, you'll probably need to know what I like (a list of dislikes will follow next issue). In no particular order, my list is as follows:*

The Sisters of Mercy, Mission UK, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Cure, Christian Death, Nosferatu, Type O negative, Skinny Puppy, Nine Inch Nails, Two Witches, Switchblade Symphony, Superheroines, Pink Floyd, The Beatles, Phillip Glass, Enya, Dead Can Dance, Bauhaus, The Commodores, Joy Division, Danny Elfman

#### Soundtracks

"The Crow" both of them, "Interview with the Vampire"

#### Directors

Hitchcock, Ed Wood, Quentin Tarantino, Tim Burton,

#### Movies

Japanese Anime, The old Universal monster movies, Edward Scissorhands, Batman 1& 2, Nightmare Before Christmas, 12 Monkeys, Pulp Fiction, Casablanca,

Jackson Pollack "Jack the Dripper", Francis Bacon, Andrew Wyeth, Hieronymus Bosch, Peter Breugel, Roy Lichtenstein, Salvador Dali

The Twilight Zone, Adams Family, Kojac the Night Stalker, American Gothic, Tales From the Crypt, Highlander, Gargoyles, Seinfeld, Friday the Thirteenth, Tales From the Dark Side, Alfred Hitchcock Presents, Batman (The animated one)

Batman : Shadow of the Bat, Legends of the Dark Knight, Sandman, Vertigo Comics, The Maxx, Green Hornet, Tales From The Crypt.

Mark Twain, Tennessee Williams, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Arthur Conan Doyle, HP Lovecraft, Edgar Allen Poe, Oscar Wilde, Anne Rice, Franz Kafka, Poppy Z. Brite

(It should be noted that there is one writer I hate because he has no sense of humor at all, Dylan Kinnett. Yeah his stuff bites)

This review column is a completely new experience for me, so if I am not constructive or critical enough, let me know. Eventually I plan to find a standard format for reviews, but until then there will be some variation in these pages.

## Next Issue:

•  
For those of you not fortunate enough to receive trendy, over-hyped music magazines from your desperately-seeking-to-be-hip grandparents, an article on Satan's cheerleaders for your savage amusement. by Lizz Marsden.

•  
A new Photography gallery within these very pages

•  
more of the same old, same old. but with a new twist. Something "alternative" in the way of poetry, short stories, reviews and the like.

•  
There will be a page two in the third issue of Apocalypse Playground, as well as a cover. Just in case you were wondering

•  
Some things even the editor doesn't know about. Because you see, he has a lot on his mind and can not list everything that will appear in the next issue because he

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