The background of the entire image is a deep space scene. On the left side, there is a large, intricate red nebula with wispy, filamentary structures. Scattered across the dark black background are numerous small, distant stars of various colors, including white, yellow, and blue. On the right side, a single, very bright blue-white star is prominent, emitting a soft, circular glow that fades into the surrounding space.

THE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO TELEPATHY

JEFF TATE

*PEOPLE WILL DO
ANYTHING,
NO MATTER HOW ABSURD,
TO AVOID FACING THEIR
OWN SOULS.*

- C.G. JUNG

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THE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO TELEPATHY

BY JEFF TATE

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CHAPTER ONE

LUNCHEON

It's all a blur to me.

Since those first waking moments this relentless question has hounded my days: What the fuck happened?!

The repercussions of actually finding out the answer could be so dire that it has taken me a full two weeks to build up the courage to even begin this monstrous quest.

Can't I just stay here in my ignorance-induced stupor and try to pick up the scattered pieces (without looking at them) and move somewhat forward?

It is this point in a broken man's recovery that begs yet another question: Is it better to let sleeping dogs lie?

Can the memory of this latest episode help or hurt your gentle frame of mind?

I don't know but that is one too many questions for this little exercise so I think we will just stick to the first one.

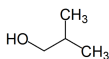
I receive invitations, from time to time, asking to attend certain events such as dinners and barbeques and drinking parties. It is one such Boxing Day luncheon in the year of 2011 that I was told held a reserved seat for myself that sparked this whole debacle.

I would like to state for the record that I graciously accepted this invite with the express expectation that a night of jolly drinking and half-arsed card games reminiscent of my younger years would ensue this lunch.

So what if my current and available friends cannot provide such an environment as this that I thrive in?

And so what if it was at my ex-girlfriend's house?

Three months ago, a five-month relationship with Abbey had ended in spectacular fashion. We had become friends over the better part of a year and then developed into a much, much closer affair that was as intense for me as I'd imagine anything could be.



It had to end, much to my dismay, but we had both known the friendship was too important to throw away with the rest of the mess.

So, I was to travel to her new home in Belmont, one of the nicer suburbs here in our fair city of Perth, 'the most isolated city in the world', in the lower reaches of the westernmost state of the land of oz.

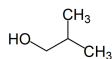
A twelve o'clock arrival presented me with the sudden activation of my innate 'fight-or-flight' survival instinct. Unfortunately instinct is one thing I have less control over than I should like. So it was not my intention to freeze and break out into a cold sweat as I stepped out into a backyard filled with my ex-girlfriend's family, close friends, and another ex-lover.

The very recent breakup effects had all but dissipated on me, leaving me in a sharp, clear and calm state of being, I could have walked the tightrope between skyscrapers if called upon to do it such was my temperament.

So why this sudden lapse in stalwartness?

At the time I blamed it on the method in which I had spent my last four days, mainly in the midst of a green cloud of smoke, a toxic gas released from a leafy shrub that came to rest over my abode. I was incapacitated, struck down with an old illness whose symptoms included ceaseless taste-testing of every food in the kitchen, half drinking bottles of Golden Ale, and the season-by-season viewing of The Sopranos.

This affliction has its claws firmly embedded in scores of people around the globe, and it has visited me many a time.



Regardless, I had awoken from my statue-like stance within the space of four to five seconds, and not one amongst my fellow guests had noticed.

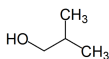
I made straight for the most frightening obstacle, as is my nature, and entered into friendly banter with the female counterpart of this family's parental unit.

I say frightening not so much to label this woman scary, on the contrary, it is the exceptional loveliness and humanness of this woman, and what she might think of me, that singled her out from this crowd.

Once I'd discovered I was still on the polite-interaction list I decided I had to move on.

There was no time for pleasantries, my beer was getting warmer with each cordial hello and warm soothing smile in greeting. After the most important trip to the fridge I made for the most interesting conversation waiting to happen, that being with the only other member of this high class lunch party I had something in common with, the ex-lover. I shall call him Ralph, because just now I opened a book of baby names to a random page and Ralph was the first name that came into focus.

So I sat down at the table next to Ralph, popping the top off my beer and taking a swig in anticipation. For why not would I engage with this man? How else would I last through that afternoon without harking back to the good days with an old colleague of mine, someone who has shared my work load and studied the same specimens?



I asked Ralph how he had been since last we spoke, and he informed me he had been quite jittery, with today's proceedings not really helping at all.

"Never fear, Ralph," I told him in my most comforting voice "all we need to do is drink fast, and eat well, and it will be business as usual before you know it."

"I... I... I don't know why I came. But I did. And now I'm too afraid to leave."

I took his bottle of whiskey from the table in front of him and poured a hefty swig into his glass.

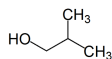
"Shut up and taste that. I am here to look after you."

The poor man was still hanging on to shredded hope, praying every night that he could reverse his predicament and re-join with our luncheon hostess as if nothing had ever gone wrong. I felt pity. I felt we shared a bond, and while I was completely recovered, he was not, so the least I could do was give him some assistance.

So it was we all ate of the dazzling food spread and the afternoon passed on, drawing night's eerie darkness over our lodgings. I made it my mission to consume all the alcohol I had brought with me, I'd even made the trek outside to the boot of my car where I kept my emergency travel booze stash for more.

By this time the other guests had fled the scene. They knew full well what was in store if they stuck around. Much more younger and unsavoury types had begun to arrive. The stack of cards had been placed in the centre of the table immediately following lunch.

Circle of Death. To all with the good fortune to have never had heard those three words pass through your



inner ear lobes, beware. In the interest of saving those people from certain public humiliation and disgrace I will refrain from explaining this drinking ‘game’.

Suffice to say there were no bodies in danger of dehydration that night.

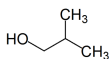
I never let Ralph stray too far from my sight, knowing only too well the danger of an unchecked drunkard running rampant with despair. Destruction was inevitable without someone’s watchful gaze. I had known from an early stage in the evening that someone would have to be me.

My plan was to immobilise my ward. If he could be confined to my quarters for the night, I could keep a lid on any potential disasters. Seeing as I was quite intent on finding out who was going to win this unwinnable game of Circle of Death, I needed to keep Ralph by my side at the table. And who knows? Maybe he could have helped with my strategy, gaining me extra reputable drinking points with the other guests.

So my only course of action was to ensure Ralph consumed the most amount of liquor possible. I made him swear allegiance to his brand new shot glass I procured for him. He was only to drink from this goblet, no other vessel may bear liquid to his lips.

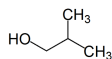
“Once you have finished your bottle,” I calmly and clearly explained to Ralph, “You can start on my new bottle I had in my car. You are not to move until this game is completed.”

I was sure I made the right choice. Within an hour he would be unable to wander, and more importantly, unable to pour his broken heart’s anguish out into the

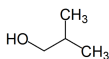


cruel air of this dank emotional prison. For that would constitute defeat, and that is no way for a man to heal. After a few hours of heavyset drinking, the emotional outbursts were kept at a minimum and everyone was laughing together in solidarity. I decided it was time to visit the lower section of the backyard, one that was walled off by big bushes, one that held a small wading pool just waiting for someone to stretch out in and relax for a short spell. For the second time that night, I knew that someone was going to have to be me. No other would dare take up this mantle, although it was a Necessary task. I took it upon myself to please the party gods, for no party was complete without a drunken half-naked man in a small wading pool.

Besides, I figured Ralph was too far gone to cause trouble now. He was safe for the time being. So I moved my one man festival to the secluded area, ever thankful the music was loud enough to be enjoyed whilst partly submerged in the cool, refreshing water of the pool. As my mind departed my current dwelling and swirled off into deep analytical thought on the nature of all things, events were occurring that would shape the course of my immediate future. An hour passed, until I was roused by a hand shaking my shoulder. The hand belonged to the other inhabitant of the house, an old and best friend of our celebrated luncheon hostess. She pertained to inform me of the manner in which Ralph had conducted himself while I was abroad. After I had left the group the game had degenerated quickly and fallen apart at the seams. It was then Ralph had begun to perk up, and with his



newfound drunken alertness had tried to make his redefining speech to our resplendent hostess, trying to win back the lost affections. She had denied this speech several times but now no longer had the energy so she let him say his piece. My story re-layer had been too far away to hear what was being said, but not too far to miss the reaction of the hostess, being in the form of disgust, proclaiming loudly that Ralph was ‘babbling gibberish’, which did not have the most calming effect on him. She went inside to escape, and was pursued. Halfway inside the house Abbey had closed the kitchen door on Ralph, and in his severely intoxicated state he replied by dragging a nearby table in front of the door, blocking it in a quite clever (or so he thought) statement. Little did he realise the computer equipment on the table had cables connected to the wall, so when he heaved the table sideways, the equipment did not move with it, instead crashing down on the floor. Ralph had panicked, instantly realising that his little prank now looked like a deliberate act with malicious intent. Now he had become *one of the others*. He himself was now trapped in the blackened pit of misunderstanding. He had caused a scene at Abbey’s party, transmuting himself into the very epitome of the opposite of what was in his heart. He retreated to the back yard and sat at the table. Forthwith our hostess and her housemate had both come out hurling abuse. Ralph tried to leave, getting as far as the end of the street, before our hostess had convinced him to stay and led him back to the front yard, where he had been for the last half an hour crying



and sobbing to the housemate in perpetual sadness. And now she had brought him to me. Maybe I could take care of him, she queried, since the sobbing had just stopped, with agitation taking its place.

She left my side and sent Ralph in. He appeared through the bushes muttering to himself about the special cord connecting him to his ex-lover, and how he could not let something so strong wither and die without a fight.

I came upon him at once. Rabid frustration gripped him tightly as he paced up and down the grassed patch of yard.

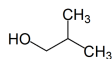
I clasped my hands on his shoulders and told him it was going to be alright as long as he kept his composure.

“Don’t let her see you like this, they’re like wolves Ralph, they smell your fear. There’s plenty more fish in the sea.”

I’d always hated that phrase, my loss for words had made it necessary, but nevertheless it didn’t make sense to me as a child. It left me with a sense of betrayal, indeed, how could one just give up the love that has put you in this state? I’d since learned, however, if you want to play this game the only prerequisite is a cold heart.

“Don’t talk to me about fucking fish man!” he shrieked, “This is my life here damnnit! How can I just walk away?”

With my young, keen eyes and faultless observational expertise I watched as he kicked a chair out of the way and continued pacing the yard.



“She doesn’t understand what I would *do* for her! It’s love!”

Swiftly I leapt forward and slapped my open palm across his face. At least I hoped it was my open palm, because now that I think of it he went down straight afterwards, collapsing in on himself like a building being deliberately demolished, and he was not coming back up for some time.

Relieved, I picked up a deck chair and threw it into the wading pool. That would be my province for the rest of the night, sipping fruity punch and playing Puscifer remixes on my tiny portable speaker.

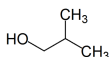
I knew the comfort of sleep would not be visiting me for many hours; I had a duty to Ralph to keep watch over his unconscious and rumpled self lest he rose again to wreak further havoc. But no sooner than I had rested back in the chair had Ralph begun to wail at the sky in pure torment, lamenting over his lost love. “Why, why?” He sobbed. This caused our hostess to confront the scene once again, screaming the words to be silent. I tried to reign in my distressed comrade, only to receive a scolding rebuke myself.

“You want her for yourself! That has been your plan all along you bastard!”

~~~~~

And so much for manners!

Remember those slight utterings before and after conversational prompts and phrases?



If you would consider a request the main meal of an exchange, then manners would be the appetisers and deserts, sweet delicacies produced solely to soften and enhance the prime rib main course.

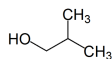
But, in an ever-changing world, in this day and age, we must take heed of declining sensibilities. We must now contend with manner-less interactions, orders rather than requests.

How far then, whilst conversing, may we allow our fellow conversers to descend into the foul and scathing depths of discourtesy before the line is drawn? We are men of action are we not? What kind of disservice do we pay to others of our ilk as we let slip with one of our own to behave with such distaste?

Why then, Sonny Jim, do you sit back and watch this abhorrent scene unfold without so much as an intentional snicker, not even a disapproving glance, nor a word of wise advice?

Episodes such as this can be brought about at different defining times in a man's life, like when the leftover cheesecake has gone off in the fridge, or when your girlfriend suddenly develops a severe and individualised case of Capgras' delusion towards you and abruptly begins avoiding you like the plague.

There can be no forewarning for those of us well-wishers and caretakers trying to keep the delicate balance of lunacy and space-cadetedness of our friend's lives in check.



If we wish to lend our hand, we must not waste time pondering over prevention strategies. We need action!

And we need men of it!

So stand up, down that radioactive sludge some of us call caffeine and take a look around. Your friend needs your help. Take the initiative, and realise this is only an episode, this is not your friend's true form. He is acting involuntarily, due to some steep, rocky, mountainous, volcanic landscape that has penetrated his mind.

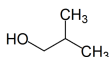
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As these thoughts rushed forth through my feeble mind the situation was dragging us further and further down, ever deeper into the cavernous pit of misunderstanding. It was time.

I stood, full of feigned calmness, an outer shell used at once to both hide my troubled disposition and quell the rising storm in our hostess' fiery eyes. With my sudden change in height I quickly surveyed the damage. Plastic chairs and drained wine bottles lay strewn across the yard, all having had the bad luck of being within arms reach of my ill-fated 'partner in crime', as it were.

It became clear to me that I would have to reach deep into the recesses of my literary knowledge and produce a remedy as yet unequalled in my past if I were to have the faintest hope of getting out of there alive.

I knew instantly I had to scrap everything from the last one hundred years, the situation being one of extreme



import, too volatile to risk in the hands of authors tainted by modernity.

Nay, I had to stick to the classics, something with substance, tried and tested true by history.

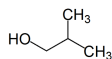
Could I draw upon the auspices of Mark Twain or Jane Austen? Could I soar under their protective wings? Perhaps I may have found guidance in the proper way with which Mr Holmes had dealings with the Red Headed League, indeed with any adversary?

No, effective though they may be, I was under no illusion that anything less than the mightiest of complimentary speech may stay the eruption of anger that was sure to spew forth at any minute from our hostess. There was only one hope. Only the greatness of ancient Greece could calm these waters of imminent destruction.

Nothing short of the prayer sung by the exalted Nestor on the shores of bountiful Pylos to the immaculate Goddess Athene would do.

Seconds flew past as this realisation hit, and not a moment too soon. A solemn grace took hold of me as I made my desperate plea:

“O QUEEN, I pray you, be gracious unto us, and bestow upon me a good repute amongst men; that I may quell this quarrel without further loss of honour. Instead I vow to you this man who draws your golden image into



disrepute. This beast will I sacrifice to you in the name of restored peace, after I have caused his ears to be covered with pure gold.”

I cannot describe to you in words the astonishment displayed by both Abbey and my once comrade-in-arms.

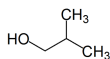
I turned to the latter, my solemnity increasing with every step I took towards him.

“I’m sorry I have to do this, but it is the only way.”

I took up in my grasp the chrome corkscrew from the table, raising it high above my head as I approached the poor sap whose fate I had just then sealed.

“This will only hurt for a short while, then I’m told you will slip into a blinding state of bliss. Never fear, for in this act you will ensure the safety of the rest of us, namely myself, and hopefully our illustrious hostess will need not seek further retribution. I shall sing songs of your bravery to my cherished ones and all who would listen.”

I could see in his eyes that he did *not* understand, his mind most probably frozen in terror as is prone to most when faced with inevitable death. I remember then a most peculiar thought flashed by me, that as I rose from night’s restful slumber the previous morning I had completely misjudged the events this outing would hold for me. A slight chuckle of irony threatened to escape my lips as I came to stop before my intended victim. Lifting the corkscrew higher and readying myself for the worst, I spoke my final goodbyes.



"I wish there was another way, but you have brought this upon yourself."

Suddenly I saw his eyes focus, and it seemed he had snapped out of his trance.

"Please! I'll stop! Think of my unborn, and come to think of it, unconceived children! I beg of you have mercy!"

This abrupt outburst shook me temporarily from my concentration, and I realised I had been holding my breath for far too long. I exhaled, and with the new intake of oxygen came the pity I had so quickly overlooked at the beginning of this wrangle.

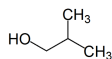
"Yes! What was I about to do?? I can't say that we are friends, friend, but we *are* partners in crime. Have we not traversed the same plain, plundered the same dungeon, and sailed the same sea? How could I forget that we have both partaken of the very same forbidden fruit, from the very same shiny bowl? You and I have, albeit at separate times, both been singed by the same flames!

"Come, let us leave this drunken mess without wreaking any further havoc."

I dropped the corkscrew, satisfied that I had changed my mind for the best.

But something was wrong.

The agreeing glance I expected on my comrade's face did not come. In its place were hurt and sorrowful features, with some kind of strange, clear liquid emanating from his eyes. He spoke to me feverishly, "I



can't believe you almost... I should have you court-marshalled!"

I was shocked. Here we were, trapped in a bubble of horror of his own making, whereas he had lit a fire under the skirt of our hostess leaving me with no option but to forfeit his life by proxy in reparation for damages against said sublime hostess.

But when it came down to it, I could not perform my own life saving duty. I had succumbed to sympathy, and spared his life.

Why then, after such a show of confederacy, was he turning against me?

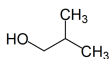
I peeked at Abbey, who showed no signs of relief. She bent over and picked up the corkscrew which I had so carelessly dropped.

"This was a gift from someone very dear to me."

It was then that comprehension reared its insufferable head and came crashing down onto mine.

The situation was doomed. I was now the enemy.

It was time to go.



CHAPTER TWO

A COLOURED SHEET

I backed away slowly, and made my escape via the house, telling them I had to use the lavatory. Coming upon my car parked along the verge, a curious thought struck me. I had been hearing a muffled, kind of roaring sound on and off all night and only then could I discern it's origin. What sounded like dirt bikes

hooning around the nearby lake at the end of the cul-de-sac drew me close. In my already apathetic state I thought I might as well go and take a look. I ventured down the street into the semi-bushland and sure enough in the dim rising sunlight there were two dirt bikes coming my way, one leading the other, tearing up the last green patches of grass as yet untouched by their drag racing the night before. They pulled up beside me as I waved them down.

“You missed a spot.” I tried to be helpful.

They didn’t catch my drift, responding instead by removing their helmets and gazing around the lake wild-eyed as if never having seen it before.

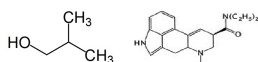
“Ohh man, I forgot how much better it looks without the visor!” The leader chuckled to his companion.

The second rider glanced at me. “Hey, how did you get past the flooded waterfall back there?”

I told him I hadn’t the faintest idea what he was talking about. “I’ve just come from an awkward social experiment gone awry. I am a budding filmmaker looking to make a big name for myself. How the hell have you been riding all night in the dark with your helmets on? It is a wonder to behold, and I should like to shoot a documentary on you both.”

I pulled out my phone and began recording their bewildered faces.

The second rider leaned over his bike and gave his friend a push in the back, gesturing towards me with a thumb in the air. “I think he’s in shock from only just surviving when that waterfall overflowed.”



The lead rider swivelled round in his seat and shot his buddy a strange look. "What fucking waterfall?! There isn't a fucking waterfall here! Is there??"

The second rider thought a moment, "Oh, I guess I imagined it. Fucken acid man."

My ears and tail perked up high in the air and my nostrils tingled as if I'd picked up the scent of a prison escapee. "You... have acid?"

"Of course we do dummy!"

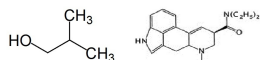
The lead rider stuffed his hand into his jeans and returned it to show me a few sheets of paper no bigger than a regular sized post-it note inside a plastic document cover. "What do you take us for?"

Before I knew what was happening, I was taking a handful of yellow notes from my wallet and handing them to this mystery rider. It was like I was watching myself from behind, I had no control over my actions. The silent interaction continued when the rider took the money from my outstretched fist and handed me one of the small sheets of paper. I examined it closely, observing it was divided up into innumerable little squares with perforated edges, each with a tiny picture of a blue duck stamped on it.

"This stuff saved our lives back there, we would've been washed away by that waterfall without it."

The second rider began to panic. "I thought you said there was no waterfall?! Is it there or not? Are we gonna drown? We have to get outta here!"

With all the commotion from those two freaks I hardly noticed a dark figure running up to us waving his arms



in the air. He was shouting at the riders. “Stay back from him! He tried to kill me! He’s insane and he wants her all for himself!”

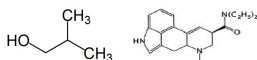
The lead rider shoved his helmet back on over his head and pointed straight at me. “You! You broke the waterfall! It’s your fault! You’ll kill us all!”

By the time I yelled ‘What the fuck are you on about?’ the second rider and Ralph had both lunged at me, knocking each other off balance. That was all the encouragement I needed to take off towards the lake, still clutching my newly purchased Class A illegal substance.

Then a cold thought washed over me – these drug-crazed psycho’s could mean the end of me.

If I was going to die there in the hands of those crusty mongrels then I was going out on top. Way up the top. I ripped my new paper in half and stuffed one piece down my throat, continuing to stumble towards the lake. A string of tiny ducklings stood on the shore, watching intently as I slowed down, wondering what to do next. My choices dwindled considerably with a strong hand coming down on my shoulder accompanied by the sound of an angry attempted murder victim.

Ralph spun me around to face himself and the riders. I didn’t even try to escape. Ralph was uttering some kind of explicit obscenities but I couldn’t compute the sounds into language. I was lost in my own thoughts. ‘This is it,’ I said to myself, ‘...I am doomed. There is no more now.’



Suddenly the right side of Ralph's face crumpled into the left side, on account of a heavy fibreglass-reinforced-with-Kevlar bike helmet swinging into it. One of the riders had literally just flipped the fuck out and now believed Ralph was me.

"We got you now you filthy waterfall-flooding motherfucker!"

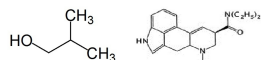
With Ralph's grip on me released, I was off on foot again doing what I do best, legging it. My parents and primary school teachers can all attest to that fact. I'm sure they can remember watching me in vain as I high-tailed it outta anywhere I didn't want to be, which was usually on holidays in some small town chalet/caravan park or at least once a week in school.

Anyway all those years of cowardly sprinting finally paid off that day at the lake. I ran. I ran and ran. Past the lake and through the trees. Through the trees and over the hill. Over the hill and under the bridge. It must have taken me half an hour before I realised I wasn't being followed anymore, but I didn't stop, I was having a great time. Under the bridge and into the tunnel. Into the tunnel and across the car park. Across the car park and around the volcano. Around the volcano and underneath the river.

It only took a few glances to notice the trees were making all that whooshing noise, not the lightly flowing river curbed by large, smooth stones and different species of wild flowers.

The grass was green.

How about that.



It was then I turned back and took a closer look at the river. "How can this river be so close to that volcano?"

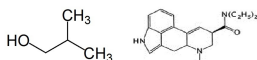
It didn't make sense to me.

I kept going, committed to my journey now more than ever. I had to make it. I had to get there. It was my mission. I came across the space shuttle landing pad.

The guards let me in after I swiped my arm with implanted microchip under the scanner to confirm my identification. After a short last minute briefing, the call sounded out.

"All hands on deck!" It was countdown to liftoff. I boarded the rocket ship and began to play the album 10,000 Days on the in-flight sound system. I borrowed some wings from Marie as the ship shot skywards, propelling me with the immense force of all mankind's accomplishments up to this date towards my target. Now I would make it on time.

My crew showed me to my quarters for the remainder of our flight. First Mate Jenny Alba was waiting for me, ready to report on my duties. She was a strange sort, a loyal soldier, a smart officer, sassy, even. Luckily throughout our careers we had held an air of pseudo-professionalism, enough to keep a lid on workplace flirtation. After all, we were in the business of galactic peacekeeping, waging war in order to prevent war, and foolish flings were tantamount to suicide. Jenny informed me we were headed to the Hybrid 24th Command Post, a top security facility housing high-level intelligence and research operations.

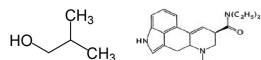


Earth had finally hit a turning point in this new millennium war. The Nordics, our blue-skinned, blue-eyed and blonde-haired allies, had successfully infiltrated an inner layer of the Hybrid intelligence network, providing our united front with security clearances into this region's top command facility. The Hybrids were the result of a genetic experiment performed by an outside, highly intelligent race of lizard-like beings from the Arcturus system. The crossing of human and Arcturial DNA resulted in a hideous deformation, a strong-bodied but weak-willed superhuman, ready to serve it's masters in the most dastardly of ways. The Arcturians were bent on destroying our race, intending to take Earth and all her resources for themselves.

Our mission was to go undercover and retrieve Hybrid attack plans and defensive protocols. If successful, this single task could decide the fate of the war.

It didn't take long to reach the Hybrid outpost and I spent what time I had rehashing my assignment. Our ship had been fitted with Hybrid cleaning contractor decals and security codes. I was to enter the base alone, posing as a sanitation officer. To convince the Surveillance Checkpoint, I had metal plates surgically installed over the left side of my face and on my right thigh, giving me the appearance of a faulty cyborg experiment gone wrong.

Hybrids regularly captured humans and attempted to transform them into cyborg slave soldiers to use against



their own kind. These cyborgs were rarely reliable enough to act as soldiers, employed instead to do the Hybrids 'dirty work'.

Well on that day their own evil plans were going to work against themselves.

Our ship descended upon the Command Post, clearing security with no problems. I disembarked with all the vigour of an almost-but-not-quite-yet-retired working class janitor, slowly dragging my cleaning trolley behind me. I made for the nearest transport vehicle; for the base was stretched over the entire surface of a large asteroid that was part of the belt in between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter.

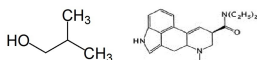
The transport swept me in and out of giant trenches lined on either side by enormous skyscraper type buildings. My vehicle entered an underground tunnel, which is where I pulled the emergency brake and set off on foot.

I had to reach the War Room, and seize whatever information was available. While I was going over my plan in my head, a peculiar sensation swamped my attention.

Before I knew it, three figures had appeared in the semi-darkness a short distance from where I stood. The strained light allowed me to distinguish the distinct dark blue skin of the Nordic intruders.

A voice protruded my consciousness. <Do not be alarmed. We are here for the same cause.>

"And what cause is that?" Telepathic communication was not new to me, but I preferred to use my human



form of speech. Some groups called that racist, but I just call those groups a bunch of ninnies.

In any case, these Nordic tunnel-dwellers should not have been there. “What are you doing here?”

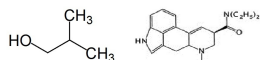
<We are here to obtain information from the War Room.> Now things were getting complicated.

“I’m afraid I can’t let you do that. This is a restricted joint military operation and you are not a part of it.” I didn’t expect that to work, but then again I didn’t expect what they said next either.

<We are not Nordic military. We are independent of your ‘alliance’. Your ignorance of certain truths endangers us all, so we must ‘take matters into our own hands’, as you humans so eloquently put it.> With that they turned and entered a side passage. <You may accompany our team if you wish.>

What choice did I have? I caught up with them just as they pried their way through a wall panel into the War Room. I immediately strode to the nearest terminal and got to work transmitting all files to the alliance network. My job done, I turned to leave, but the Nordics were pulling what looked like very old, ancient in fact, books out of a dusty wooden chest. “What are you doing now?”

<There are things more important than your intelligence gathering, human.> They finished loading the books into their packs and followed me back out into the tunnel.



“Like what, then?” It seemed pointless to ask those clearly disturbed book snatching blue aliens for more details, but things did seem a little fishy.

<Your superiors do not wish to know. It is futile to even respond to your line of inquiry.> Well that was the one and only way to get me to pay even more attention.

Before I could investigate further, however, bright lights illuminated the corridor. We were being fired at from behind. The Nord bringing up the rear of our makeshift company went down, his chest cavity scorched by laser fire.

“Fuck! Take cover!” I slammed my body against the wall, frantically searching for a place of shelter and finding none. The renegade Nordic closest to me took a step forward.

<There is something you should know-> He stopped suddenly and looked down. A small red light was flashing on the ground underneath his foot.

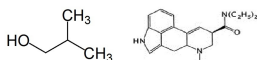
“A landmine? Now? Are you serious??”

The other Nordic turned and gave cover fire back on our assailants.

<Listen, human. What you think you know about the beings from Arcturus is wrong.> His companion fell from the enemy salvo. <The lizards are from Earth! They nest underground, where they’ve been even longer than your kind.> Our attackers were closing in now.

<YOU’VE GOT TO FIND THE PROOF! GET BACK TO YOUR HOMEWORLD! EXPOSE THE TRUTH!>

With that he lifted his foot.



“Shit!” I scrambled in the opposite direction, desperate to clear the distance before I was disintegrated along with everyone else in that tunnel. The flames from the explosion reached around me on both sides, and everything went black.

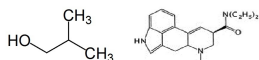
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I awoke with a wheeze and an involuntary kick of my right leg. I put my hands up to protect my face from the fireball, but the broiling heat never came. I was back in my quarters on board my ship.

My First Mate was sitting by my side, keeping watch and waiting for consciousness to return to her Commander. She explained to me how my crew had received a telepathic warning from the renegade Nords and came to rescue me. We were now hurtling back towards Earth, nearing the end of our mission.

But I had something else to do now. The Nordics had sacrificed themselves to save me, and I owed my life to them. I instructed my crew to travel back to where we first took off.

With a successful landing in the clearing the crew cheered and rejoiced in each other's arms. We had made it back to our own planet, safe and sound. The scouting party was already waiting for me at the airlock. Three of my best soldiers. We had been through thick and thin, somehow surviving the siege of Crete Island in Greece with Sanders and Marshall, and picking up



Alterz in the evacuation of Moscow. We cautiously made our way across the rough terrain, glad to be back on Earth but wary of the imminent danger at the same time. Trekking up a nearby hill hoping to get a chance to survey our surroundings, we discovered we were on the cusp of a very strange sight indeed.

I spoke to my team. "Holy shit. Those crazy dirt bikers were right! There *is* a waterfall out here!"

Sanders was in the process of taking readings while Alterz spied the landmark with her field binoculars.

"There's a dam at the base of the waterfall directing the flow into the river. There must be enough water in there to hydrate the entire city!"

I began to assign tasks. "Sanders, get down to the dam there and make sure it's stable, we don't want any surprises while we dig for the entrance to our cave.

Marshall, take the metal detector into quadrant four and start the search."

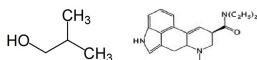
Suddenly Alterz was waving her arm wildly.

"Somebody's down there sir! It looks like they're planting something in the dam wall."

I snatched the binoculars from her grasp and took a look for myself. My vision caught sight of a man with a black helmet over his head. "Is that one of those riders?"

I thought out loud in bemusement. The rider was certainly placing something in the rock wall of the dam. Then he was running away, flailing his arms in the air at top speed. "What in the name of Moloch...?"

A huge thunderous explosion shook the ground where we stood. I caught my balance in time to watch the



giant fireball in the sky where the dam used to be dissipating. Then there was a deep blue wave of beautiful water gushing forward over the red dirt and dried up fauna. I remember thinking “well at least those trees will get something to drink,” right before I realised the direction in which the wave was headed.

“Oh shit.” I dropped the binoculars and turned to start running.

“Sir!” Marshall was shouting at me. “Where are you going?”

“Fuck this! It’s every man for himself! Run for your lives!” Drowning was not on my list of things to do that week. I bolted as fast as I could back down the hill. I knew the ship could not take off in time, so there was no point going back there. In fact, there was not much point in running at all. There was nowhere to hide.

I stopped at the foot of the hill and closed my eyes.

“Maybe it won’t take long.” My mind, ever hopeful, tried to make me feel better. “Maybe it’s not as bad as they say it is.”

Whatever the case was, it didn’t matter anymore, I could hear the sweeping doom of the wave now.

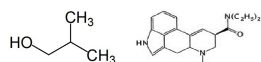
It was upon me.

In my last moments of life I tried to think of something cheerful, but all I could picture was the waterfall.

I waited for it to engulf me. I waited for a long while.

The horror I was expecting was taking it’s time, but I couldn’t open my eyes to check. I wouldn’t.

If only I’d listened to those wise riders. Then a scary thought invaded my broodings. The dirt bike riders



were trying to warn me about this waterfall before! I didn't pay attention because they were all spaced out on...

"Oh my little baby Jesus! Sweet baby Jesus up in heaven!" The acid! I'd forgotten about that.

Was this waterfall real? Then I thought about my mission. "But my crew on the ship..."

I slowly opened my eyes and gazed around my position with the awe and wonder of a newborn infant. I was standing in the middle of a busy road somewhere in Belmont. The waterfall and ship were nowhere in sight.

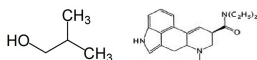
"Ah shit." I had taken myself for a ride. A ride so intense I actually believed I was on a ship in space!

The ship! Where was it? Did it get washed away?

Wait.... "Ahh I need help, and I need it before I flip out again!"

I knew there was only one person that had the expertise to deal with my present condition, and who wouldn't call the cops like the nurses might do if I went barrelling into the nearest hospital screaming about Hybrids and my lost mission.

I had to see my shaman.



## CHAPTER THREE

# SPIRITS OF THE PLANTS

I called a taxi. “A telephonist will be with you shortly.”  
“I sure could use that rocket ship right about now.” I  
chuckled to myself, and then slapped my own wrist.  
“Don’t say that shit! It’s not real! Why can’t I just see  
spiders climbing up the wall like a normal person  
hallucinating? I can handle spiders up the wall!”

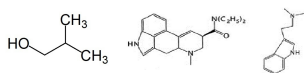
Thankfully the taxi driver didn't feel the need to ask for my life story, and he dropped me off at my car. I frantically drove the twenty minutes right to the doorstep of shaman Pete's house, taking great pains to ignore the leprechauns and chupacabras that so convincingly kept trying to enlist my help in various quests and swashbuckling adventures. Pete had been introduced to me as a man who walked with Aboriginal elders and knew many secrets of life. Now I knew him as a poker buddy and fellow hallucinogen experimenter. We'd been acquainted for a few years now, but still every time I saw him he managed to spin me out with some crazy story or wild discussion on the intricate workings of life beneath society's blinding veil. I hoped he was home. A quick knock at the door summoned his presence.

"What are you doing here dude? It's eleven o'clock at night, you know the bubs are sleepin'." A dark skinned man with long, black half-frizzled hair stood in the doorway, silhouetted by the passageway light.

"Last time I knew it was dawn! I'm sorry to impose on you like this but I'm in a spot of bother. By the way, you're not wearing a wig of live witchetty grubs are you per chance?" His head squirmed and writhed in the shadow cast on the brick wall. "Please tell me that's not YOUR REAL HAIR!!"

"Sshh! Calm down, there's no grubs on my head! And be quiet or you'll wake the little ones."

"Oh man I am *seeing shit Pete!* I took a fuckload of acid and I've just come back from an intergalactic war please





help me I don't know what to do the waterfall disappeared and now—

Pete put his hand on my shoulder. "Fuck me, come inside."

I followed his lead, accidentally letting the screen door slam behind me. A loud wailing sound began to emanate from inside the house.

"You've angered the spirits now. We'd better go out the back." Pete gestured for me to silently exit his kitchen.

"Don't joke about that shit man!" I whispered. "There's no telling what I'll see if you get me thinkin' about spirits." I edged past him and his wriggling head, keeping my distance just in case.

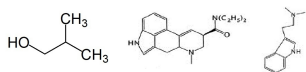
I walked all the way out across his back lawn and into the shed filled with couches and an old poker table where I waited for Pete to calm his house down again. He returned not too long afterwards, updating me on his wife's baby juggling progress. "You'd better stay away from her just now."

"I would love to Pete, believe me. I don't think I could handle any crying bambinos at this particular moment." I gripped the arm of a nearby chair as I tried to explain what had befallen me that day.

"That's a lot of chemicals bubbling around in your system." Pete rested his chin on his hand, pondering my predicament.

"Please don't use the word 'bubbling' anymore," I asked, "... it scares me."

There were many shiny objects on the table in front of me, leftover materials from Pete's jewellery making side-



business. There were precious stones such as Opals and Sapphires, Quartz crystals and Amethyst.

I began gathering them all up in my arms. "Why didn't you tell me you had these here?? Do you know how long I've been searching for them? They're the keys to Ashtar Command! They will save us all!"

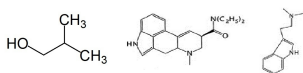
Pete stood up and went to a cupboard in the far corner of the shed. "I think I know what will calm you down." He produced a small clear plastic bag filled with yellowish-white powder. "I stashed this in here because it's too weak to use on its own. But you've had enough acid to make a dog start standing on it's hind legs while reciting Shakespeare so it may just work."

"I told you to stop saying these things to me! No more imagery please you bastard! Just fix me and send me home!" I took the bong Pete handed to me. It was filled with weed, and the powder was lightly sprinkled on top. I toked until there was no more. "What is the name of this special mixture then?"

Pete looked me dead in the eye and smiled. "It's time for you to take the Business Man's Lunch Trip."

"Holy fuck!" I choked on my own saliva. "What have you done you crazy bushman?? Stop smiling at me you evil inbred monster!" A chain of events was now in motion that would keep my physical body incapacitated for several hours.

I had just smoked DMT, the Spirit Molecule, the magikal substance with the potential to propel my being into other dimensions. And I came here for help.



"That's it. You know those nightmare stories on the news when some idiot flips out on hard drugs and kills a bunch of people?" I pointed at Pete with forceful conviction. "Well tonight that's me and the first victim is gonna be you."

"Sit down and shut up." Pete instructed me to lie back and close my eyes. This will help, he reassured me.

I had no choice.

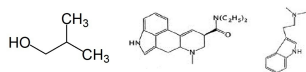
I lay back on a couch and shut the outside world out. I was instantly aware of multi-coloured patterns vibrating and pulsating on the inside of my eyelids. "I swear Pete, if I start screaming and throwing my own shit everywhere I will hold you personally respo—"

"Shut the fuck up and let the spirit of the plant guide you."

I concentrated on the patterns. Some swirled and some streamed, like rivers flowing across my mind's eye.

Suddenly I saw a transparent canoe way off in the distance. It was getting closer. There was a naked, also transparent lady with billowing brown hair standing inside, steering the craft with an oar. She floated right up close and then drew a long, slow semi-circle around in front of me and back the way she came, beckoning me to follow with her hand the whole time.

As hard as I tried, I couldn't move. She kept moving away, getting smaller and smaller, eventually fading away into the background patterns. The sense of loss I felt was so immense, second only to the agony felt over my recent broken relationship's status.



I commanded my eyes to open. "Where did she go?"  
Pete would know.

He chortled knowingly and gave me the bong. "Would  
you like to see her again?"

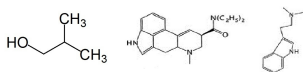
"Yes please." I inhaled.

This time as soon as the smoke left my lungs my limbs  
went limp. I dropped the water pipe, safely, I might  
add, into Pete's expecting hands. I came careening back  
down on the couch and all external stimuli vanished  
from my conscious awareness.

I saw the patterns again, more intense and flowing  
around an invisible circuit board. The whole scene  
seemed to breathe as if it was alive. But the woman was  
not there.

I willed myself to move forward, in the direction her  
canoe was headed. I found it very easy and surged  
ahead. Too fast, in fact. The patterns moved closer and  
closer, and suddenly they were all around me, racing  
past at incredible speed. All I could do at that point was  
watch this happening to me.

The patterns continued to fly by, geometrically melding  
into one another and forming first individual straight  
lines, then those lines melded and all the colours of an  
artist's palette filled my vision. The colours interwove  
and shone brighter and brighter, until a piercing white  
light enveloped me and I wept like a little schoolgirl. It  
felt like all the vibrations of reality were speeding up,  
creating a thunderous, calamitous, devastating and  
ruinous cacophony of noise. It was as if every sound  
that ever existed in the known universe all came



together at once, resonating faster and louder, surrounding and penetrating, rising to a point, a crescendo, rising and rising, until everything just stopped.

The world as I knew it was gone.

I, as I knew me, was no more.

'I' was an insufficient description altogether, I was not just me. I was one part, connected to the whole.

Connected to every other 'I', every other living scrap of existence, as I always was, except now I could feel it.

I found myself in an environment made of pure white light, although not as bright as before. I felt incredibly still, and calm. This was my centre, my origin, the state I would be in without all the guilt and bullshit feelings I had accumulated over my lifespan. I was free, but better yet, I knew I had always been free.

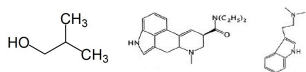
I saw a figure materialise in front of me. It was the woman from the canoe, this time in a much more corporeal form. I was overjoyed as she moved closer to me.

"You should not be here yet." Her rough monotonous speech rattled me. "There are things inside you must face first."

I told her I didn't want to leave, and that made her top lip curl up. "YOU HAVE NO CHOICE!"

She touched my forehead, and I felt a shift. The scene changed instantly, and now I was standing at a glass sliding door.

I felt less. Less connected to this place. Everything was dull, the bright white light was confined now to a mix



of dark browns and greys. I was standing in front of a small structure. It looked like a bigger version of the little dongas they cram the contractors in when they fly out bush to mine for ore.

I thought, "This is familiar." And then I realised it was the little granny flat my ex-girlfriend used to live in.

"Okay..." This was not somewhere on the top of my list of places to be, but I still opened the glass door and went inside. The place was untouched, exactly as I remembered it. No one was around, so I turned to leave.

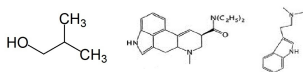
Looking down outside the glass door I saw something through the pavement. It was like peering down into a deep sinkhole. I saw the girl that used to live here, that girl that had caused me so much trouble this past year. Beside her was her family, even her little dog, all staring back up at me disapprovingly.

Why was I seeing this? I had dealt with all this months ago, experiencing the typical rite of passage expectant to all members of an ended relationship.

Well, I hadn't dealt with it per se.

It had taken me to the point of insanity, and I'd finally switched from 'I can still save this' mode to 'I just want it to go away now' mode. I locked it all up, boarded it shut in an attempt to give me time to find my feet again.

Then it was like the dam burst, and all those sick and twisted emotions came flooding back, washing over my feelings until there was nothing but the sadness I wallowed in when she told me this isn't working.



The guilt was so horrible, it was inescapable.

I wanted to run, I wanted to snuff out the light that shone on me, I wanted to cut my own fucking head off, anything to get away from this. It was my fault, I fucked up. I had everything I wanted and lost it. I lost her.

Where did I go wrong? It didn't matter; there was nothing I could do about it. That thought felt especially cold.

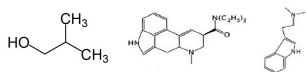
She didn't care, she never really cared about all of this that I thought we had between us. I was so shocked, I felt we shared something, but she showed me that something didn't exist. I was smothered by this terrible feeling. I felt worthless.

I felt that, fundamentally, life had taken a great big shit on me. I stood back and pleaded with life itself. I was sorry. I didn't know why it was wrong, but I'd try not to do it again. I'd stay away.

If I didn't ask for anything then I'd never be disappointed. I'd never miss out. I just wanted to do the right thing.

But it was all wrong. She didn't care?

I remembered thinking that particular thought over and over on a turntable of adamant belief that soaked through every other thought, belief, emotion and memory I had of her. Of course she cared! Why was I thinking this shit?



The answer was so bleedingly obvious it was painful to realise.

Depression has a way of finding a single dark misconstrued contemplation and amplifying it to encompass your entire life. And depressed I was, blatantly flagrant and inexorably merciless.

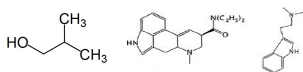
The blocked memories returned to me. This previous year I had begun to seriously think about the future, what I wanted my life to include and the kind of work I was actually suited for. Becoming involved with this young woman had awoken in me the desire to live my life the way I wanted to, instead of going with the flow and taking too many immediate luxuries. I'd never found an occupation that really interested me, so I'd always left it until later, speculating that one day I would know enough about myself to find the right path. Trouble was I had left it too long.

I looked back too much and felt regret at all the 'wasted time'. I reflected too much, getting to the point where I'd deluded myself into believing I was a complete loser.

I worried my newfound partner would one day have had enough of this loser and I would lose her. The devastating irony was I worried so much about losing her that I spiralled down and down into an amazingly deep depression which caused me to close up and retreat inside my cave.

I tried to hide my faults, but instead hid everything, and there was only one way it could be undone.

A catalyst, a severe wake up call was sounded in the form of my girlfriend breaking up with me. At the time





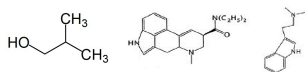
I believed she was the only light in my life, and I didn't understand. Messy, messy situations unfolded that only added to my sad mental state.

During that spiritual experience on a couch in Pete's shed I could finally see the truth, that I desperately needed that wake up call.

There is a certain kind of deeper anguish about knowing you have irreversibly fucked things up because you dwelled on something that never actually existed in the first place. And because of the abominably hideous nature of deep depression all you can do is watch as you make situations worse and worse with every good intentioned action you are compelled to take to try and make it all better.

These twisted thoughts were the basis for what was to become my new paradigm.

I was transported back again. This time it wasn't physical, instead I was swept in and out of the different frames of mind that had occupied my person over the last few months. I regressed back through the anger, then the helplessness, then some more guilt thrown in just for good measure. Finally the initial sadness returned to the foray and I remembered just how much emotion I'd bottled up. Strangely, I was no longer a slave to these emotions, I was a degree removed, an observer, witnessing these thoughts clouding my judgement. I could take a step back and watch myself deliberate endlessly, trying to rationalise my newfound



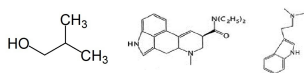
situation and make sense of it. I saw how I had tortured myself over and over day and night for weeks on end, digging a deep hole of despair, where the normal and structured world I used to have became unfathomable. I'd dragged myself kicking and screaming to the edge of the cliff, the wits-end, the first step over the parapet, and I'd given up. Throwing my hands up in the air in complete desperation, I'd chosen to give up and focus on my own mental health. I realised that all was lost, and now I had to carry on alone. So I stacked up the guilt, of having lost that happiness, the sorrow, and the anger at the unfairness of it all, and I pushed it under the carpet that lined my sanity inside my mind.

I even knew at the time I was doing myself damage, creating future problems by hiding from these ones without dealing with them, but I didn't care. Anything to escape that horrible depression was acceptable. It dawned on me that I was being shown a problem I had to work through.

A hanging sense of guidance permeated the air around me, making it feel thick and heavy. I vaguely recalled that I had taken a hefty dose of DMT, and that comforted me. This plant that had captivated many ancient civilisations before our time knew exactly what I needed to do. Sanitation of the mind, back to sanity. A spiritual cleanse. Cleanliness is next to godliness...! Ha!

Indeed.

With that thought I felt much better, and became aware again of my surroundings. Once again I was in a



different place. It was a dark warehouse. Huge in fact, although walls were built all throughout, partitioning off hundreds of small sections and passageways, creating a kind of maze the likes of which it looked to me I would have to traverse if I was ever to leave again.

“Am I actually standing inside the recesses of my mind?” I half joked/wondered out loud to myself.

Something stirred deeper inside the maze and I could hear an obscure mumbling emanating from the left of the main pathway in front of me.

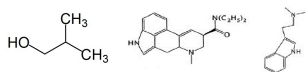
“All the traps in the cellar go clickety clack ‘cause you know I always set ‘em for you...”

A shadowed silhouette of a man slinked around the corner about a hundred metres down the path.

He was shouting something at me. “Give me the altar, red will shine. The pendulum won’t wait!” I’d never heard a man speak like that man before but, even though I couldn’t decipher his exact meaning, I could infer from the way he was swinging his scythe in my direction whatever he was saying didn’t bode well for me.

My eyes widened involuntarily. Who in the fuck was this? It was more than I could handle after becoming so emotionally depleted. The Fear began to place it’s hands around my psyche. Slowly the man crept forward towards me, and with every step he took a feeling of dread grew deeper in the pit of my stomach. I tried to get a glimpse of his face, but there was none.

He was a shadow, featureless, an empty vessel making a very loud noise.

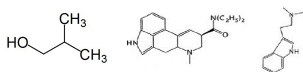


I turned to run, not caring where. The walls opened up and swallowed me. I ran, in any direction, first this way then that, but it didn't matter, the Shadowman always knew where I was. I would stop to catch my breath, and then there he would be, dragging his scythe all the while.

Was he going to kill me? Is this like a falling dream, where if you hit the pavement before you wake up then you die in real life too? Could this anonymous assailant end my time on this universal plane of existence?

I didn't want to find out, but there was nowhere to go. I'd been accumulating the ability to face my impending doom with some amount of courage throughout these little adventures of mine of the last few days, and so, not knowing if that was the reason or if it was my uncanny ability to make the absolute worst decisions concerning my own health and wellbeing, I stopped running. The man slinked closer to me, like a vile substance oozing down the dark pathway ready to saturate my being in distress and affliction.

Now my fate was sealed. If this abstruse character intended to end my life he would encounter no resistance. I was sure he was a manifestation of my internal anguish. The super strong emotions of grief, loss, and complete sadness over splitting from my girlfriend that I'd locked away had spent their time festering and blackening my subconscious, returning to me now in the form of some crazed serial killing madman demanding my complete attention. It was



time to stop running from my past before it created a schism in my mind too deep to iron out.

I suddenly understood what this was all about. These subconscious emotions were affecting my conscious actions. It was evident in the way I spoke to any female now, even basic conversations could fill me with overwhelming anxiety. I thought I was better; I was no longer depressed, but I was not moving forward in any capacity either. I'd unknowingly trapped myself in a dead world, void of all emotion, because it was my feelings that had caused all of this insane sadness. The arcane wisdom of the spirit of the plant whose chemical makeup was coursing through my brain became apparent to me. It was time to deal with this, so I could grow and move on. And as I grasped this concept the scary man with the giant blade dematerialised before my eyes, his purpose fulfilled.

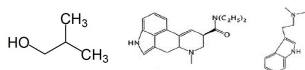
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I opened my eyes. The distinct smell of Pete's dank shed returned to my senses. It was over.

Pete noticed me stirring. "You're back."

Looking up at him, the words to describe anything at all eluded me. "...I..."

"It's okay, don't have to say anything. You've been lying there for five hours stiff as a board with your eyes closed." Pete fondled his left wrist. "Except for about an hour ago when you opened your eyes and almost



snapped my arm off screaming for me to stop chasing you with a scythe.”

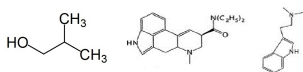
“I did that? Sorry. I *was* being chased, though.” The amusement of Pete’s semi-injury kicked my vocabulary back into action. “It showed me my thoughts, my feelings, it helped me put it all in perspective. This is nature’s psychiatrist.”

“Wow that’s interesting.” Pete walked over to me. “Can you stand?”

I put one leg over the side of the couch, then the other leg, and I pulled myself into the upright position. “Yes, I do believe I can.”

“Ah good.” Pete stood back. “Now grab your shit and get lost. I’m tired.”

And with that my shaman sent me home, prescribing lots of rest for several days, unless irreversible psychological damage was a new year’s resolution of mine.



CHAPTER FOUR

INTERNÁLIS

I'm not sure how long I was standing there, staring at my reflection in the floor to ceiling window in my backyard. I'm not even sure how I'd managed to drive home that morning. I was also not too sure if I'd been ogling myself this whole time, or if I'd walked away and run some other errands and come back again without realising it. I was dazed, and had been caught by my

enchancing image, swaying back and forth in the cool breeze without a single thought passing through my mind. I was suddenly reminded of Sybil Dorsett and her lost time.

“What the hell was I doing?” I thought to myself.

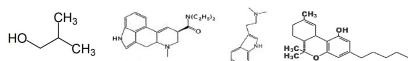
“Goddamnit, if I’m not going to sleep again then I’m going to enjoy myself! I don’t care anymore; I’m going to the beach!”

One of my favourite pastimes of the last two months was to take an hour long drive to South Beach, on the shores of Fremantle, and get incredibly stoned in the blinding hot sun while drinking cider and listening to The John Butler Trio live in concert. Of course I would chop and change, replacing the Trio with Pegz or The Cat Empire but Mr Butler never failed to remind me of the immense beauty of all things.

So it was, inspired by the promise of tranquil happiness, I began to gather supplies for the journey.

Essential to the plan was my small pipe with the large cone piece I had bought several years earlier for the express purpose of smoking DMT. I kept it in a nice, professional looking black case originally intended for a glass crack pipe but after the owner had broken it he had been kind enough to bequeath the case to me.

In that went to a large cloth supermarket shopping bag along with two beach towels, headphones, and my special hemp sunscreen. Donning my thongs, it was off to make a pit-stop to pick up a bag of lollipops, a box of Jatz biscuits and two long neck bottles of organic apple cider. With my supplies in the passenger seat and



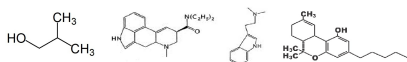
myself at the helm, my small four door burgundy 'hairstresser's car', as my Irish compadres so lovingly and with great respect used to call it, disembarked and set sail down the highway towards Fremantle, the life and soul of the city of Perth. I glanced down at the seat beside me and, seeing my little black case that held the instrument that would allow me to suspend reality for another short spell, I thought of a *letter* I once wrote to a dear friend back in a time when sleep was even more inevitable than my present impasse.

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27/07/07

Dear Domenic,

There is not much that you are allowed to say regarding the official police and justice systems. When you do say something, it is usually because you yourself have been wronged and wish to exact vengeance or at least get yourself off the hook. For space reasons we will call the police and justice systems simply the 'beasts'. Rare is the case of a person (with a heart) who stands up against these beasts and speaks for human rights of their own accord, without a catalyst. Take me for example, I have lots of things to say about the police and justice scams, but I have a selfish reason. I believe I have been wronged. Some people I know have other opinions and their own words to express, but they, also, have



regarded their treatment by these beasts as 'unsavoury' and 'not right'.

When you think about it, is there not one person who has negative thoughts of these beasts who hasn't been 'touched' by them in some way?

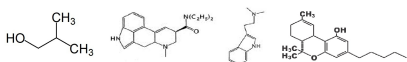
I guess what I'm trying to say is there are a hell of a lot of people who believe they have been 'hard done by' by the beasts. And I am one of them. And if you don't listen to what I have to say then I will turn you in to the beasts and denounce you as a terrorist. It would be infinitely simple. Then you would pay. SO LISTEN. Actually it's not that interesting. Let's talk of something else.

Let's reflect on last month's effort and enjoy the splendid conversation of a madman. For that is what I am. Or at least what I should be, for staying in my house is an unbelievably silly act.

The two beings I live with can testify to that. Willingly. Just last week after a hard day at work they came home and did what anyone would do with a strong craving for alcohol, snort a line of vodka.

But vodka is liquid, I hear your thoughts scream. Yes, it is not a solid based entity. But they snuffed it anyway. So now you may have a vague idea of how things went down three weeks ago after the hole in the kitchen wall had finally been covered up. Rent inspections are nasty things.

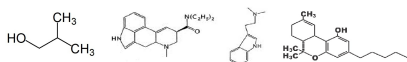
Having made ready my bed and propped a large cushion up against the head so I may sit up and read, and set up the little ashtray on my bedside table and



stuffed a bed sheet under the crack of the door so the smoke wouldn't creep out into the rest of the house and ignite a fire inside the mind of the black voodoo-magic-wielding one, who does not allow tobacco to be smoked inside the house, except mixed with a special herb and placed in a certain object filled with water (fucking hypocrite); I was about to relax. I thought of the phone call I had with the black one only three hours ago. He had said that he and Skip were going to the pub around the corner, and will be back later. Using my special oracle powers of experience I predicted a very long night for them, and myself, if I didn't get into bed and lock the damn door. Fall asleep and hopefully dream of lilies and daisies while they smash their heads against my bedroom door, trying to wake me from my terrified slumber. But, alas, I was too slow and instead of being safely locked up inside my bedroom prison, I was lying on the couch in the "lounge room" when they crashed through the front door, unable to stand on both legs and ready to perform illegal acts of indecency against the moral fibres of our society.

I had witnessed these things before – at one stage it was a daily occurrence – and it doesn't bother me, except when it keeps me awake at times I do not wish to be conscious.

Seeing the things I've seen, like an African curled up in a corner on the floor because he exposed himself to a pedestal fan with the grating off and tried to stop the blades from spinning, it can get to you.



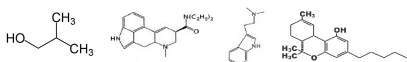
But why not, you ask? It worked with his tongue, and chin. It hurt a little more with the eyebrows but that is all part of drunken experimenting.

What I'm trying to say is when you see your housemates taking every globe in the house and smashing them, or dropping half of them on account of the liquor involved... you get used to it. Especially when you are normally the main instigator, taking matters into your own hands and harvesting globes from the ceiling crop, cultivating smoking implements and facilitating criminal acts. But not this night. As soon as these events surfaced I knew I had to lock myself in my room, or I wouldn't be sitting here in this classroom today, I'd be watching (for the fifth time) the entire fourth season of Family Guy.

What followed from there is something 'That which we do not speak'. It is too frightening to even recall the recessed memories in my cached mind. All that needs to be known is the next day the house had transformed into a cess pool of negative energy and luciferic consciousness.

And without being too much more detailed I will leave this seat and possibly read about suppressed inventions until I smoke my last cigarette I can afford this week then jump off the Swan River bridge onto a pile of rocks. Nicotine withdrawals are considerably worse for me than the average 'Joe'.

Have fun with the fish, but I have heard that if you recite certain poems and phrases close to the glass of the



tank, they will transform and take the shape of... just don't do it.

Bah.

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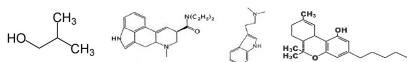
My reminiscence lost its hold on my attention as I dissociatively pulled into the car park and switched off the engine. My beach was metres away, ready and waiting to become the venue for my rehabilitation ritual. I was parked in between two large tourist vans, empty of course, and perfect cover for stage one of the ritual: the smoking of the ceremonial herb that coincidentally allows increased relaxation and overall enjoyment of the senses, funnily enough.

I knew I was doing the wrong thing. I knew that being in a state of uncontrollable delightfulness and heightened introspective thinking was a danger to society. Why else would this plant be illegal?

And knowing all this I still did it anyway. Why did I ignore the directive given to me by the authorities who govern my society? Because fuck them, that's why.

If that argument seems irrational to you, that is only because you have thought very little on these matters.

There are innumerable arguments that can support my view, but they all boil down to personal choice. As a modern philosopher by the name of Bill Hicks once said: "What business is it of yours what I do, read, buy, see or take into my body as long as I don't harm another human being whilst on this planet? And for



those of you having a little moral dilemma on how to answer this, I'll answer for you: **NONE OF YOUR FUCKING BUSINESS!** Take that to the bank, cash it and take it on a vacation outta my fucking life.”

So it was I inhaled enough illegal smoke to shut out the rest of the world, bringing the most basic of sensory information to my immediate concentration.

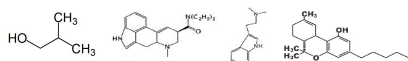
One of the most awesome things about becoming high on marijuana is everything seems new again. You can watch a movie you've seen a thousand times and laugh like you've never heard of a comedy film before. You can eat pretty much any kind of food and be completely captivated by how good it tastes, regardless of how many times you've tasted it before.

Immersing yourself in the ocean feels great, but you've done it many times in the past, and the initial wonderment of feeling the cold liquid on every inch of your skin has worn off. Not so when you're stoned, which is precisely what I was when I dumped my bag of supplies on the sand and headed to the blue water.

The exhilaration is intoxicating, it's so pleasurable it is overwhelming, and sometimes you wonder if you can make it back to the shore before you forget how to keep afloat.

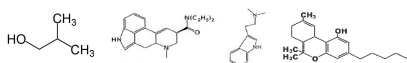
You have to concentrate really hard!

Especially when you've been awake for three days and seemingly tried to overdose on alcohol and certain psychedelic substances. I figured a quick dip was more than dangerous enough for my exploits so I trudged



back up the beach and fell face up on my towel. Wrapping my headphones around my head I began to listen to my South Beach playlist, taking a big gulp of cider as I continued to wait for my eyes to adjust to the bright sunlight reflecting off the pure white sand. I watched some people stand in the water. They were frozen solid, staring into the water, most probably wondering if they just saw a transparent jellyfish. Should they go in? Is anyone watching me? Do they know I'm hesitating? I've walked all the way out here to the water from the sand, I can't just go back now I'll look stupid! But I know I saw something in there... It's too cold! Yes, it is too cold, so I need not go in. That is what I will say if anyone asks.

I used to think I went to the beach to see the beautiful women of Freo in their best bikinis. But I've since realised I always end up staring at the family dogs racing everywhere, brought here to this pet-friendly shore. Just now I've been gawking at a hairy brown dog digging a dead tree branch out of the sand and bouncing around it as if everyone else should know about it. The dog dug underneath the branch, as far as his paws could reach with his hind legs sprawled out on the sand. Then he sat motionless for a while, perhaps wondering why he was halfway underground, then stuck his head up with a huge grin and sand stuck to his face, looking around as if to see if anyone else had witnessed his ridiculousness. And then, instantly forgetting the past



two minutes, take off like a shot to the other end of the beach and back again.

I took a cigarette out of my packet and lit it, knowing exactly how that hairy brown dog felt.

BUT... there always comes a time when more fuel is required. It's usually when the first long-neck of cider is nearing the end of its usefulness.

About that time you've smoked at least three cigarettes while lying in the sun with your eyes closed. Captivated by that bright yellow glow shining behind your eyelids. That glow may just be the main reason you come here. Why you pack a bag with towels, pot, and cider, and drag yourself down to the beach to bake in the sun while baked. All that preparation just for the weed to wear off halfway through your morning holiday.

Now the question stands tall: Do you pack up your things, walk all the way back to the car just to have a pipe in the backseat? Or do you just leave early?

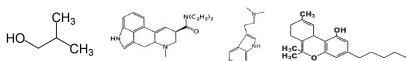
No! There must be another way! You can't let this small hiccup defeat you!

You look around, hoping some object in your field of vision will trigger an idea to appear. Your eyes come to rest on the corner of your towel on the sand that keeps getting blown back onto itself by the wind.

Of course! It's too windy!

Too windy to light a cigarette, so one must put up a wind shield just to light up!

Of course this is believable, it's perfectly logical. You tuck one side of the towel underneath your beach bag,



and flick the other end over your shoulder, creating a tiny private booth, just for your face, which you plunge into your bag. Digging around, you manage to sprinkle some green leaf into your small pipe, resting on the bottom of the bag. Leaning right over, you light the pipe and suck on the end, taking exactly six seconds to choke and cough green smoke all over the place. You quickly light a smoke then pop your head out of cover and look around. A family of five are staring at you. The mum laughs. You try to laugh, but choke again. Shit. Turn head. Take sip of cider. Mouth lyrics to song playing on headphones. Is she still looking? Nope, she's gone, and now the coast is literally clear.

A smile took it's rightful place on my face, below the nose and above the chin, ear to ear.

I felt like a baby, the warmth of the sun toasted my whole body and I was happier than a middle-class employee on holiday.

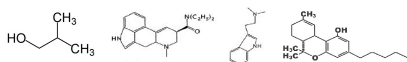
"This is it," I decided, "...I am gonna pass out right here right now. I don't care where I am."

This decision overjoyed me. The pain of no sleep could now pass, I was out of the woods.

As soon as I had felt this, my phone rang. I slowly took it out of my bag and stared at it in disbelief.

Work. Work! They were calling!

A wave of panic washed over me quite unlike the gentle wave of euphoria I'd had not minutes before. I worked as a casual night-shift patient carer for a health care agency. That meant I was on call indefinitely. Meaning



I didn't know if I was working until I received a phone call from the office each day. Which meant when they called, you had better pick up, or the office girls may develop a stigma towards your phone number and cease to call it.

The pressures of rent and the paying of other nice and fun bills were too powerful. I answered the call.

A shift in a hospital sixty minutes away from my current location had my name on it. I was to report to the head nurse at twenty one hundred hours, leaving me with three hours to myself after travelling home to get ready. Not enough time for sleep, as I knew full well from extensive personal experience. If I slept now, I knew, I would not be returning to the realm of consciousness for possibly an entire day, therefore losing my job, with my house becoming my former address as a result.

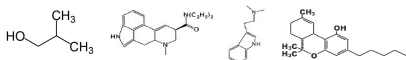
My only choice was to get to the hospital, although for a different reason than a sane man's logic would suggest.

For the first twenty minutes of my drive home I was filled with rage.

Three hours later I was all smiles and handshakes as I pulled into the hospital car park.

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Entering the building, I had to sign in before my shift began. This proved to be a very difficult task indeed. I thought I had everything under control, until I put pen



to paper. That's when I discovered I'd forgotten how to fill out my time-sheet.

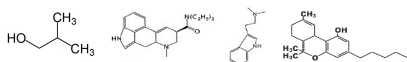
I stood there a while, contemplating whether to ask someone for help or flee as fast as I could, kicking up a cloud of dust in my wake. Thankfully I was able to watch another agency employee who'd walked in to fill out her form. I copied her as best I could, drawing a messy spiral scribble in place of my forgotten signature. My next stop was the West Wing, home of the infamous Room 30, which was my destination for the next nine hours.

Walking past Room 30's dedicated bathroom an unusual sight caught my attention. A young man with an identical uniform to mine was standing in front of the mirror, flexing his muscles and pursing his lips. He was completely oblivious to my presence until I gave a quick "Heya!" and he jumped back.

"How long...? Uhh hi, I'm Dasehra. You must be relieving me. I'll give you the handover." He led me into the room.

Six beds lined the walls, three on the right, three on the left. This was the room where the wanderers were sent to be watched over twenty-four/seven. Dementia. As bad as any other medical condition you can think of, it is an irreversible disease of the mind, causing brain cells to wither and die without being replaced. Everything from long term and short term memory to motor control suffers from it.

A patient with dementia will stand there and argue with you until they are blue in the face that of course it is



1961 and yes you are trespassing on their private property.

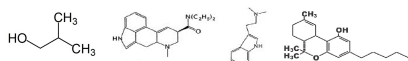
My own thoughts tend to scrape the bottom of a very dark barrel on this issue. Optimism is a luxury that can be very hard to reach for someone in my line of work. Not many people can say they work with the 'walking dead', but that is the way some see it. At this point in time there is no return from this disease. All you can do is excruciatingly watch as a loved one slowly loses all their memories and mental faculties and eventually passes away.

Perhaps this horrible 'truth' is why some workers in this industry can seem detached and almost cold-hearted. It takes an extremely beneficent guardian angel superhero to deal with the heart-wrenching drama that unfolds in one single shift in a hospital without breaking down and weeping for humanity.

A defence mechanism is required to shut off some of your emotions just to be able to function in your role as a health professional.

One of my worrisome thoughts that continuously stream through my head during my hospital visits is the question of my own fate.

If I somehow reach the age considered to be 'elderly', will I have the good fortune to forget every thing past my ninth birthday and be forced to wear adult diapers while someone shovels thickened porridge into my gob because I've lost the ability to do it myself? Will someone one day have to physically take me to the bathroom and watch me relieve myself in case I forget



what the toilet looks like and make a mess all over the walls and floor? These questions haunt me when I am sleep deprived on night shift and vulnerable to depressive thought mania.

How can you defend yourself against ending up this way?

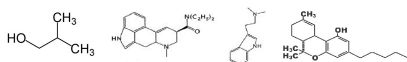
Can you find someone to make a pact with who will 'take care' of you when your mind is completely gone and you're just running on autopilot? Is this why people have children? Is this the reason why procreation is so important to the individual? The need to have your own flesh and blood to watch over you in your last days must be encoded in some inherited molecule somewhere in every newborn. Is there a legal contract that can ensure you don't spend the last years of your life like a caged animal because you can no longer think for yourself?

These are dark thoughts indeed, especially when you are seated in a dark room surrounded by patients unable to walk without falling and breaking a number of bones but who insist they are fine and attempt to walk all the same.

This was where I found myself that night, in my frighteningly intoxicated state.

"This is Mr Harding, he'll be your charge tonight."

Dasehra warmly introduced me to the eighty-six year old Croatian man in Bed F. "He is fine until he wants to leave here and go home, which is about every three minutes."



Dasehra pointed to an African woman seated on a chair next to the front door. “You’ll need to work with your co-companion, one takes care of Mr Harding while the other helps the rest. This is Ana, who got here about five minutes ago.”

Ana was already fast asleep.

“Well, good luck!” Dasehra was out of the door before I could find something to lean on so the room would stop spinning long enough for me to ask him any questions.

I was on my own.

“Water!” I spun around to find that Mr Harding was on his feet, shaking uncontrollably, his arms outstretched into empty space.

I handed him his cup of water. He said “Th-thankyou v-v-very much,” then proceeded to place the cup on the floor and rummage through the bin.

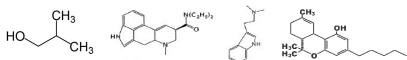
Finding a used Styrofoam cup, Mr Harding began filling it from the hot water tap over the sink.

“That’s going to burn your insides mate.” I tried to take the cup before he became a poster child for infection control.

“NO!” He wasn’t having any of that, throwing the hot water in my face and grabbing my shirt. Searing pain was the price paid for my slow reaction time.

I squirmed and twisted away from him, calling out to the nurse in a frantic voice. “CODE BLACK!”

Two security guards appeared within thirty seconds, restraining Mr Harding while the nurse pumped sedatives into his right arm’s IV line. I felt my features,



my panic becoming alleviated to discover my skin was not melting off my face.

"Night, night, Mr Harding." I waved goodbye to him as his head floated back on the bed. He was out, and I was free. Security left the room, and I went to high-five my co-companion.

She was still fast asleep.

"Oh well," I thought to myself, "...there's two less eyes watching me!"

Pulling out my notepad to try and take my mind off my scolding face, I settled in for what looked like a very long night ahead.

Here follows the pages from my notepad that night, well, the ones that make some kind of sense anyway:

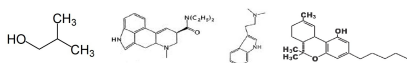
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I speak in specialised generalisations.

A sort of smokescreen for my thoughts on the way humans behave so as not to offend the slightly more irrational types, the ones who may 'fly off the handle' when confronted with some dope who is effectively placing them in a pigeon hole with horrid labels and no clear exit but to stand and fight.

Take, for instance, if I was to say to Peter "Look, Peter, women think very different to men. They are hardwired in another way. Basically they are fucked in the head."

Now Jane, who is standing next to Peter, has taken this generalised statement as a highly personal insult, as though if we were all having this conversation one



thousand years ago I would have been smart to have been carrying my newly repaired iron shield and recently sharpened steel sword before committing those words to the verbal record.

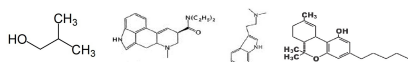
This is where the situation turns nasty. The bells and whistles of feigned normalcy and cordial banter have unglued themselves from the dying wreath of decency and taken off down the shortest path explaining to all they encounter along the way that their services are no longer required. There is no need now to disguise the surreptitious harsh realities behind forged social politeness.

We have transgressed back down to the level of beasts. I have attacked poor Jane, placing chains on her freedom of thought, implying to Peter that there are limits to her greatness, and now she must *respond*.

The ensuing barrage of mixed emotional and intelligent retorts combined with some of her own personal insults are exactly what I expect from any person I interact with on a daily basis that is exposed to my thought processes, and exactly that which I aim to avoid.

Which is why I speak ‘with regard to *my* experiences, and *my* point of view’.

Let us think, now, if I was to say to Peter “Look, Peter, what I have found, personally, is that I think very differently to the women I’ve had close contact with. It’s like I have been totally unlucky enough to have only been paired with women (except for one) who disagree completely with me! This is just what I have found, personally.”



It doesn't hurt to put my hands up and half shrug either, complimenting my outward appearance of slight submission and disarmament.

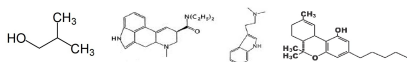
Now, you see, the words I have spoken were not delivered with normal breath, no, they were totally encompassed in pacifying smoke, creating a screen the likes of which Jane is not prepared for. The original meaning of my words are coated in a highly toxic blend of self-persecution and apparent observational research, creating a very large barrier for Jane to climb if she wishes to disagree.

Will she add to my feeling of failure by saying "Well that's just you."? Or will she outright try to tell me that I am wrong on the basis that not every woman is like the ones I have encountered? Except we are talking about me here, this is only what I have found, personally, and who are you, Jane, to deny that? I have now successfully expressed my general opinion, without causing my fellow conversationalists to backfoot and attack my thoughts instead of accepting them as my personal theories and not trying to change them.

My autonomusness remains protected!

The only problem is Peter as well as Jane is most likely fooled by this whole charade as well, so the message has not been delivered and therefore the entire conversation has served the same purpose as staying silent.

~~~~~



Yes, well, that was the first veritable tangent I have allowed myself in a long while.

And no wonder.

Constantly reading materials on Psychology and the workings of the mind as I have been of late sets you off trying to discover the workings of your own mind, and this can cause one of two things.

Either you dwell too much on your inner patternistic thoughts and realise how different they actually are to the way you always thought they were, eventually caving the walls of your mind in that kept your crazy and deluded self separate from the watchful eyes of society, eventuating in a complete collapse, a 'fall from social grace', your place on the rung of society's step ladder disintegrating, all you've built in the way of social security crumbles, suddenly they SEE YOU!

The Fear creeps into your very existence.

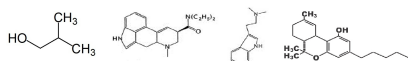
You are FOUND! Found out and exposed.

Now there is no going back, they will always know the truth about you. You will never be able to pretend you are normal like them. There goes the light banter at christmas dinner.

There is no place for you now. Now they know.

Only one option remains: Return.

Return to that world from whence you came. The world you love and hate in the same instance. The world full of horrors, but they are your horrors. They are of your own making, and thus you can handle it. Not like out there. Out there you have no control, you have no place.



In here you are the cause of your suffering, and so you welcome the devastation it reaps on your soul. You know every little thing about it, all the little intricacies so there are no surprises, you know exactly what you are in for and are prepared for it.

The havoc it wrecks is an acceptable substitute, you hide behind it, for if you must suffer, then you will arbitrate the terms.

Now you have travelled from a naturally disturbed individual reading a book to an entirely broken and self-consumed thing trapped within the walls of their own mind.

OR...

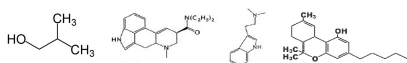
You express your thoughts to the outside world before they consume your very being.

Which is exactly what has led myself to commit societal thought-crime by exposing you to this filth.

~~~~~

Well, so much for old-fashioned decency right?

Introspection can conjure the most extraordinary revelations full of insightful goodness. If only I could capture it in print instead of whatever this garbage may be called at a later date, a court date perhaps? A hearing of special magnitude for myself, as I watch the robots in



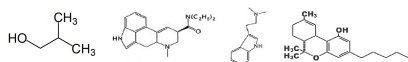
dark suits bicker over how much/less insane I am than the 'average' 'individual'.

Yes pulling this and other old rags out from storage and catapulting them into the public limelight for all citizens and officers of the court to see and peruse would almost certainly inspire a manly judge (regardless of gender) to condemn me to the bowels of the nearest new millennium dungeon. In the interest of all hard working good people of course.

And who would argue? No self respecting and law abiding labour-hand would extend their five digits high into the air to protest after becoming exposed to these ramblings. They will demand payment for the debt incurred against our moral society. It will be Life, with no hope. That is not to say a physical cell, nay, it is the Chemical Lobotomy they will be after.

Fix him, so he may not foul this land once more. Let us take the initiative, preventative action, offensive defence. We shall start the fight, before the fight begins. Anything to stop this madness. Yes, exactly like the curtains pulled close around the hospital bed. Your vision is obscured, and the patient retains a small degree of dignity, though the screams and pleas for mercy must be heard by all. A desperate measure that does not mend, but mask the underlying problem.

Imagine the unimaginable horror that takes place behind those simple hospital curtain fabrics, made worse by your imagination. You can't even face the terror that engulfs you as you await the day that some well-meaning nurse pulls the curtain round *your* bed



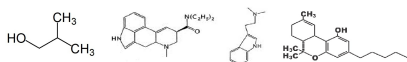
and the 'doctors' descend upon *you*. All you may do is smile with yellow teeth and hope these savages don't notice the black ones, because if they do you are not so sure your escape plan is foolproof. Indeed, how does one escape once the ruling mob has branded you an outsider? When it is decreed you are *sick*, and in need of *rehabilitation*, where is there to run to in this brave new world?

In the face of license plate scanning cameras and optical identification, how long will it take for the wrongdoer to fall into enemy hands?

Luckily, you will not have to waste your time pondering these questions of liberty, because you have done nothing wrong, and you shan't forever more.

Until that day you allow your gaze to fall from the winding road because that red-back spider you glimpsed out of the corner of your eye sixty seconds ago (but didn't worry too much about because the car ahead of you almost forgot to stop at the lights) has now taken a chunk out of your left ankle leaving you with an immediate compulsion to rub this 'sweet' spot.

You don't even feel the bump in the road. You are only thinking of the sore welling up under every fingernail scratch, realising how later you are going to have to lie in bed on the other side of your body than usual so as not to lean on this fresh spider bite. Great, you think, now how long is this going to last? Two days, three? You didn't ask for this, in fact you've been keeping inside the lines of acceptable behaviour just so something like this isn't brought upon you by the



karma that you don't believe in but still fear. Maybe you will be the one out of every four victims of red-back spider bites that do not pull through.

Maybe-

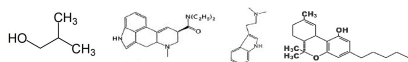
HOLY SHIT what was THAT?!?!

Your foot finally crunches the brake pedal into the cabin floor. You swear that tree branch wasn't on the hood of your car before. Except it's not a tree branch. Tree branches don't writhe and moan. Also, they don't try to stand up on a shattered leg before toppling backwards over the overpass.

And now you, YES YOU, through no fault of your own, only a very human tendency to wonder what the fuck just bit you, have become an outlaw. Manslaughter by car. You killed them. Because we all live in a blame orientated world. Someone has to take it.

I put it to you sir, that you followed poor Mrs Shattered-Leg from the supermarket all the way to the overpass on that fateful night. You have never liked the idea of a woman walking alone late at night, ever since your own mother was tragically befallen by an abrupt aneurism when you were twelve.

Who was she to trust she would be safe walking home by herself? If she had taken you that night, you might have raised the alarm and prevented her early demise. You swore to punish anyone stupid enough to trust the darkness ahead of their own family. That's right, I put it to you and this court, sir, that you have performed this heinous act before!



Just because the evidence is lacking from those times does not make it untrue!

So, a man who has desecrated the sanctity of human life at least once, maybe many times in the past, would have no shame in teaching poor Mrs Shattered-Leg the lesson you so thoroughly believe she deserves! You ran her over, and now you owe a debt to society to be paid in full on the due date with your freedom.

Thus the anxiety of an entire community is dispelled by the single act of placing blame on anyone who is close enough. You.

At least take comfort in that.

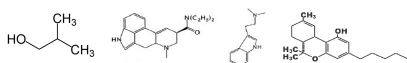
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All jokes aside... where is my fucking milk?

I know I put it in here somewhere... BUT I CAN'T TASTE IT!

Maybe four teaspoons of that horrible and exquisitely average Nescafe was too much...

Yes, it was Necessary, but was it Right? I'm talking strictly in a health sense here, we all know of course it was the Right decision *society-wise*, pushing ourselves to the limit in order to serve and survive in our society; most bodily worries can be set aside too, apart from this insistent sensation that I can feel my left temporal lobe deteriorating as we speak. No I mean to say, or rather, ask, can this practice of excessive coffee ingestion have a negative, that is to say, not good, non-productive, less



than positive, effect on the situation that applies to my mental health?

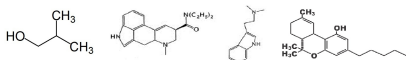
When you take into account the constant barrage of the continuous grinding of mind gears pounding against the walls of my brain, powered by a mouse on a wheel, with but three or four bells attached to the spokes at different intervals, so each time a bell passes by the mouse's head he can hear the ring, except it's not a ring but a harsh thought that is repeated over and over as the wheel turns... and my answer to this is to feed said mouse caffeine and speed up this endless cycle of torture??

What in the sweet smell of sweaty lovemaking is going on here? Can I be that insane? Can I taste my fucking milk yet?

~~~~~

Ahem. Okay Sonny Jim, let's take a step back here. We can't go on and on with this fiction while there are important matters at hand. Yes that is correct Sonny I said that little outburst before was mere fiction, a made up description of woe, and you my friend fell for it. Well the joke is on you.
Bah.
Anyway back to the action.

~~~~~





I snapped out of my trance in the nick of time. I was so engrossed in my notepad musings that a couple of hours had whizzed by and the only thing that made me stop and look up were the trepidant cries of the patient in the last bed on the left hand side of the room. Bed D. The curtain partially obscured my view and it seemed important enough so I got up to investigate. I found a tiny old lady in a pink dressing gown frantically rummaging through her handbag covered in blood. Her bag, her gown, her face, the sheets, all painted a new dark shade of red.

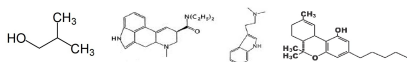
Surprise threatened to hold me in place while my newfound headache asked me very nicely to go back and sit down and stop the room from spinning. And I would have been more than happy to oblige, had my special obs training not kicked in first. I quickly determined the source of the blood, her hand, and it was still streaming the red liquid of life as she raked through her handbag.

"Where's my purse? I need to make a donation!" the tiny old lady informed me. "They'll be round any minute."

"You don't need to pay them anything ma'am, it's all taken care of." I was pulling on surgical gloves two sizes too small for me as I tried to reassure her.

"Then why do they keep coming by every ten minutes asking for donations?"

Three pairs of gloves broke before I gave up and pulled a wad of paper towels from the dispenser on the wall, encasing her hand with them. "Pay no mind to those



people, they are con-artists and they want your life savings. Listen to me, I don't want any money, I just want you to stop gushing blood."

This alarmed her greatly, for apparently she hadn't noticed her medical predicament until I so eagerly pointed it out. She threw both hands up in the air, hysterical with panic. Blood flew up in front of me and across the wall, contrasting nicely, I thought, with the mind-numbingly bland pink wall paint some hospital bureaucrat had seen fit to coat every room in.

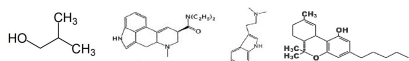
"What have you got in your bag lady? A switchblade? How did you cut yourself?" There was no time for an answer, because now the other patients were getting rowdy too.

"Sheryl!" the heavyset man in Bed B called out loudly to his wife, believing she was asleep in the room next door. Normally I would have ignored the outburst, but a quick glance to his side of the room endowed me with the knowledge that this large man who was incapable of walking on his own was attempting to climb over the bedrails to presumably go in search of his wife. I jumped across the room and blocked his path.

"Sheryl!" he called out again, louder and with a hint of impatience. Just a hint.

"George," I said, for that was his name, "...George, listen to me. Sheryl is not here. You are in the hospital, and she is at home in bed."

"At home in bed? Ha." He laughed at me in disbelief as if I was telling tall stories. "The house is just over there," he pointed to the wall, "...and she will hear me

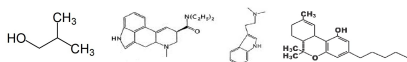


calling if you don't help me get up. Where are my shoes? Who is going to lock up the house?"

"Sheryl will lock up the house and then she will come and visit you in the morning George. For now you must sleep."

"Bullshit! You're in my house, and if you don't help me there'll be hell to pay," he hacked up a chunk of phlegm and spat it out onto the floor at my feet, "...when my wife finds out what you've done you'll be out of a job I can tell you that right now." He then continued climbing over the bedrails.

I didn't have time for these antics while that tiny old lady was painting the town red so I decided to try and confuse the old man, then scare him into submission. "Listen, George, Sheryl is not real, you never had a wife mate. Wake up and smell the roses. You're calling out to someone that doesn't exist. Now stop trying to get out of bed or the doctor is going to cut your legs off." This sent George into a flying fit of rage. "You little pinprick bastard! When Mark gets home and finds you dillying about he will take you to the cleaners! You're fired! Get out! I'm warning you..." His whale of a fist launched up from the ocean of bed sheets, narrowly missing its target, that being my unprotected face. This unprovoked surge of anger caught me off guard, and I took a step back, right into Mrs Wilhelm, the elderly German lady from Bed A who, having been woken by the commotion, had gotten up to use the bathroom.



She grabbed my arm to keep her balance and then proceeded to scold me intermittently. “Beobachten wohin du gehst du Affe!”

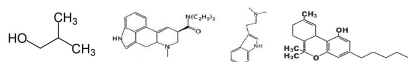
“Mrs Wilhelm! I’m so sorry are you alright?”

She smiled, flashing those perfectly moulded dentures.

“Well aren’t you a handsome gentleman?” Then she frowned again, having remembered why she was out of bed. “Nehmen Sie mich auf die Toilette, Matrose Junge!”

I told her I had no idea what she was on about as I guided her back onto bed, looking up to see the patients from beds E, D, C and B all trying to get out of bed in perfect synchronistic fashion. The potential for broken hips and dislodged limbs was catastrophic, but all I could do was stand still and try to ignore the walls of the room turning like a goddamn revolving restaurant, raining blood all the while. The side effects of my adventures the past week tormented my senses, making it extremely hard to dismiss the overwhelming feeling of foreboding that hung over me. It was all I could muster to swing around and hit the call button on the edge of the bed.

The room suddenly filled with nurses, enough to race to each bed and convince these poor damned souls that it is much safer staying in bed. By the time my own little episode had passed the patients were quietly sleeping again and the nurses were silently backing out the door. My situation being alleviated beyond words, I took a seat once again at the door next to my still sleeping co-companion.



I'd gotten to the point where I'd dared to imagine that was the worst of it, when Mr Harding sat bolt upright in bed and, as if we'd been discussing it for the past ten minutes, shouted to me with immense concern: "YEAH, BUT WHY DON'T YOU HAVE ENOUGH VEHICLES??"

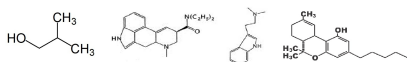
This sent the entire room back into uproar, and my headache gauge peaking at eight thousand revolutions per second. I closed my eyes and willed it all to go away. That endless procession continued throughout the night, until the time my shift was halfway through, and the head nurse came to pay me a visit.

She smiled as she read over the observation sheet I'd been filling out. "You've had a busy night."

"Mmmm..." The ability to engage in menial conversation had departed my repertoire sometime a few days before. At the time my only wish was for the world to end.

"Lucky for you, they need a carer over in psych ward. Maybe you'll get some quiet time then." The head nurse's smile curled up in such a way that allowed me to see the thick layer of sarcasm coating her communiqué. She marched off and, seeing as I was now in automatic pilot mode, devoid of the capacity to make my own rational choices, I followed.

Walking down a long, long corridor, I was led first through a few left and right turns, then through two sets of key card encoded vault doors. The adjoining room was a hub, at the centre of which was the nurses



station. Four different hallways with patient bedrooms split off from there, where the nurses could keep an eye on everything.

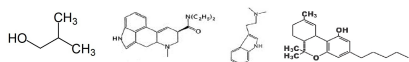
“This is the Fish Tank.” The nurses station had big glass panels instead of walls, ensuring even a trip to the toilet never went unnoticed. “We see all. You can wait here for the night staff to give you a handover.”

And for the second time that night the only person around me who knew what was going on turned tail and left abruptly, leaving me in the proverbial ‘lurch’.

It took less than five minutes for me to notice the overwhelming feeling of dread that was digging through my stomach. “This place scares me.” I said to myself.

I began flicking through some pamphlets hanging on the wall. The first one I picked up bore the title: What is ECT? Before I could stop myself I had read a page and a half about Electro-Convulsive Therapy, at which point I decided reading on would only elevate my anxious state. I put the pamphlet back amongst the other aptly named brochures such as: What is the Office of the Head Psychiatrist?; Are You an Involuntary Patient?; and Can Treatment be Forced on Me?

One of the psych nurses returned to the office and took me down to the end room of the hallway. I was to sit at that door for four hours in case the sixty year old lady with bipolar disorder inside the room woke up and started wandering aimlessly through the ward causing havoc. It seemed I had caught a break, seeing as she was



asleep and there wasn't much time left til my freedom was secured. I sat in my night watching chair and stared back down the corridor at the fish tank.

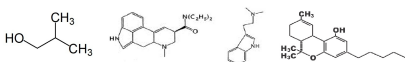
It was a weird thought, but the green floors of the hallway, the glass walls of the office, even the fake pot plant by the door all felt strangely familiar to me. I tried to think if I had been anywhere like that place before, or if I'd seen somewhere similar in a movie, but the memory eluded me.

I then began to ponder the predicament presented to us presently and promptly.

This is what it is like to live and die in the city.

This is the result of the choice we have all made which is to live inside a place that levels nature and treats it's own people as the enemy. Taking all healthy life-living basics out in one fell swoop is just another day at the office inside a city. Not more than half an hour's drive away from any city's lights will you discover an entirely different world with an amazingly decorated night sky and running water over rocks as of this date still untainted by the monstrous poisoning of city drinking water with an industrial waste product called Fluoride. That stuff will eat through concrete. They have to call Haz-Mat teams to clean up accidents at Fluoride processing plants. Ask the boys over at CSBP if they would drink a glass of pure Sodium Fluoride.

Ha ha no they won't, not when the lethal dose for an average seventy kilogram human is estimated at five to ten grams.



If they were to dump this industrial-superphosphate-fertilizer-waste-by-product ..... anywhere ..... they would go straight to jail on account of widespread habitat devastation.

And we all drink the stuff straight from the tap and pretend that it tastes good!

As they say, the population is ageing. We're living longer and now we get to watch ourselves slowly waste away. Whatever happened to the 60 year old cowboy goin out in the blaze of battle?

How about the Thelma & Louise ending?

No now it is anti-wrinkle cream and pills for this and tablets for that!

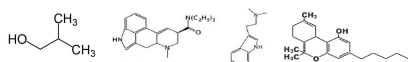
You can't move anymore so you strap yourself to a golf caddy and cling to life like a store manager clinging to those bonuses that are supposed to be coming your way. I don't think fading away is very enticing myself!

I took a deep breath and looked up, away from my extensive ponderings.

The door of the room next door opened and out walked a forty year old woman all dressed up as if she was off to the theatre, except it was four o'clock in the morning.

"Hello there," she beamed at the sight of me, "...glad to see you came back to us. You'll get the best help there is here." She touched my shoulder in a warm and friendly gesture, then walked away towards the fish tank.

Panic seeped in through the walls and threw itself at me. I froze solid, with nothing moving but my eyes





darting back and forth, trying to see as much as I could without drawing too much attention to myself.

Back? Came back? But I'd never been there before! Had I? How did she know me? Was she making it up? I did seem to recognise that place... But what did that mean?? Was I... a patient there?

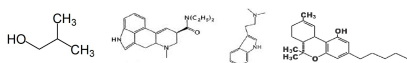
The idea was ridiculous. Of course I wasn't a patient in the psych ward. I was a regular person who only *worked* in hospitals, I didn't live in one.

Now I was breathing very short, fast, shallow breaths and my mind was having trouble keeping up with the panicked thoughts bubbling about all around me. The more I mulled over it, the more I convinced myself something wasn't right.

Could I be totally delusional? Have I dreamed up this whole other life to hide the fact I am a paranoid schizophrenic confined to a mental institution? Could the nurses have just let me believe I worked there and played along by sitting me at that door? But what about everything else in my life? Even the bender of the last week since Boxing Day, was that real? I wasn't so sure anymore...

Every muscle in my body tightened until I was anchored in the chair, powerless to move or speak or hardly even think beyond how afraid I was of that place. Should I ask someone? What if I was wrong and I just made it clear to them that I really was unstable??

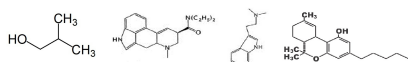
I decided to keep my head down and say nothing. I'd see in the morning if they let me out the gates, and if they didn't then I would know. "And if that happens," I



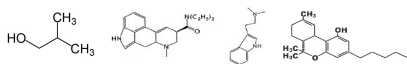
thought solemnly, "...then I guess I should stay here, I mean it's for my own good, and I'm clearly not sane enough to be allowed to roam freely among those normal peoples... If they don't let me go of course." For the next three hours and forty five minutes I sat there, unmoving, contemplating over and over the implications of my being insane. I tried to find holes in my memories, things that didn't make sense, some kind of sign to show my invisible hand of fabrication at work. I recalled the peculiar feeling I sometimes get while driving. When I haven't been paying attention and then snap out of it all of a sudden. I then remember passing a truck or going through a set of traffic lights while I was daydreaming and think "Did that just happen? Or did I actually hit that truck? Were those lights really red and I ploughed through them unthinking, getting cleaned up by a four wheel drive in the process? Was I just in an accident and this right now is my mind creating a vivid dream just for me so I don't have to experience the horror of dying in a monstrous crash? Is this what happens to someone in complete shock lying in pieces on the harsh bitumen road?"

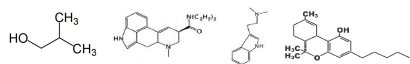
That feeling was what I felt that night as I waited to see whether I was crazy and on a frightening week-long bender or whether I was insane and just believed I had a life outside the psych ward.

Thankfully the morning came and when the managerial gods saw fit to release me from my rostral bondage I



rejoiced in the hospital car park, unable to move any further before shedding a tear in honour of that night's massive effort.





## CHAPTER FIVE

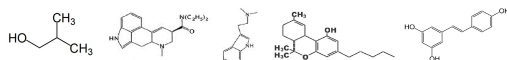
# HOLOGRAMMATON

The lack of sleep had kept my brain in a semi-fried state for the most part of three days, and now I knew it was time to give in. Just a short thirty minute drive stood between me and my holy sanctuary bed, the place of slumber worship and abundance. My lethargic driving pattern didn't seem to bother me as I took a shortcut out of the car park over a curb, through some nicely cut

green grass and onto the highway. I was very impressed with myself for making it to the traffic lights two minutes down the road. I stopped at the red, thankful that the meaning of the colours still registered with my mind. I was staring at that light, gripping the wheel tightly to hold my body in place. My vision was first filled with the traffic lights, then the dashboard, then the steering wheel, then my legs, and then darkness. A banging sound intruded on my blackout, shaking me awake in a most rude and frightening way. I peeled my eyes open and found a man racking his knuckles on my window, shouting for me to 'fucking wake up you useless cunt'. I ventured to look at the clock and saw that ten minutes had passed while I was out. With a mumbled sorry I decided to pull the car over onto somebody's lawn for a minute. I needed to rest, I couldn't drive without a rest. In a couple minutes I'd get back on my journey homewards.

~~~~~

I was choking. My lungs seized for a second, then automatically inhaled, increasing their lung volume capacity tenfold, causing me to wake with violent disruption. The car was like a sauna, except someone had brought a heater in and also started a bonfire, and the sauna was on the surface of the sun. The clock now showed a time of twelve thirty in the afternoon. I had passed out for five hours in my car with the windows up in direct blistering sunshine. The humidity was so



intense, I thought I was going to die. I could not for the life of me suck in any of that boiling air. Somehow my hand clasped the door handle, and I pulled with the force of a desperate and dying moron trapped in a 2000 Volcano model four door lava-car, tumbling out onto the grass of somebody's front lawn.

Fresh air engulfed my senses, overwhelming me with relief. Too much relief, in fact, and I was reminded of my second year teacher telling me how dangerous it was to switch instantly from one extreme temperature to the opposite, let's say if you're in the shower and you play with the taps you could pass out and kill yourself.

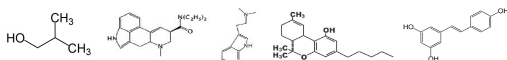
These thoughts constituted an overload of my remaining mental faculties so I dropped them to make way for a plan to form to get me off the side of that road.

Lying face down on the cool grass still gasping for air, an annoying sound began to play from my pocket. I slowly picked myself up, careful to compensate my steps for the headspin my brain was now floating in. Getting back into the car, I pilfered my pants pocket and procured my ringing phone. The voice on the other end was my sister Lucy.

"Hello?"

A short phrase was the only response. "The front door smells like the colour green."

"Right." I hung up the phone and started the car. What Lucy had said was our secret code. It meant come over. It could mean there was trouble, and this was a way of



saying ‘help me!’ without anyone else around knowing. Or it could mean there was wine waiting to be drunk. Whatever the case was, her house was now my next destination.

The front door was open when I arrived, sparking my interest with pictures of several violent scenarios that could have been awaiting me inside.

“Lucy? I’m coming in.”

I took one step inside the doorway and was accosted by a huge blue, green and yellow parrot. It’s massive wings flapped over my face and I wondered what kind of strange scientist’s lab this creature had escaped from.

“Unhand me you flying rodent!”

“Arrr! Ye’ll not get me treasure ye cowardly, gutless, nattering bilge rat! Strike yer colours! Bwaaaak!”

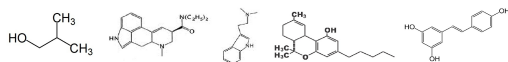
It spoke!

“You’ve got about two seconds before I send you back to the cereal box you spawned from bird-brain!” I worried what this beast had done with my sister.

Suddenly another voice sounded out. “Cyrus!” Relief came quick when Lucy popped her head around the wall of the inside hallway.

I stepped back to see her friend Cyrus dressed in a parrot costume. “You’re so lucky buddy. I’m not afraid to stab a bird if I have to.”

“Heh heh you shat yourself.” He turned and we followed Lucy into her living room. Sitting on the lounge, he explained himself. “I’m going to a pirate party tonight.”



"Of course you are." I took up a position in an adjacent armchair. On the long coffee table between us was a shisha, bubbling away as Lucy smoked a sweet strawberry flavour. Next to that was a bottle of precious Caduceus red wine straight from the dusty hills of Northern Arizona. I took the liberty of pouring myself a glass.

"I was afraid you'd opened a portal to some prehistoric age and become overrun with ancient monsters." I took a sip, savouring the dry, graped concoction.

"Funny you should mention portals. We were just talking about them. That's why I called you." Lucy sat cross legged on the carpet.

"You mean you were makin' some crazy shit up." Said the giant bird-man.

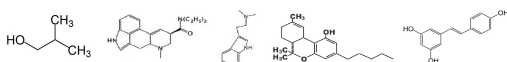
"Okay, give it to me. I'll sort yous out." I sat back, preparing to judicate on this discussion.

Lucy threw a book into my lap. I perused the cover. It was titled 'The Holographic Universe'. "Yes I've read this."

"So you know all about the holographic theory?" Cyrus looked dubiously unimpressed.

"Yeah. It's based on discoveries made with quantum physics. Don't quote me, but it's got to do with how a particle is only a particle when it's being observed by someone. When it's not being observed, it's actually some kind of waveform." Another sip of wine captivated my taste buds.

"So the theory is that matter only exists when it's being looked at." Lucy piped in. "Reality is just a bunch of



waveform frequencies that our brains decode into a physical world. They liken it to a hologram, which is just frequencies encoded on a plate, but when you shine a laser through the plate a 3-D image appears out of thin air. Our brains are the laser.”

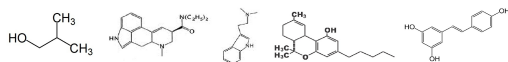
“Yes, yes, and if you magnify an atom you find it is a cloud of electrons swirling around in a big empty space.” Cyrus was a little impatient. “If an atom was the size of a cathedral, the nucleus would be the size of a ten cent coin. It’s basically empty, and our physical world is made up of these atoms. This table is physically solid, but it’s only made up of empty atoms!”

“Cyrus here thinks it sounds plausible, but he’s not sold on it.” Lucy jeered at him menacingly.

“You’re tryin’ to tell me reality is an illusion that we make real with our heads!” Lucy’s beaked friend exclaimed.

“It’s just a theory, but it explains just about everything that conventional science pulls it’s hair out over.” I handed him the book. “For example, in there they talk about people with Dissociative Identity Disorder. When people have multiple personalities, doctors often find biological and physiological differences in their bodies depending on which personality is in control. Someone can be drunk, then switch to another personality and be sober.

“It defies explanation... unless you see the world and even the body as an illusion made real by our minds. Our brain is so powerful, if it truly believes it is not



drunk, it can decode reality in the way it thinks it should be.”

Lucy continued on. “It explains the placebo effect, there’s even accounts of people with third degree burns healing miraculously in no time at all because one personality takes over that doesn’t believe it has those burns. When they switch back, the burns return!”

Cyrus was becoming increasingly agitated. “Okay, we’ve been through this. But then you were talking about this Icke guy.”

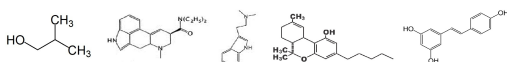
“Yeah, David Icke. He goes on about shape-shifting reptiles and ritual sacrifices and stuff.” Lucy was getting a bit too deep for Cyrus’ liking,

“Aliens now?” He scoffed.

I jumped in. “Man, we are sitting here talking about how all of existence is a fucking illusion and you don’t think aliens are possible??”

My wine had gone somewhere. I leant forward and poured another glass. “We don’t have to believe everything that people say about other beings, but it’s got to at least be possible. And as for ritual sacrifices and magic and the like, I can see those things having a scientific explanation if the holographic theory is true.”

Lucy got up and started digging through her wall cabinet, pulling out a DVD entitled ‘Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove’. It was a documentary by a man named Alex Jones, and when she put it on the TV I could see why I’d never heard of it before. Lucy skipped to the main part, that being a scene from a hidden camera portraying a large crowd of people



sitting across a lake from a giant stone owl. The voiceover informed us the people were various American successful businessmen and politicians. In front of the idol of the owl, whose name was ‘Moloch’, were robed figures holding flaming torches standing around an altar. They were burning an effigy that represented ‘Care’ in a ritual called the ‘Cremation of Care’, effectively absorbing them of the burden of remorse and their conscience.

Many of these famous people, including actors and Presidents, purported to be fundamentalist Christians in public, but here they were worshipping a great stone owl taking part in an occult ritual.

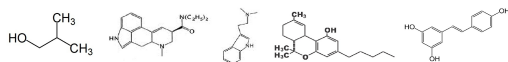
“Well, this is certainly freaking me out.” I looked to Lucy for guidance.

“This is just a lame enactment of a ritual.” She told us.

“But think about all the satanic cults and ‘magicians’ that chant and mix potions trying to open portals to other dimensions and shit.”

“And now we come full circle.” Cyrus had almost had enough. “See what I’ve been dealing with here?”

“Well, there’s a point to this too.” I ventured out on a limb of logic. “Okay, you can break sound down into frequencies right? Sound is a frequency. If there was a sound high-pitched enough this wine glass would shatter, right? So a sound – frequency – can have an effect on this glass. What am I doing as I’m talking to you right now? I’m making a sound. Sound is a frequency. So is it possible that certain sounds –

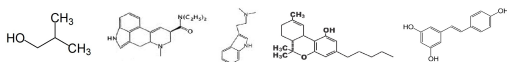


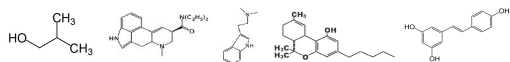
frequencies – I can make with my voice could have an effect on something else?”

Lucy was smiling. “Those chants you hear in movies and such might actually work! If you knew the right ones...”

“Right! That does it. I’m out.” Cyrus flapped his wings again and jumped off the lounge with a squawk. “You freaks are too loony for me! I gotta get to this party.” And that was when my phone rang again. This time it was my dreadlocked friend Scot, calling to arrange a special rendezvous at a nearby pub.

So I took the opportunity to catch a lift with the pissed off parrot man in his shitty old light blue convertible named ‘Mavis’.





CHAPTER SIX

MAJIC MOMENTS

At this juncture in my recounting of this writer's latest self-depreciative adventure I must be honest with the reader.

I remember entering this lowly slum dive of a bar, but do not recall anything thereafter until a full twenty four hours later.

I did, however, find the following pathetic rag scrawled in my notepad attesting to record those twenty four hours.

Please keep in mind that it was written under duress.

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It is an extremely strained effort to lift your drink to your lips from the bar.

Taking your time, you slowly unwrap your fingers from the thin bottle and place your newly freed hand upon your knee.

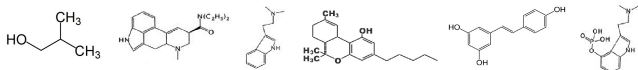
These rehearsed actions are replayed over and over while you sit on your wooden stool, trying to figure out how you came to be here right now.

What made you take to the streets, bumbling in and out of traffic, searching for a space to occupy, and eventually wind up in this dive?

Sure, you wanted to have a drink and play some billiards but that has been and gone now, and you are back to where you started. What is there to do?

Surely the other patrons of this establishment are questioning their own reasons too. But as you look around, surveying their faces with a slightly conflicted predisposition, you see a haze of wasted time and unused energy.

It is definitely time to go. You have lost. Back to the real world with you.





As you take your wallet off the bench and stuff it back into your jeans, preparing yourself for the tiresome journey home, your long haired scruffy companion leans over and says "I've still got those capsules from last year man."

A chill begins to emanate from the back of your neck as a plan quickly forms.

"Right! Grab the merchandise and meet me out back. There's precious little time, we can only take the bare essentials, certainly not enough for a haircut, but you will have to live with that my friend."

The night looked as if it would end in tears, but things have taken a new course. Opportunity has struck, and who are you to deny it?

After acquiring a case of hard liquor and a mandatory packet of cigarettes, it is off to the chosen hideout away from prying eyes and insensitive remarks.

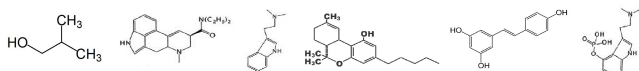
Five grey capsules fall into your lap. As you look up to thank your companion, he has already downed two.

"I'd better get a move on then!" You hear yourself say. Once the ingestion is complete, your friend begins to stare at you in awe.

"All of them? I can't do that my man, I have not been where these take you before and I need to test them out first."

Oh the preposterousness!

You stand up and begin to put your own fingers down your throat.



“Well I guess this was a waste of time. You can have these back if that is what you will do with them. This little experience requires at least a second participant.”

Your friend immediately apologises profusely and shovels the rest of his share into his gob.

With that job done, it is time to have your fifth alcoholic beverage of the day.

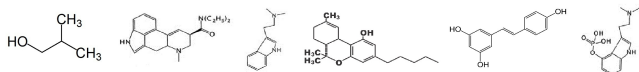
Yes, there is a sacred and time-honoured tradition surrounding the majic mushroom trip, one where you could stare into a bon-fire for hours on end and may be subjected to all kinds of ravenous visions and life-changing treks, but today is for party time.

With some quiet reflection expected in let's say oh, five hours?

The anticipation of what may come leaves you feeling all giddy inside. When you take the last sip of your drink you look up to ask your friend if he can assist with the supply of alcohol to an over-aged minor, but he is no longer there. He has ventured inside to begin his come-back solo performance on the drum kit sitting in the living room. Amazingly loud noises exude out into the dark night.

You take a look inside and find your head whipping up and down and back and forth because all the sounds seem to come from different corners of the house.

Just as it appears to you that you could very well be standing in the middle of the percussion section of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra with a special guest drum solo from a long-haired scruffy mushroom



tripper your eyes come to rest on the back sliding glass door, where a head is intruding with a bemused look on it's unfamiliar face.

Luckily you had long ago learnt to disable your snap-decision making technique while under the influence of mind-altering substances, or else you quite possibly could have suddenly ditched your empty bottle at this foreign head and screamed foul play to the high heavens.

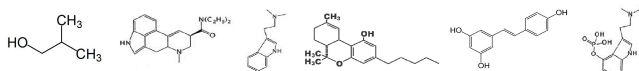
As it turns out this new character is the next door neighbour, come to use the washing machine due to theirs being inexplicably 'missing'.

"What great timing!" You indubitably express as you guide this unsuspecting middle-aged lady to the back table and pour her a drink.

"Now, what's your deal? Where did you come from then?" The question is quite sizable, but your new friend takes it in her stride. Before you know it you have listened to the better part of a condensed thirty year long tale of ups and downs, heartache and redemption.

You discover you are speaking to a foster carer, someone who brings children in desperate need of stability into their home and family unit in an attempt to provide some kind of normal existence to a young person who may just think that daily beatings and hardcore parental neglect is a normal run-of-the-mill childhood.

And you are hoping against hope she doesn't notice you floating two metres above the table, completely unable



to form sentences (in English) to be an actual part of the conversation.

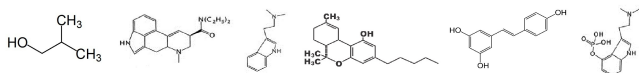
Thankfully (well, for you anyway), your scruffy companion emerges from his one-night-only rock show to try and explain to this neighbour from the Department of Child Protection how there is a secret ring of sex-slavery operating in the shadows of our very own community run by the most higher-ups of the higher-ups and maybe she has come across little snippets of this conspiracy during her role as a foster carer? Can she shed some light on this dilemma? Grateful the spotlight has been redirected from your flustered face, you close your eyes and concentrate on floating back down to your chair.

*Please dismantle all these phantom limbs,  
it's the evidence of humans as ornaments.*

*- The Mars Volta*

Twenty minutes later as you are furiously trying to figure out why Cedric felt the need to sing those words with such passion and emotion you realise you are standing on the edge of the couch that sits on the back lawn up against the fence.

The neighbour is gone, and you've been staring at the tree in her garden for ten minutes engulfed in its beauty and magnificence. The flowing leaves brilliantly cause the light from the bright moon to dance in and out from the tree against the night sky. Sparkling all the way.



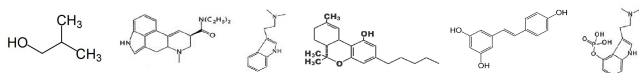
Your companion finally remembers he is not alone and comes searching for you, instantly becoming enthralled in the intricate patterns and inner workings of a line of ants on the pavement.

“You’ve got to see this.”

No, no, no. It’s time to change the music. Time to sit and have a drink, let the trip wash over you, experience the waves of completeness you feel but don’t let it take you out to sea. That will have to wait for another time. We are here, now, in this place. I mean, just take a look around. The walls of the house, they are sturdy, and the shade cloth over the back fence, it is just right. It all fits right into place. I always knew this was the truth. I just haven’t taken the time to articulate my thoughts into this simplistic fashion. What do I do now? I have to apply this newfound knowledge to my life. I have to stand up and take control once again, lest my life continues in this downward spiral.

I have to begin this next stage of my life that I’ve been waiting for and *throw a whiskey bottle at a bunch of dignitaries*.

It only takes you a couple of moments to figure out the song Pegz is singing has infiltrated your subconscious. Well that’s okay, you can go back to what you were thinking just now and finish it, because this is important damnnit.



But the train carrying your thought was derailed some ninety seconds ago, lost forever in the midst of a wild, fiery brainstorm.

You turn to your long haired scruffy companion and ask if he knew what it was.

“I dunno, you said something about spirals.”

“Yeah spirals are cool.”

Of course! Now you remember. You were wondering about spirals and how far a simple curved line has to turn in on itself until you may call it a spiral. Right?

Well now that is all cleared up you can concentrate on listening to the music.

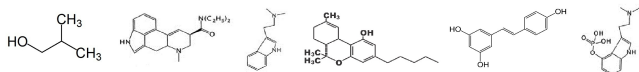
*Life is what happens when you  
are busy making other plans.*

*- John Lennon*

Remembering little quotes of wisdom such as this ignites an urgent feeling that splashes over your form. Yes! Of course! THAT’S what I will do!

The eureka moment has arrived, and everything is put into place. You can see what brought you here, to this point in time, and where you need to go now.

You need to apply for that job you’ve been procrastinating over for six-months. You need to save the money to pay for radio broadcasting lessons so you can finally have that show you’ve been talking about since high-school.

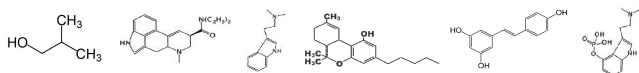


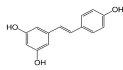
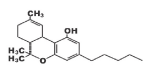
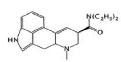
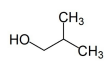
And you need to sort out your true feelings for the people in your life and tell them what they mean to you.

It is like when you finally get that moment of clarity, after a long while of uncreativity. One of those times when you say to yourself “No, today is the day. I’ve tied the cord around my waist on my loose fitting pants. No more lounging about the house, watching movies and masturbating. It’s time to kick into gear. It’s time to turn off the vaporiser and put away the grinder. I’ve got important things to do today. Should I have a shave? No, there’s no time for a shave. There’s people out there on the front lines, and what am I doing? Lying back with my hand down my pants watching porno? It’s time to press pause and get up.”

So you snuggle up with a rug on the back couch and begin voraciously scrawling this filth in your trusty notepad.

Because after all, you can’t let yourself forget this, this is gold.







## CHAPTER SEVEN

# ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

I awoke to feel an icy cold wind tearing it's way across my face. I lifted my head out of the esky.

What was my head doing in the esky?

I peered around, finding myself in the back seat of a car, air billowing in through the open windows, hurtling down a busy highway. Next to me was Scot, grinning

hungrily, obviously waiting for this perfect moment as I discover all is not well.

"I thought you'd wake to that."

I managed to glimpse the backs of the heads of the gimps driving this hell car. Instantly recognising Domenic and his partner Ashley, I quickly thought of a cunning and tasteful insult to express my confusion.

"What the fuck's going on dickheads?"

Ashley leaned back in her seat. "We're not there yet so just pipe down Jesus Christ already."

Some type of internal liquid began performing somersaults inside my stomach, which grumbled in lonely pain.

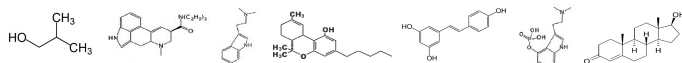
"Holy shit was that you?" Domenic was genuinely flabbergasted. "I heard that clear as day! I told you to eat before we left but you weren't having any of that were you?"

"For starters, speaking of days, what day is it?" I reached into my jeans pockets, searching for clues and/or something edible. "And secondly, please refer back to my first question.... What the fuck is going on??"

Scota put a hand around the back of my neck, turning me towards him as if to inspect me, as if he had any idea what he was doing. "It seems cohesion has returned to your speech!"

"And has seemingly left yours. Come on now peoples, you must explain, I implore you! Have you no decency you freaking reptiles?!"

"You seriously don't remember?" Ashley was now preparing to relay the most recent events missing from



my parched memory. “We got home this morning and found you asleep on the couch outside. I waited for the sprinklers to wake you up.”

“Ah thanks for that Ash, actually from now on just gimme the bullet points okay?” My head was in no shape to contain extra details.

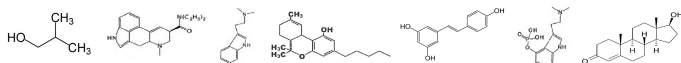
“Well you got on the phone to someone named Jenny and she told you you had to go to Wedge Island tonight for the big New Years rave on the beach.”

“Ah, Wedge.” Memories of tents and sandy campfires were released into my mind’s eye. It was a less popular holiday location than Lancelin, the both of them being small surfie towns about an hour and a half’s drive north from our great city of Perth, which only made it more appealing to myself.

Ashley went on. “My cousin has a shack out there and she’s been hounding me all month to come stay for the big party tonight.”

Using my indageted powers of deduction I deduced the ending of this detractable tale. “So you’ve kidnapped me against my will and spirited me away to some crazy rave on some backwards island to have your way with me?”

“It was your idea damnnit!” Domenic was obviously not following my contradictory statements over the last few hours with the amusement that I’d found. “Stick your head back in the esky til we get... we should be there by now. Are we even on the right road? There’s no reception out here I can’t even check my map on the phone.”



Ashley panicked immediately as was her nature. “How long have you not known where we’re fucking driving??”

While they bickered I turned to Scota, “What happened to that bar we went to? I don’t remember leaving.”

“You practically carried me out of there once you found out I had mushies.”

I had to chuckle. “Well at least that makes some sense.”

Then I thought of this mystery phone conversation I supposedly made that morning. “Hang on, who was I calling before? Because it certainly wasn’t Jenny. She’s not real you see.”

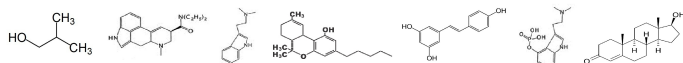
Domenic pulled the car over into a large rounded Parking Bay on the side of the road. “They said the dirt track was half an hour past Lancelin, but it hasn’t come up yet.”

Now Ashley was interested in my last little anecdote.

“Jenny’s not real?”

“Yeah I sorta had a complete mental breakdown on Tuesday but I’m alright now I just have a couple of imaginary friends hanging around apparently.” I peered out the car window to see a police wagon parked with a good view of the busy outback highway. “We’re lost right? Time to ask for directions.” I stepped out onto the loose gravel.

“Wait! You shouldn’t go anywhere near those cops man do you even know how much acid you took this morning?” Scota tried to grab my arm but too prompt was my closing of the car door.

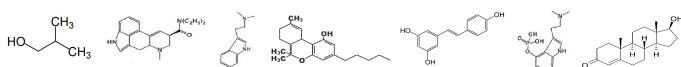


I instantly thought of my dirt bike riding buddies from the lake. I'd only taken half of my stash that day, and now it seemed I'd begun the second round without even remembering doing it. Oh what horrors were awaiting me this time? I decided if anyone knew, it would be these clean cut boy scout coppers. I strode over to their vehicle, making sure to remain visible in their side rear mirrors, you don't want to sneak up and surprise a couple of on edge nightwatchmen with guns on their hips.

"Good afternoon officers." I called out as I came upon them. "How are your finings on this fine day? Keeping up with your quotas I presume?"

"Is there something I can help you with?" A large, dark haired and light skinned man sat in the driver's seat. He looked about fifty years old, and the permanent scowl formed by his sagging cheeks suggested a large amount of that time had been spent dealing with the unruly sycophants infecting what would otherwise be a most delectable and tolerable existence.

"Why yes, in fact, my friend's and I are on our way to Wedge though we can't seem to locate the proper route. May I enquire as to whether you have the knowledge we seek?" I tried to smile, but the muscles in my cheeks were taking directions from no one but themselves, serving up a dancing morph between grin and frown. "Step back please." The large uniformed man became a large, tall, lurching giant as he opened the door and stood from his seat. "It's literally the next right the way



you were heading. But before you go, what is this all about?" He pointed to my shirt.

It was about that time I noticed I was wearing a bright yellow life jacket. Unfortunately I had taken a liking to relieving the airline of the life jackets under the seat whenever I found myself on a plane ride. And I'd somehow brought one with me that day. Yes, not the most favourable defining moment in a young man's criminal career, but nonetheless I now had to explain this situation without also relieving myself of my immediate freedom.

"Well?" The policeman was waiting. "Where did you get that from?"

I answered him with the infinite wisdom of a scared little child trapped in the body of a twenty five year old New Year's raver. "Uhh... off the plane."

"Off the plane?!"

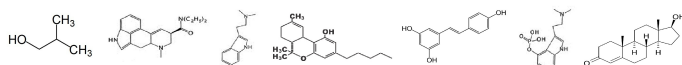
"Um, no, the same company as the plane..."

"What??"

A car door slammed behind me. I turned to observe Domenic march over to us.

"Officer! I'm responsible for this young man! We're taking him to see his family in Wedge. He's left his medication with them as you can probably tell by now..."

"I am Sergeant Reynolds, and I'm in charge of the team patrolling Wedge Island tonight. Don't let me catch you fucking around or you'll end up in the back of my wagon." Reynolds turned away, dismissing us with a flick of the back of a hand in the air.



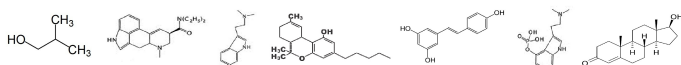
Then suddenly Domenic's arm was around my neck. "We certainly don't want that sir. Just a few quiet drinks is all we're interested in."

Four minutes later we were back in the car and driving around sand dunes trying to find Ashley's cousin's shack. "Well that was a gallant effort on your part Domenic!"

"Yeah, a career in retail really keeps your little-white-lies skill up to scratch." Swerving to avoid a van-load of party goers with fluoro sticks protruding out of every orifice, Domenic lent down to check his map book. "Oh, that's right, I don't have a goddamn map book anymore, because *you* think Google Maps is all we need!"

Ashley didn't even look at him. "Don't fucking start that shit- Look there she is."

Ashley's cousin flagged us down. Her name was Julie, and she was made up of long brown hair, dark green eyes, tanned skin and white teeth. She looked right at home on the sand with the ocean just visible behind her, although a jug of beer in one hand and a wad of cash in the other would have completed this picture. She stood in front of her holiday home, a run-down, pathetic looking tin shack that could have easily held the esteemed title of being the reason why tetanus was still prevalent in this region of the Southern Hemisphere. Despite the lack of holding even half a star on the resort quality scale, I would jump at the chance



to own my own shitbox shack on the shores of that beachside paradise.

Domenic parked us next to a four-wheel drive buggy. As we unloaded the esky and the rest of our drinking paraphernalia we were greeted by the rest of the troops, various hoodlums gathered through the allure of reckless partying promises and I suspect lusty notions towards the sassy Miss Julie.

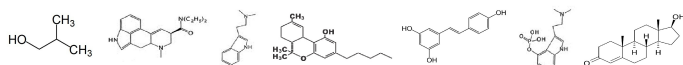
Once we had lugged everything to the small undercroft area (which was really just a room of the shack missing an outside wall) we were seated at a long table. This was where another four hours of my damaged memory was whittled away, drinking as fast as we could, just waiting for the countdown to the new year. At some point we had all traipsed off towards the beach, keen to discover what celebrations were taking place.

Along the way we had become lost. Julie, well travelled in those sandy paths though she was, sober she was not. While the others pitched camp and sat down to pass the time with more liquor, I walked over a sand dune to try and get some bearing on our location.

Suddenly Julie was standing next to me. She linked her arm into mine and smiled flirtingly at me in the semi-darkness. I think I even saw her batting her eyelids.

“Oh my god.” I thought to myself. “Is this seriously happening? I’ve barely spoken to her or even her friends all night.”

I turned to look at her, and she began to playfully pull on my shirt. I quickly realised she was putty in my unwitting hands.





"Maybe this will be good for me." I tried to see the upside to this, one of what was effectively any guys late night partying fantasy... but my thoughts came to rest on Abbey. It was enough to halt the initial burst of lust. But there was some fun to be had first.

This time I spoke out loud. "Hey, I dropped my phone somewhere back there. Wait right here... don't go anywhere, I have plans for you." I winked at her, then retreated back down the sand dune.

Before the others could see me I turned off in another direction. My thoughts were still centred on Abbey. What had I just done?

It was like saying no to someone who was giving away free money. It was right there in front of me, but I couldn't do it. I had someone else on my mind.

I found a large log laying on the side of the path, and decided to take a seat.

And then Domenic was there. He sat down next to me in silence.

Just as I was wondering what I was even thinking, he spoke up. "I see you left Julie hanging back there."

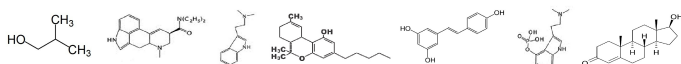
I looked up at the night sky. "Hmmm..."

He leaned over and, adopting a serious tone, asked me the question I'd been trying to answer for three months.

"So what went on about all that business with Abbey?"

"That question, you know, it's a doozie." The stars were extremely bright in the blackened sky. The atmospheric canopy seemed so huge, all of a sudden.

"I got sick. I let too many things build up, too stressed out. I got depressed man. Then it couldn't go on. But



my feelings haven't changed. Well I think they've gotten stronger! I don't know what to do, I feel like I've been robbed of the chance to do it the right way, you know? I'm completely taken by her. She's got me listening to Crowded House again for fuck's sake!"

Domenic's voice gained a little weight as he gave me his advice. "There's only one thing to do. Make it clear. Lay it down, hard as concrete. If it goes well, good. If it goes bad, then you can move on mate. There's no time for fucking around when it comes to this."

"That's straight up, isn't it?"

"Yeah well you gotta remember what you're worth too. No use layin' back waitin' to get fucked again."

"Fuckin' too right!"

I could hear the distinct sound of someone trudging through the bushes towards us. A female voice gave a little "Whoop!" as she almost took a dive in the darkness.

I stood up. "Look, Julie, I gotta tell you something.... I'm gay. With Domenic. Can we have some privacy please?"

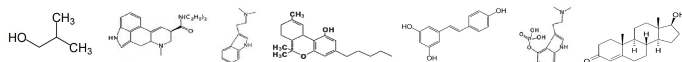
But it was not Julie who stepped through the bushes with leaves in her hair. "Who the hell is Julie?"

"Holy shit Jenny! Where... I'm not even going to ask."

Domenic was understandably confused. "Who are you talking to?"

"Who's this chump then?" Jenny obviously liked to live in ignorance.

"Jenny, please. You know he can't see you."



I looked at Domenic, who I can only say looked as equally perplexed as I was starving for food.

"Look there's these guys talking to your friends back there. They're trouble alright? You need to get as far away from them as possible." Jenny pointed us back in the right direction.

"Well okay then, whatever you say!" I grabbed Domenic and took off to see what the fuss was about.

"I think you need to lie down man." Domenic was clearly concerned.

"Nonsense! I feel great! Once we're on the beach we'll..."

We stepped out onto the path where the rest of the group was, chatting to four new fairly large, older men.

"There you are!" Ashley ran over to Domenic and said softly, "These guys are fucken weird."

I walked up to them and a stocky but shortish man with a black crew-cut stuck out his hand. "Hi, I'm Mr Kent. Been down to the party yet?"

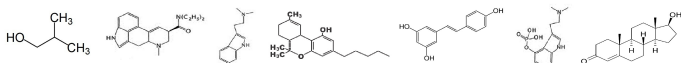
I shook his hand. "Nah not just yet, what's it like?"

"It'll pick up soon." I couldn't see any immediate danger to our witless entourage, but Jenny had warned us about them. I decided to stay on my guard.

Mr Kent spoke again. "We were going to smoke some grass at our shack. Want to come?"

Glancing at Domenic, who was nodding his head and beaming with delight, I shrugged my shoulders. "Lead the way!"

So much for maintaining vigilance. Jenny wasn't real anyway.



The others made it clear they needed to get some raving done, so they split off, leaving Domenic, Ashley, Scoti and I following these new strangers, hot on the trail of free drugs.

It didn't take long to make it to their shack, and even less time for me to ask if they had any food. Of course they didn't.

Mr Kent opened his 'front door' and ushered us inside. His shack had a very large lounge room decked out with old sofas and coffee tables. A few small back rooms were the only other feature of this humble abode.

I leapt at the chance to sit down again, making a bee-line direct to the large couch covered in dust. Everyone else took seats and Mr Kent began passing round a long glass bong.

Scoti was the first to break the session's silence. "Nice place you have here mate. Spend much time here?"

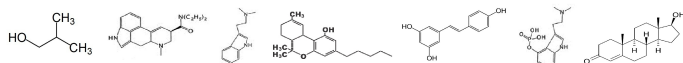
Mr Kent spoke in a serious tone. "I've been coming out here more and more lately. I want to get this place ready."

"Ready for what?" Ashley asked.

"Well, this island is perfect as a last defence. There's underground caves all over the place just waiting to be excavated, and the sea is right there if you need to make the quick escape."

"What do you mean, escape?" Scoti queried, sitting forward in an interested manner.

"When the fucking world ends! When China come in and take the lot of it. You need a place to hide."



Ashley looked bemused. "China's not going to invade. We're their friends anyway aren't we?"

"It's inevitable. They'll just keep growing then decide they don't need anyone else and take what they want. And we don't stand a chance." Mr Kent was serious.

Domenic shook his head. "I don't know, we've been beefing up our defences for a while now. We could probably give them a run for their money. And we've got the other big superpowers as allies too."

"All of them combined would just be like taking a stick to kill a dinosaur. Ha ha." Mr Kent laughed, then looked to me. "And what do you think?"

"I don't have an opinion." I lied.

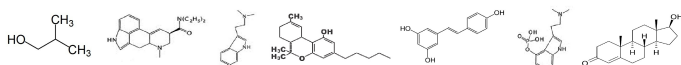
"Sure you do. Come on let's have it."

"People usually get angry when I speak my mind." My voice was low, testing the waters of this capricious congregation. "It's almost as if you're not allowed to have an opinion if you don't subscribe to an official school of thought. I like to simply point out the things that are wrong, I don't presume to know how to fix them."

"So make some points then." Why was this guy pushing me on this?

"If you're asking me what I think about a war, I'll think long and hard about whether I should tell you what I think about *all* wars, mainly that anyone who fights them are fucking dumb cunts.

"Now before you have a fit and cry nation-rape to the high-heavens keep in mind that I'm not just talking about your grand pappy and his heroic human



slaughtering efforts, I'm talking about the whole lot of them. All those people that actually believe that killing another human solves any-fucking-thing *at all*.

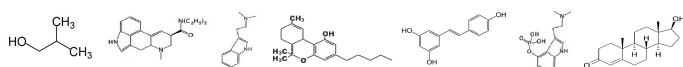
"But, what about defence, you ask? Well what is that old saying? Come on I know you know it!" I sprung out of my seat and started hopping around the room, smiling frantically at my captive audience, frozen in place as they were with shock and I expect extreme anger.

"The best defence is a good.....?" I had become the elevated teacher, the master adept guru stepping down off his mantle in the Theban hills for five minutes to educate the lowly masses.

"No one? Offence! Now I know you immediately thought 'Oh we should kill them first, then?' but no! I mean to attack the underlying dilemma, the original and uncomplicated conundrum itself! War!" I was now performing star jumps and shouting my sermon in the small lounge room.

"Perhaps when someone suggests war as a course of action, instead of listening any further, someone else could punch them in the face and leave them bleeding in the street for being a piece of shit! Now, wouldn't that just be a nicer world?

"You know why I never joined the army? Because I thought to myself..... don't be so fucking stupid! You mean to sign up to a group of knuckleheads who tell you not to think and just follow orders, mainly go here and kill that? Really? Take a look at what this human



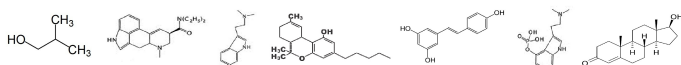
race has achieved with but their own bare hands and careful planning!

We have constructed massive cities, learned and discovered the mathematical and philosophical laws of this third dimension and risen up ever so slowly from the caves of beasts to a wireless technological age. And we're still running around like silly monkeys fighting over pieces of the ground? Really??"

Mania had once again found it's way into my day. Through gritted teeth Mr Kent spat a question. "So what happens when China invades? We just sit back and die?"

"Haven't you been listening? It's our job as thinking human beings to never let it get that far. The people in China's army aren't evil, just like the ones in our army aren't evil. You think the Nazi soldiers were evil?? Ha ha ha." I chuckled and slapped my hand on my thigh. "They were just as fucking dumb as the rest of us! We are all in danger of letting some retard movement take us over, all it takes is to listen too long to the ravings of madmen! When you swear blind allegiance to your country or whatever then you hand over the keys to your own thoughts and you can get fired up enough to do whatever it takes to defend your stupid beliefs." I let my arms droop down to the floor like a big gorilla.

*"We had to kill them, they are different to us!"* I stumbled around picking up imaginary food from the air and shovelling it into my mouth while making 'Ooh Oooh' sounds.



"You see, the world is overwhelmingly simple. If you think about any problem through the eyes of a child, you almost always never have to think any further!

"Oh dear, my family can't eat. There is a supermarket across the road filled with food, but you have to buy it with money I don't have. Child's View: So what about money?? What has that shitty little paper with pictures of old ugly people on it got to do with food??"

"Oh dear, my country is in turmoil, there are soldiers killing each other left, right and centre, and when I asked them why they said they were following orders. Child's View: Orders? Whose orders? Fuck orders! Put down the guns and bake mull cookies already!

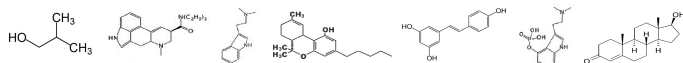
"If every dumb cunt in every army on the planet shot themselves in the face, then there would never be any wars! Just like if every parking inspector set fire to their fine books, I wouldn't feel the need to spit at them in the street."

Silence greeted my rampageous outbursts. I decided to sit back down.

"Look I'm not saying I have the answer, I'm just pointing out the *real* problem, which I might add is the first step towards that answer."

"Right, wait here..." Mr Kent got up and moved towards the back room, disappearing as he said "I'm going to get my shotgun and blow you in half."

I mused over the sincerity of that last statement, that is until I heard a loud 'click'. I knew exactly what that





was, and it was exactly what he said it would be.

“Fuck!”

I was on my feet in a flash. Images of gory blood soaked limbs strewn over the sand dunes played across my mind’s eye. This time my fellow adventurers followed my lead.

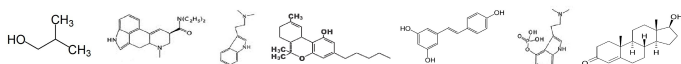
One of Mr Kent’s buddies was already at the door.

“Heh heh heh and where do you think you’re gettin’ to?”

Now we were heading straight for an Australian re-make of *Deliverance* starring my pearly white dimpled backside.

We were manhandled into the back room, a small and empty bathroom sized space where Mr Kent stood waiting over an opened manhole built into the ground. He motioned towards the manhole with the muzzle of his shotgun. Down the rickety ladder and into a tight-squeezing underground tunnel was the only path available, with the goons closing the gap behind us one step at a time. The tunnel had been excavated through the sand, held back by measly looking wooden panels on a steady downhill slope.

Eventually the well worn passage evened out, and the air turned a bitter cold along with it. Large six-pronged candlesticks lined the walls every few metres, assuring us the full view of how the small passage opened up into a giant chamber. We trudged forward in silence. Rock made of black granite formed the inside of this new underground hall, the place I felt would finally see the end of me and my friends.



My eyes fell instantly on the far side of the chamber to a black stone altar surrounded by bonfires and people in black gowns that covered their whole body.

“Uhh, guys, this looks a little dodgy.”

These robed and faceless cave dwellers were chanting softly in some foreign tongue, heads down, fixated on the burning embers of the largest bonfire closest to the black stone altar.

I remember a short phrase that was repeated over and over again: *Antiquis Atare, Antiquam Fidem.*

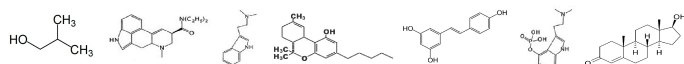
I am inclined to say this was in Latin, though that is as far as my investigation is going to go, knowing what these freaks were chanting could only add to the accumulated pile of fear and anxiety I’ve accrued after that whole ordeal.

Overlooking this prodigious arena, hung high near the roof, was an enormous black tapestry with a white symbol of a flower centred inside a white hexagram above the words ‘Do what thou wilt’. Below that and to the left was a giant steel cage fixed to the rock wall.

Inside was a filthy half naked man, pulling his hair and pacing madly in tiny circles.

“I’ve always wondered what La-La Land looked like Mr Kent, so I’d like to start by saying thankyou for that. I think we’d best be off now and leave you with your little magic show...” All I got for that was a shove towards a cleared area just next to the stone altar.

Our inconsequential protests made themselves scarce at the sight of our captors retreat to the hallway, satisfied with the sequestering of their prey. It was then that one



of the men in black robes approached us, placing a plate with three, small, thin, amazing looking wafers on the altar in front of me.

"You are in the wrong, wrong place." I'd heard this voice before, recognising mostly the disdain cornering his words.

"I'm pretty sure this is abnormal for all of us." I gazed around, seeing the poor sod trapped in the steel cage.

"Except for that guy. He seems to fit right in here."

A large hand flew through the space between it and my face, it's long fingernails drawing blood from my forehead, and then I was on my knees crumpled against the altar.

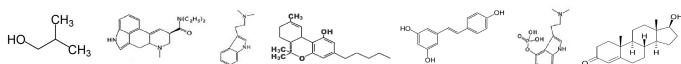
I clutched my head believing my brain had detached from the inside of my skull. "Wow... you're really good at that."

"You'll soon learn the importance of remaining silent."

The act of backhanding me to the ground had caused his hood to droop down to his shoulders. The face that met my glare belonged to none other than Sergeant Reynolds, the officer overseeing police operations for the Island's New Years ravings.

"This..... does not surprise me."

"You are in for a treat this night. As has been done at the beginning and end of each cycle since time immemorial, the gods shall be called forth to reign in glory on this wretched plane." Reynolds' exalted speech failed to contain any kind of sense that we were aware of, though I'm sure at least *he* knew what he was articulating about. "For tonight you will bear witness to



the hidden truth. Then your insignificant lives will end, to honour our true masters.” He then stalked over to the entrance to converse with Mr Kent, obviously impressed with his own dribble about his wonderful ‘masters’.

He called back to his lackey priests. “Bring forth the vessel!”

They ceased their chanting and slowly formed a procession to the man locked in the steel cage. While they were occupied with him I took the opportunity to stand up off the ground, using the altar for support. Once up, I noticed again the plate of three small wafers sitting right in front of me. At the sight of these seemingly out of place refreshments the rest of the world faded away, leaving only the burning pain inside my empty stomach.

I crammed them into my mouth without a second’s thought, gorging each one before I could notice how funny they tasted.

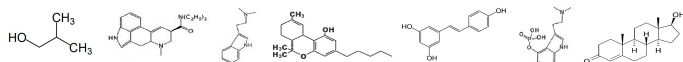
As soon as I had finished this act of plate pillaging the group of dark gowned black magick priests were by my side, panicking in confusion.

“The Cakes of Light!” I heard someone exclaim.

Reynolds pushed his way through the crowd, the veins in his neck bulging out so evident was his fury.

“YOU IMBECILE! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?”

Unbridled rage imbued him with the strength of ten men and he let loose on my ill-protected form. Punches and kicks from all sides was the reward for my latest achievement.



A small amount of composure returned to my attacker once I was back on the ground with no means left to even open my eyes. “You’ve made a very silly mistake little boy. But you’ve just ensured you’ll live through tonight, in one way or another...”

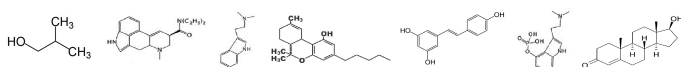
Reynolds drew an old scroll from the inside of his robe and carelessly threw it down to me in disgust. I slowly unravelled this ancient looking parchment to see many words of a strange language in deep black ink scrawled sporadically about the page, occasionally interrupted by occult diagrams and drawings of ingredients. In a clear space underneath somebody had evidently translated this gibberish into English with a crappy red pen. I began to read it out loud:

“For perfume mix meal and honey and thick leavings of red wine; then oil of Abramelin and olive oil....”

Reynolds took up the recitation from memory. “...and afterward soften and smooth down with rich fresh blood.” He raised his eyes and hands to the ceiling. “... This burn: of this make cakes and eat unto me.” Now he turned back down to me. “What you have just eaten takes a long time to prepare. They are mooncakes, from the host of heaven.”

“Uh, did they have blood in them? Human blood?”

“Ha ha ha.” He chuckled. “I’m afraid the scroll is incomplete. The correct translation is something along the lines of bodily fluids. So yes there’s blood, but the main ingredient is a properly trained magician’s semen prepared after rigorous sexual ritual.”



“Oh *dude!*” I knew this was coming. I had been too cocky with these people. “No no no no no no no.....”

“Yes yes yes! And furthermore, the mooncakes must be consumed by the vessel prior to the arrival of the master.” Reynolds took two short steps towards the half naked man who had been released from his cage and was now in the grips of the black priests. Suddenly he had a small ceremonial blade in his right hand, and he used it to spill the prisoners blood from his throat.

“You are now the new vessel. On the altar!”

The robed priest freaks dropped their now worthless captive and seized me instead, forcibly compelling me to lie face up on the black stone altar.

Scota, Domenic and Ashley all stood back in disbelief. Surely this was not really happening? They were just there for an end of year celebration, now they were being told they were to become some psycho cult’s ritual sacrifice??

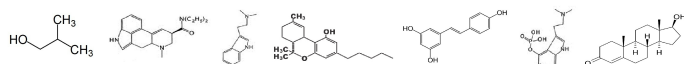
I on the other hand could only be dubious about the fact that not two days before had I been talking about the possibility of secret underground magickal convents and their connections to other beings.

“Tell Moloch I’m ready now. I’m ready to be his human puppet. Chicks dig evil demons right?”

“SILENCE! THE HOUR APPROACHES!

COMMENCE THE CHANT!”

And so it was the priests struck up their droning chorus. I wondered if what I was hearing was actually affecting the frequencies of reality’s fabric. I found it amusing



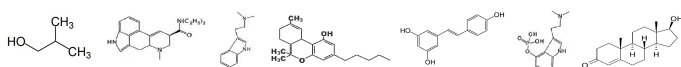
that in between eating potent, magickally 'enhanced' mooncakes and becoming the centre of attention of a flock of truly disturbed fruitcakes I was trying to understand how magick can be explained scientifically. I wished I knew more about octaves and harmonical temperament.

Reynolds appeared over me, hooded once again and holding a silver chalice above his head. He parroted the priest's moanings in his own obnoxious tone, then broke off, introducing a new verse to the mix. "To the four elements we beseech thee: Osiris, estranged god of the underworld, we ask for your divine grace. Smote those who seek to repel your deeds! Lend us the flame of your spirit!"

Green flashes of light sparked out of the silver chalice, with purple smoke rising to the high reaches of the cavern's ceiling.

"I am your servant, Master! Your vessel awaits, to carry your will out into the world. Through our sexual union your transition will be complete."

"Through our what?!" I tried to sit up, but was unable. Bizarrely, the continuously chanting priests had backed away, and no one was holding me down. An invisible force had me pinned to this nightmare unfolding before our eyes. I tried to twist my neck enough to get a glimpse of my friends, but all I could see was a grey mist blocking my view. Ripples of faint colours swirled through the mist, forming ambiguous shapes that were hard to focus on.



“O great lord, we are ready to receive thine eternal glory. To the four elements, we beseech thee!”

The bonfires around us grew intensely, glowing a bright orange and sending the darkness scurrying to the lowliest corners of the underground chamber.

But I was fixated on the grey mist. For now I could make out a remarkable form. Materialising in front of me was a very tall eight foot being. Reptilian in appearance, it had fiery dark red eyes, greenish scales covering its entire body, fangs, claws, a thick tail long enough to settle on the ground, and a ring of thorny bones around the crown of its head.

“You guys...”

Reynolds snarled at me, showing his teeth up to his gums, his expression made all the more deranged by his eyes almost bursting from their sockets. “You can see him can’t you?”

“It’s a he??” I was still trying to come to grips that what I was seeing was possible, never mind this thing’s gender.

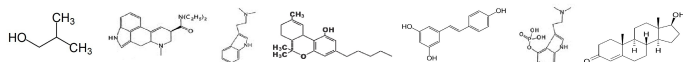
Reynolds peered around, completely unaware of the mist and this new creature.

And then it spoke. A deep guttural growl emanated from it’s fang filled mouth. “Whom is thou before me?”

Not one to be rude, I replied in a cordial manner.

“Good evening. I understand I’m to be your vessel, though I haven’t had my induction as of yet, but I’m a quick learner-“

“SILENCE! He was talking to me.” Reynolds handed the chalice to another nutjob priest as he kept searching





to see his master. “We are your Order, that which follows Thelema. Your sacrifices have been prepared. The ritual awaits.”

The giant lizard spoke once again, it's scratchy tone causing my ears to twitch. “The horsemen you have brought deserve me.”

This chilled me to the same level of the cold black stone I was lying on. I began to realise this guy could be the real deal. “Who are you? You know, if you don't mind me asking...”

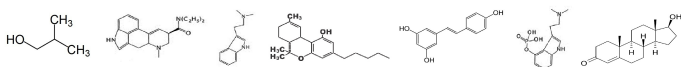
“I am Pindar, the Daedric Prince of Darkness, consumer of souls and ruler over mankind. If you could see where I've been, you'd touch the hand that touches sin. Long have I been from this world. But I'm drawing closer to the present, and I'll find a space with no memories, 'cause I've been with you before, and now I've got a second chance to inhabit the living.”

“Geez I didn't ask for your life story.”

“ENOUGH!” Reynolds' frantic voice interrupted our inter-dimensional commune. I glanced over to find he was now disrobed, with manhood at full attention.

“Through the energy released by our sexual intercourse the Master will gain total control of you, and enter this world with you as his mindless avatar. It will be the last thing you will know, for once the act is completed your spirit will be devoured, your body will be the Master's, and you will cease to exist. It is time, remove his clothes!”

The black magick priest freaks stepped forward, reaching out to me.



But the enormous reptile god screeched in anger.  
 “HALT!” It looked me up and down, it’s flickering red  
 eyes scanning my body. Could it see through my skin,  
 to the very core of me?

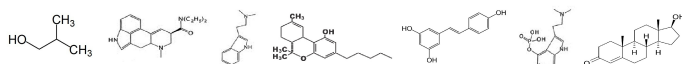
Then it boomed, as furious as any vengeful god could  
 be. “FOOLS! THIS VESSEL IS UNPURE!” It lifted its  
 scaly arm and distended one ugly finger toward the  
 massive bonfire. The flames spread exponentially,  
 exploding out at the dumbfounded priests. Screams of  
 agony echoed throughout the cavern.

“YOU’VE FAILED ME. THE WINDOW HAS  
 CLOSED. SEEK YOUR REFUGE AND COUNT  
 YOUR DAYS!” The implacable reptile called Pindar  
 lifted its arms every which way, wreaking devastation  
 upon it’s minions.

Suddenly there were hands gripping mine, dragging me  
 to my feet and through the recurrent blaze of Pindar’s  
 wrath. Released from my invisible bondage on the black  
 altar, I could see Domenic and Scotia were my saviours,  
 leading me to the only exit. Ashley was already there,  
 and when we caught up we all ran through the steep  
 hallway and back up the ladder into the rickety shack  
 once again.

We burst out into the sweet warm air of the last night  
 of the year, racing towards the distant sounds of the  
 young careless party goers cavorting about the beach in  
 blissful oblivion.

We made fairly good time for people in such a shocked  
 state, coming across the beach in minutes, believing we  
 had escaped. There were hundreds of people gathered



around a stage that had a myriad of different coloured laser lights shooting and flashing out onto the faces below and into the sky above. The DJ on stage wore a bright fluoro green tracksuit and yellow rimmed sunglasses, pumping his fists in the air as he played a fast techno remix of Regurgitator's 'I Was Sent By God To Get You Off'. Cars, vans, buses and motorbikes were scattered in amongst the crowd and throughout the entire beach. There were very large, high sand dunes surrounding this area of the beach, and they were being used by a couple of 4WD motorists as their personal drag racing circuit.

We swiftly mingled into the horde of New Years ravers, every face we passed seemed to be more off chops than the last. I was sure there'd be no way any survivors from whatever it was that happened earlier could find us. I was sure that the swarm of unruly drug-taking, fun-loving, love-making hippies would provide enough cover.

That was until a black robe strode through the crowd and the hand of the lurching giant man who was wearing it fixed itself around my neck.

The lyrics of the loud music played on my ears.

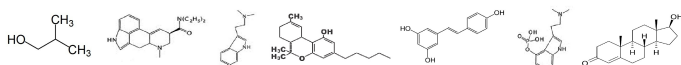
*"...Don't be afraid..."*

Reynolds' voice thundered at me. "I got you now prick!"

*"...this shit is going straight to your cock..."*

Scota yelled back. "What the fuck do you want with us?"

*"...It's all you ever needed..."*



Reynolds' face was all cut up, blood streamed from the top to the bottom. "You are going to PAY!"

*"...and I'll be all you ever wanted..."*

I was choking my last words out. "YOU'RE... A... FUCKING... FRUIT LOOP!"

*"...we all know you better be good to me baby..."*

Headlights shone on the back of Reynolds' hood. I could just make out the 4WD's, one in front of the other, recklessly tearing their way towards the crowd.

Raving punters scattered in all directions.

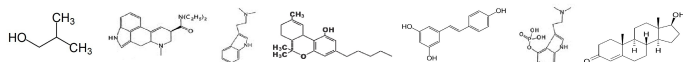
Reynolds turned his head to look back at the madness coming straight for us. Scota grabbed me by the shoulders and pulled backwards. But the large robed cult leader tightened his grasp, with asphyxiation plaguing my spent breaths.

Reynolds looked back to me, fixing me with a vicious glare. "It's time to die. Let us both meet the next world together." He stood fast.

I struggled meagrely, seconds away from losing consciousness. Reynolds looked back again, facing our impending doom. The 4WD's screamed closer and closer, their lights painfully blinding my eyes.

With my absolute last ounce of strength I lifted both my legs and pushed my feet into Reynolds' chest. Scota pulled backwards on my shoulders, and together we managed to break Reynolds' hold on my throat.

The huge man lost his footing and went careening back, directly into the oncoming beach traffic. Scota and I both toppled over the other way, and on my way to the sandy ground I felt the force of the 4WD's as they



whizzed past and smashed into Reynolds' body. If he had survived the first hit, then going under the wheels of the second car would have finished him off.

The crazed vehicles screeched to a halt.

Trying desperately to breathe normally again, I gaped up to see the drivers of the drag racing 4WD's step out onto the sand. Who else stood before us but the lunatic dirt bike riders from the lake who had sold me the potent acid I was still reeling from. And of course they were still wearing their black helmets with the dark visors down.

The lead rider walked up and slapped his friend on the back. "Did you see that? I hit my first kangaroo!"

"Was that what it was?" The second rider bent over and leant on his knees with his hands. "I didn't know 'roos could live in all this snow."

Scota got up and dusted himself off. "You guys saved our lives."

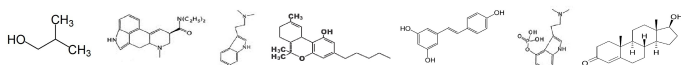
"All in a days work my friend." The lead rider looked well chuffed. "I don't know what you're talkin' about, but you're welcome all the same."

Ashley came closer to us. "What are you guys thinking driving into a crowd of people like that??"

The second rider answered her defensively. "Well we didn't want to die! We were in the middle of an avalanche!"

"Avalanche?" A bewildered Domenic exclaimed. "This isn't snow, this is sand!"

The two riders looked at each other and burst out laughing. "Ha ha ha. Sand?!"



"What do you take us for? Ha, sand..." They started to get back in their cars.

The displaced party ravers had begun to wander back, keen to investigate the scene.

"Hey wait!" Scotla called out. "Could you give us a lift?"

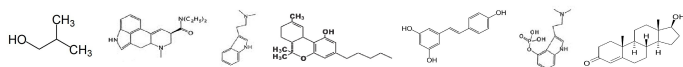
Twenty minutes later my friends were carrying me back to their car. We had had enough of Wedge Island.

The journey home was made in silence, each one of us being completely unable to figure out the ramifications of the night's unbelievable events.

Domenic drove me back to where I'd left my car at my sister's house. The first morning rays of sunshine lit up the street. It was now a brand new year.

"I'll... call you later, man."

I stood out on the footpath for a long while, contemplating what to do next while trying to stop my legs from shaking.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

# SOMETHING POSITIVE

As I looked back on the culmination of fortuitous events that had brought me from a regular Boxing Day luncheon six days ago to that very sidewalk, I realised something fairly important.

My path, that took me through some pretty confusing  
and draining trials, led me to a place I could finally sit  
down and listen.

Listen to the world.

Listen to the silence.

Listen to the voices.

Alright there's no voices but that's what I would've said  
if I was crazy.

Except I'm not.

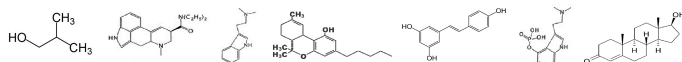
And that's what crazy people say when they're accused  
of being crazy.

My path had shown me how to quieten my own mind.  
To stop the constant grind of empty emotion swirling  
through my heavy heart, generated by years of fake and  
misplaced guilt pressing down on my soul.

Not to say I'm any different from anyone else, in fact  
this is something I think everybody shares. A primal  
feeling of guilt. Not of any one event, but of all. All the  
times you have felt it over your life, built up, and  
crushing down.

As long as I've let the past dictate to me how I should  
feel I have felt guilty. Guilty for all the times I could  
have helped someone but chose not to. Or when I had  
something better than someone else had. Stupid little  
things like that build up.

What about the times when I hurt someone. I'm proud  
to say it's been a very long time since I've hurt someone





on purpose (since childhood), but by accident? Plenty and plenty and lots more times.

It's taken me so long to finally realise what is probably one of the best known advices given by advice givers but ignored by all: The past is the past. Can't change it. What's more so is, the past doesn't exist anyway! The past is now, the future is now, now is now! This moment is all that exists. The past is now, so by being conscious of your actions and doing the first time what you always say you should've done in the first place, is actually changing the past. And changing the future. Because it's all now! You control your reality. You are the master of your world and a student of life at the same time.

Now do you believe me when I say I'm not crazy?

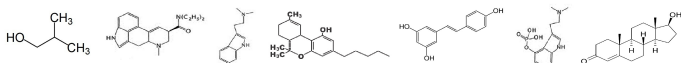
OK poor choice of words.....

Anyway, it became clear what was really important to me, what I'd been ignoring (for good reason) for three months and only now had the peace of mind to do something about it.

Even after everything that had befallen me, all that craziness and near-death experience, there was only one thing that truly mattered to me. There was something I had to set right.

I jumped in my car and high-tailed it down the street to the site of the beginning of this little bender.

The hot midday sun beamed down on my sleep deprived figure, replenishing my sore limbs with that little spark of extra energy I needed to walk up the



driveway and rap on the front door. An incredible pang of self-doubt threatened to take me by the back of the neck and drag me home with my courage and pride frolicking between my legs.

What the hell was I doing? It was too late to run off and hide in the bushes, so an uneasy smile stretched thinly over my face as the door opened revealing an extremely tired looking ex-girlfriend. For all the trouble (self-inflicted though it may be) that I'd been through over this girl, seeing her in that daylight with her eyes squinting and her dressing gown wrapped tightly around her slim physique, I could think of nothing else but how much I wanted her in my arms. Instead I took her hand and opened my mouth, hoping the words would save me in this my ultimate time of need.

"I have been a little busy since last we met, Abbey.

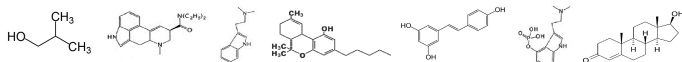
Everything in my heart is telling me to try and impress you, to win your affections back with all the things I've been up to.

Instead I think I will just tell you how I feel.

You see, you and me, we're the same. We are both just as misunderstood as each other. We belong together!

My heart aches for the time when your wall came down only for me. You used to ask me if I could read your mind, and I am telling you my dear that I still feel that connection.

I have to go away now, I'm going to the outback to unplug from this horrid city.



But know this, there would not be a shorter time than that which would take me to return should you send word!"

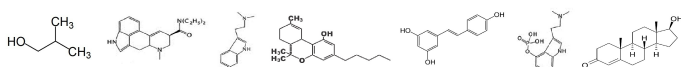
I smiled, and the warm feeling in my chest spread out to the rest of my body. I had done the first productive thing in a long time, and it had been the absolute truth. Abbey nodded and smiled. I squeezed her hand then let it go and walked back to my car. Light-headedness kept me focussed on just walking straight without taking a dive face first into the pavement.

Well, that was that. I had no idea whether she was being polite or if she'd been waiting for me to grow back up again and say that.

It almost didn't matter either. Almost. I had said what was important to me, instead of rolling over and letting opportunity pass me by. I'd taken hold of the reins again, I was back, ready to swing on the spiral, ready to reach out and embrace the random, ready to reach out and embrace whatever may come.

My bones became ten times heavier suddenly as I slumped down into the driver's seat of my little car.

What else could I do? Where could I go from here? I wondered if Yale University would accept me as a 2012 freshman. There I could join the esteemed but secretive society called 'Skull and Bones'. They had some pretty wild parties, like when they dig up ancient Native American bones to display in their hallways, and they have even more 'out there' rituals. I must admit I'd



always liked the idea of lying naked in an open coffin with a ribbon tied around my penis as I masturbate and yell out my entire history of sexual experiences while on this plane of vibration to my fellow ‘Bonesmen’.

BUT I would have to stay in that coffin, having one off with myself *forever* because I’d have to confess every sexual act I had taken part in *ever*, including the present one, so I would have to keep constantly updating my list whilst I jacked.

And why not? It was good enough for US Senator Prescott Bush, and his son George Bush, and his son George Bush, as well as William Howard Taft, Percy Rockefeller, Charles Seymour, Averell Harriman, and an expansive host of high ranking American politicians, bankers, and other assorted criminals.

What have I learned from all this?

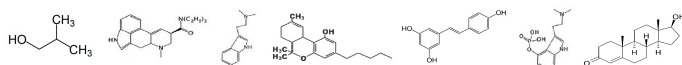
What is the moral of this story?

Is there anything tangible to recover from this unholy wreckage?

I suppose I should be grateful that my mind still functions at all.

With scattered memories such as these who would know?

I turned to Jenny, who was sitting next to me in the passenger seat. “Don’t look at me, I’m just waiting for you to return to active duty. There’s mischief afoot in the galaxy.”



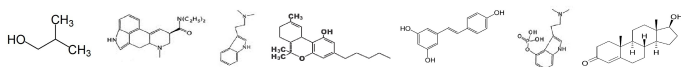
A short sigh escaped my lips. “You’re not going away are you? Well, I suppose hallucinations aren’t the worst side effects from this little adventure of mine.”

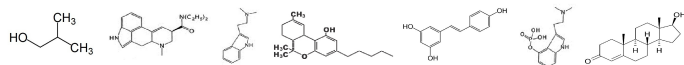
Curiosity struck me as I pondered what the consequences of further eloping would entail.

And why not? As far as imaginary friends went, Jenny wasn’t so bad, and who was I to deny her existence when I couldn’t physically tell if she was tangible or not? I started the car and began the journey home.

“Strap yourself in Jen, we’re off to follow our will and wind, and we may just go where no one’s been. Now, this galactic mischief you speak of, you had better tell me all about it.”

FIN





# THE PLAYLIST

The playlist was named 'Creative Indulgence'.  
The name was my excuse for wasting time dwelling  
within my imagination.  
I had work to do now, there was no more time to play  
fantasy inside my head.  
But I knew I was not able to function correctly all the  
time unless I took some time for myself. And so with  
this playlist I gave myself the option to calm my mind.  
These were training wheels, I knew.  
Music that would aid me, but also protect me as it  
encapsulated my brain, keeping my eye on the prize.

The music centred around a method I had concocted  
designed to elicit a telepathic response within the  
practioners own mind.

Integral to this method, was a certain playlist.

Thirteen songs. In a particular order.

ONE

GREENSKEEPERS

*SMOKE*

A light-hearted song  
to flush the senses.

Clearing the way to make  
room in the brain for focus.

Also highly suggestible.

TWO

MUSE

*SUPREMECY*

A STRONG message to your mind:

I am in control here.

I reign Supreme.

Anyone who believes otherwise  
must take notice.



THREE

BLACK EYED PEAS

*SHUT UP*

The gears are turning.  
Ceaseless thoughts that  
threaten one's focus.  
Shut Up.

FOUR

BLACK EYED PEAS

*REQUEST LINE*

Calling out to the operator.  
Tuning in to the other stations.  
We respectfully request.  
We dance in payment.

FIVE

BLACK EYED PEAS

*WHERE IS THE LOVE*

Listen to this song and be happy.  
This is the right space to be in.

## SIX

# THE BLACK KEYS

## *DEAD AND GONE*

The Nah, Nah, is a playful tease. A bright, wide smile is permanently fixed on the singers of this song. Their eyes are closed and they are saying “Ha ha, not yet,” by slowly shaking their heads. They are standing above in the heavens looking down, dancing, holding their open palms out in the air waiving them softly. Lovingly teasing as only ‘family’ could, they are just as heartbroken being this far away as the one who would hear, but they know there can only be laughter in the face of sadness. So they laugh, and they tease, saying “Nah Nah, soon you will be with us, Nah Nah, soon you will know all we know, but not yet!”

This is the way I originally heard it, until I finally read the lyrics (real lyrics in brackets):

*Nah Nah, Nah Nah, Nah Nah Nah, Nah Nah, Nah Nah*

*So long*

*Why you waitin' so long? (Why'd you wait him so long?)*

*After every single word is said,*

*I'm feelin' dead and gone*

*Alone*

*Don't you drag me along*

*If you do you know I'll follow you*

*Until the truth is wrong*

*I'll be waiting when you come (I'll go anywhere you go)*

*I'll be ready when you come (I'll go anywhere you go)*

*All the way*

*All the way*

*So long*

*Why'd it take you so long?*

*Every time I hear the whistle blow*

*I'm down below your pawn*

*Don't call me*

*I'll call you*

*Is what you say*

*I'll obey*

*Chill tonight or eatin' right*

*I need to say*

*Gotta say:*

*I'll be waiting when you come (I'll go anywhere you go)*

*I'll be ready when you come (I'll go anywhere you go)*

*All the way*

*All the way*

*Nah Nah, Nah Nah, Nah Nah Nah, Nah Nah, Nah Nah*

SEVEN

THE BLACK KEYS

*LONELY BOY*

“I got a love that keeps me waiting...”

The love that is waiting for  
all of us in the next realm.

The love source that our  
loved ones have returned  
to; that love is waiting.

Don't worry. Enjoy yourself for now.  
We'll meet up again soon.

EIGHT

THE BLACK KEYS

*LITTLE BLACK SUBMARINES*

Operator please.

NINE

CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL  
*RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE*

This is new territory.  
What predators have made  
this their hunting ground?

TEN

KENNY ROGERS & THE FIRST EDITION  
*JUST DROPPED IN*

Reality kicking back in slightly?  
Wondering if this is all really happening?  
Did the last song scare you or embolden you?

ELEVEN

STEPPENWOLF  
*MAGIC CARPET RIDE*

This is a magical part of life.  
If there was someone trustworthy  
enough, this song could aid to invite  
them to take you on a ride of discovery.

TWELVE

WARREN ZEVON

*WEREWOLF IN LONDON*

Because you never know who  
you may be speaking with.

THIRTEEN

NORMAN GREENBAUM

*SPIRIT IN THE SKY*

We're all headed to the Spirit realm.

# FROM THE AUTHOR

*21<sup>st</sup> June 2012 – 2.43AM*

I am sitting here in the nurse's station of the Stroke Rehabilitation Unit of Swan Districts Hospital, a place that bore the full brunt of my dilapidated musings during my downhill race to reach rock bottom through the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, and it seems fitting to write this introduction here attempting to explain the reason I wrote these wild ravings, and why they are appearing in this book instead of becoming moth breakfast with the rest of my insane ramblings in the folder in the bottom drawer of my desk.

I began scrawling this fractionally autobiographical nonsense in pursuit of reason, trying to make sense of something horrible in my life, not unlike the magnificent narrative wove together by Cedric Bixler-Zavala for his band The Mars Volta and their debut LP De-Loused in the Comatorium. In it the tortured and clinically depressed man Cerpin Taxt decides to end his life by injecting a concoction of morphine and rat poison. Instead of dying, he sends himself into a seven day coma, and his consciousness is propelled into the world of the Comatorium, a place where punishment is exacted upon him in extreme dreadfulness until he finds the

courage to fight back and save it's inhabitants from tyrannous monsters.

Cerpin eventually awakens from his coma but is changed forever. Taking the next few years to tie up loose ends, he once again takes his own life, desperate to return to his other world to escape this one.

My understanding of this story is Cerpin was based on a real person, and the author's attempted to create a dream world for him, one where he belonged and had more meaning than real life which had lost all appeal to him.

The reason for writing my own narrative was to bring some kind of sense to my life which had fallen to pieces, and once I'd read the 'finished product' I thought it could serve to help someone else having similar dilemmas, much in the same tradition as William Styron's *Darkness Visible*, which helped me when I was down and out.

The other reason for writing this pretentious introduction is to acknowledge all the works of art I make reference to in the story.

We wouldn't want you to think I'm some kind of genius would we??

I put these various lyrics and quotes and the like in as part of my adventure to pay homage to the creations that inspire me, and to give the reader who tracks down these sources an extra air of atmosphere.

So don't sue me you bastards! There's no cash here for you anyways.

Bah.



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THEOPENEDMIND.BIZ

**THE CONTROVERSIAL PAPERBACK THAT STARTED IT ALL!**

**THE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO TELEPATHY  
IS A FAILED FEAR AND LOATHING  
ROAD TRIP THAT DOESN'T ACTUALLY  
GO ANYWHERE - BUT IT'S EXACTLY  
WHERE YOU WANT TO GO.**

**-YOUR GURU**

**NOW AVAILABLE IN \*COMPLETE\* FREE PDF  
FORM DUE TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S  
EDITING AND DELETION OF FINAL CHAPTER  
FROM ALL PREVIOUS EDITIONS...**

**...ONE OF THE PSYCH NURSES RETURNED TO THE OFFICE AND TOOK ME  
DOWN TO THE END ROOM OF THE HALLWAY. I WAS TO SIT AT THAT DOOR  
FOR FOUR HOURS IN CASE THE SIXTY YEAR OLD LADY WITH BIPOLAR  
DISORDER INSIDE THE ROOM WOKE UP AND STARTED WANDERING AIM-  
LESSLY THROUGH THE WARD CAUSING HAVOC. IT SEEMED I HAD  
CAUGHT A BREAK, SEEING AS SHE WAS ASLEEP AND THERE WASN'T  
MUCH TIME LEFT TIL MY FREEDOM WAS SECURED. I SAT IN MY NIGHT  
WATCHING CHAIR AND STARED BACK DOWN THE CORRIDOR AT THE FISH  
TANK.**

**IT WAS A WEIRD THOUGHT, BUT THE GREEN FLOORS OF THE HALLWAY,  
THE GLASS WALLS OF THE OFFICE, EVEN THE FAKE POT PLANT BY THE  
DOOR ALL FELT STRANGELY FAMILIAR TO ME...**

**12TH EDITION BY JEFF TATE (C) 2016**



**OPENED MIND  
PRODUCTIONS**