

Blindsight.

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Night I

I dream of its tendrils on the first night. Dark, wiry tentacles squirming their way into every orifice.

The thick strands wrap around my neck and chest, their firm grip forcing the air out of my lungs. I desperately inhale, yet it is black liquid that fills me instead of oxygen. I feel my innards burn, a cleansing acid removing all impurities.

It burrows into my navel, bores into my anus, snakes into my genitals. Violation of the highest order, yet without hate or lust or fear. No emotion, just unfathomable purpose.

The evisceration burns like fire, rips like childbirth, stings like heartbreak, but it isn't meant to hurt. They just need more space.

No, not they, but 'him'. Or 'her'. Someone, or something. It doesn't matter. I'm going to die.

And my purpose will be served.

I feel the intruder's appendages writhe inside of me, filling me to the brim with its unfeeling essence. A balloon set to burst, the pain of the reverse birth unimaginable. Yet in that moment of exquisite pain, I saw with otherworldly clarity.

I understood.

Choking the life out me, making room for something else. A trade.

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Day I

I wake up screaming, covered in what feels like sweat or blood or piss. It smells like all three. It's the blackest night I've ever seen, even my bed covered by its impenetrable darkness. I've already forgotten the dream. My head hurts thinking about it.

My eyes itch and I try to scratch them, but instead of skin I feel a different material. I carefully touch my face, tracing the coarse linen bandage wrapped around my head. Sure explains the

lack of light. A spark of fear hits me and I start breathing quickly. I touch the rest of my body to check for other injuries or even worse, for missing limbs. No other wounds that I can detect. My steady breathing returns and I calm myself again. I was in an accident. I must be at a hospital.

I attempt to sit up and my brain explodes. The pain pulses from the front of my head outwards to the rest of my body, causing my jaw to clench and muscles to spasm. Instinctively, I grab my face with both hands and close my eyes. Or I try to at least. The system meant for moving my eyelids doesn't do as it's told.

My eye sockets burn red hot as I land back on my pillow. I barely manage to stop my hands from reaching for my injured eyes. I attempt to fight the tears, to no avail. The sensation of salt mixed with my apparently still open wounds is excruciating. My brain instructs my body it has taken enough punishment for one day, and I lose consciousness.

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I'm walking through the park. It's quite cold and wet, but I love the rain. No, actually I love taking a shower after I get home all soaked and shivering.

I'm listening to a classical piece of which I don't know the name. A few days ago I decided that I should listen to more cultured music. I'm not sure yet whether I feel more sophisticated, or more of a pretentious asshole. Musing the pros and cons of being one or the other, I exit the park and before long, my feet on autopilot, I arrive at the front door.

In the corner of my eye, I see a shabby looking woman walk up to me as I fumble around with my keys. Sorry miss, I don't have any change on me and I don't smoke either, I tell her in anticipation of the usual questions. I might have an apple or something if you give me a moment. As I unlock the front door, I feel her close by. I turn around, like I said, just give me a moment.

I stare straight into her unblinking, milky-white eyes. She moves her dried lips and I hear the voice that drowns out all others. The guttural sound is reminiscent of a meatgrinder, barely audible television static, the grinding noise of tectonic plates colliding. Windows shatter, bones splinter. The flutter of tiny insect wings. Blood coursing through a hundred-thousand aortas simultaneously.

Unable to look away from the woman's glazed over eyes, I push my hands onto my ears as hard as I can, anything to make it stop, make it stop please, oh god. With inhumane effort I manage to close my eyes, only to find me unable to open them again, the terrifying voice taking shape in the darkness behind them. I grind my teeth and pull my ears but I see only the voice, I hear only the forming shape.

Desperate and half-crazed, I move a trembling hand away from my right ear and lash out. My palm connects with something far away, in a place different than the one behind my eyes. A ripping, tearing sound louder than the sonic boom of a fighter plane, and I open my eyes. The woman has a bruise on her cheek from where I apparently landed my blow. Her gaze averted, the woman tears up, slumps her shoulders and falls to her knees on the stone steps, a loud crack indicative of kneecaps shattering. A hysterical wail escapes her mouth. Please don't please stop I beg you, she cries. A black and red substance oozes from her ears and mouth, yet she unflinchingly raises her head and stares up at me again with those empty eyes. Afraid of her, of the voice, terrified, I hit her again, harder this time.

Stay the fuck away from me.

Adrenaline kicks in and my left hand joins the fray and I punch and push and stop get away from me get away you beast die die fuck you.

Hyperventilating and backed up against the door, I push her away with both hands as hard as possible. She falls backwards, tumbles down the steps and lies motionless on her back, her body twisted at an awkward angle.

She isn't moving. I gasp for air. She doesn't move. Tears start clouding my vision.

Somewhere deep down I know she won't ever move again.

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Night II

I'm looking through a small, rectangular window.

The soft, pink creature that stares back seems familiar somehow.

I contort my face at it, and it returns a crooked smile. I move one of my limbs towards it dismissively, and it mimics me mockingly.

The harsh light reveals all its countless imperfections perfectly.

Patchy, black fur covers its hide, which is thin enough to show the underlying veins. Its chest moves up and down rhythmically with its exhalation, its need for oxygen apparent. Pores open and close, releasing warmth and liquid, revealing the inefficient regulation of its body temperature. The pupils of its two small eyes fruitlessly shrink and dilate, unable to catch the light properly. It shivers from the cold, naked and weak.

I laugh at its pathetic musculature and it sneers at me in return.

It does not know its place. I'll take its meaningless life.

I attack.

The mirror shatters from the impact of my fist, which breaks along with it.

Instead of pain, a sensation of disgust overtakes me as I realize my error. The remaining pieces of glass still clinging to the wall reflect my repulsion.

I pick up a large piece of the broken mirror and clutch it tightly, glass piercing the skin of my hand.

Without hesitation I jab the shard into the soft flesh underneath my jaw.

I slowly cut upwards, towards my left ear and pull out the glass, which I drop. I push my fingers into the incision, grabbing hold of the foreign meat firmly.

I throw one last look at the hideous creature and pull back hard, tearing off the fleshy mask.

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Day II

I wake up to the sound of my father's voice. He's talking to someone on the phone. It sounds serious. He's shouting while simultaneously trying to keep his voice down. Yes I know about the Esmeralda docking, I'll be there as soon as I can, but someone needs to be here when he wakes up.

Dad, I stutter, my voice cracking from disuse, you better not let Tom take care of the shipyard while you're away. I smile in his general direction. He'll only make a few sink if you're lucky.

He produces a sound I have never heard before, something between a laugh and a sob and mumbles distractedly about having to go. Quick footsteps later, his hand touches my cheek softly. His hand trembling slightly, his voice quivering, he calls my name. My father tells it will be alright and how glad he is that I'm still alive.

I ask him and he tells me I will never see again.

His grip tightens and I hear my father weep for the very first time. I hug him and I try not to cry but I do and the anguish returns. He calls out and a person whom I assume to be the nurse gives me something for the pain. The burning stops, yet something keeps pulsing behind my eyes, like a heartbeat.