

Internal

written by

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Address  
Phone  
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## THE BEGINNING

*The audience member is given the rules of the show:*

- \* Listen to directions within the audio.*
- \* If you are told to walk, walk at a slow pace.*
- \* Be aware of your surroundings as you move.*
- \* If you are told to stand still, step out of the main flow of traffic before doing so.*
- \* Follow and instructions on the audio.*
- \* Look for the large BRAIN buttons pinned on actors before interacting with them. This will assure you that you are dealing with someone from the show.*

*Once they are ready, they are placed facing in the right direction and given one final instruction:*

### INSTRUCTOR:

Please put your headset on. Close your eyes. Countdown slowly from 10 to 1. Then press play to start your experience.

*The Instructor makes certain that the audience member does as they are supposed to do and then the show begins...*

## SCENE ONE: WHAT WAS THAT?

NARRATOR

Deep breath. Relax. Take the moment to listen to the street around you.

*Street noise in headphones. A -very- slow heartbeat starts playing, so slow it's unrecognizable.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

That's what the doctor says, right? When it gets to be too much, take a moment to just listen. A moment to quiet your head down and center yourself again. So let's do that. Let's relax. Just. Re-lax. Re---I can't believe it's already June. 2019 is halfway over already. I don't feel like I've accomplished ANYTHING of ANY VALUE. Then again, does ANYONE really accomplish much of anything anymore? Isn't it all just a waste of time and space and people and food and diseases and hyperbole and all that crap? Sometimes I think I'm so far behind everyone else. But I'm not, right? I can't really be that much of a waste. Can I? Everyone has to have moments like this where they feel like they're standing at the edge of the end of the world and they're the only ones who don't see the danger, right? I'm sure of it. RIGHT? It's not just me being some weird monster standing around on a Friday night with my eyes closed. Oh, shit. Why am I just standing here on a street corner like an idiot? Why haven't I started walking home? Why can't I keep my head straight? Why am I talking to myself like a complete asshole?

*Street noises get louder, blaring suddenly.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

No, remember what the doctor said. Listen. Don't talk. Listen. LISTEN. No, it's getting too loud. Something's coming for me. It's going to run me down. *Nonsense. It's far more dangerous than that. It's going to eat you from the inside out.* QUIET! Just let me THINK for a second!

*The sound goes completely out for a moment (except for the heartbeat).*

*Then the street noises fade back in softly.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay. Okay. THAT was completely unnecessary. You get that, right? COMPLETELY overboard. I know it was fucking crazy earlier but that's not an excuse to completely lose your shit, you know? It was just one weird moment. You know that, right? You used to be so much stronger about things and now you just freak the fuck out when some woman runs at you and snaps her teeth. There was a time you've have slapped her away without even thinking. What'd you do this time? Just stand there. You didn't even make a sound.

She just SNAPPED SNAPPED SNAPPED and you hid your eyes like a kid watching George Romero for the first time. Your eyes were shut so tight--just like right now--you don't even have any idea how that car hit her--

*There is the sound of a car crash, echoing and distant somehow.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

--and even when you heard it you STILL didn't make a sound. You just walked away. Now it's however long later it might be and your eyes are closed again and the street sounds got loud and NOW you wanted to scream? It wouldn't make ANY damn sense to scream now. You were frightened back THEN. Now you're just dredging up the moment with my nattering nonsense of noise and there's no damn reason to be scared here. So thank God you just did it in your head. Wait. Wait. Wait. It WAS all in my head, right? Fuck me. Did I scream out loud? Did I? Did I hear it echo off the buildings or am I just deciding I heard it because that matches my freaked out state? We have to decide the answer here. It's a Friday on Vine and people could be staring at me. What would I say if they do? Oh, Jesus, stop just talking and OPEN YOUR EYES RIGHT NOW.

*Panting, out of breath, very close.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Nobody's staring, right? We're good, right? Anyone? Anyone?

*Panting calms down.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

No, I think we're good. You're good, I mean. I'm just the stupid little voice in your head. *Whistling in the graveyard.* Dodged a bullet that time, you know. But Jesus, you gotta be careful. Enough crazy homeless wandering Hollywood already. You don't want people to add you to the list. Not that anyone in L.A. even recognizes the homeless as a situation any more. Just walk on by, sir, madam. Ignore them. Claim you care on Facebook but do nothing of any real value. *They're already dead, anyway.* Jesus, that's a dark thought. You're just a spot of sunshine tonight, ain't ya? Just make sure you don't say any of this out loud, ok? YOU might think it's okay to be seen as part of the wandering brigade. But I don't want to join them. Okay? OKAY? How about we START WALKING NORTH now? That cool with you? That's where our home is, right?

*The street sounds continue. The heartbeat speeds up just a tiny bit, gets a tiny bit louder. Noises designed to make the audience feel like there is someone walking behind them. They get close and then vanish. It should sound a little...off.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

(Laughs)

Keep asking questions and you WILL blurt something out loud and that'll be all the answer you need, won't it? This is what you get for living by yourself in a city that breeds loneliness like roaches and devours love faster than In N'Out. Los Angeles gives you too much time on your hands. No one to talk to all day long. *No one to talk to all night, either, though.* That's what places like Three Clubs are for. Crazy homeless woman scares you and you grab a drink to help you ignore it. Or two. Or ... was it six? Jesus, maybe that's why your brain is scattered all to hell. You can't even remember how many drinks you *just* had. *Who are you kidding, kidding, kiddo? You talk to yourself no matter how sober or drunk you are. It's all you've got left. Whose fault is that? Yours.* Shut up, you. *I'll be quiet. Thank you. For now.*

*Silence from the voice. Police helicopter sound in the distance, a horn honks.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

That Hampton Inn popped up fast. Super fast. And yet I've already forgotten whatever the hell existed there before it. Happens every time something new gets built here. Can't for the bloody life of me remember what the hell was there before. Hollywood--even our memories are just facades here. Front walls and cheap construction and nothing inside. Not. A. Damn. Thing. Buildings with no souls. Matches all of us who live there, I suppose--what in the hell was WRONG with that woman? She ran at me SO FAST. Fucking teeth everywhere. SNAP. SNAP. SNAPPITY-SNAP-SNAP-SNAP!

*Something similar to that makes noise EXTREMELY CLOSE. Human teeth? Something else? WHAT THE HELL IS IT?*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It's a damn good thing you leaned back enough that she didn't latch onto you anywhere. Imagine what kind of bubonic plague, typhus kind of crap she might have had in her. No one's vaccinated enough for that shit. STOP. STOP RIGHT NOW. GET OUT OF PEOPLE'S WAY and think. What was that you heard yesterday about a new virus? It wasn't in L.A. yet, right? Yeah, yeah, it was just in Hong Kong. CDC put out a warning for travelers. Well, that ain't gonna be you any time soon. Okay, let's HEAD FOR THE CORNER. We gotta get--oh, fuck me. That's Marjorie from your building, isn't it? Right there in front of you. If you don't speak to her now, she'll complain about it for a week. Might as well STOP WHAT YOU'RE LISTENING TO AND TAKE OFF YOUR HEADPHONES and get it over with. Go say hello to her.

DIRECTION VOICE

PLEASE TURN OFF THE TRACK AND REMOVE YOUR HEADPHONES.

## SCENE TWO: INNOCENCE

*Marjorie (#1) spots the audience member as they finish taking off the headphones and smiles at them. She's young, innocent--that epitome of the naive, recently married WASP-type young woman. Bright, cheery, determined to keep a happy face on any situation...even the worst.*

*She walks over to the audience, barely able to carry the bags that she has in her hands. The bags are closed but seem to be full of canned grocery items and other such staples.*

MARJORIE

Hello, Audience Member X! I'm so glad I ran into you! Would you mind grabbing a few of these bags for me? You'd be such a sweetheart!

*She gives a few bags to the audience member if they accept the help (move to beyond the nasty bit).*

*If they refuse, she turns on them charm and tries once more to get them to do so. If they still refuse, she turns a little nasty.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Well, then, don't come to me when you run out of food!

*Then she shakes her head and returns to a happier tone.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Come on, we better get walking. Don't want to miss the Presidential address later, do we?

*She starts walking up Vine slowly, chatting in a way that is either bubbly...or desperately trying to cover her fear. Which is it?*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Gosh, have you seen the grocery stores today? It took me six stops before I found one that still had all the food I needed for hubby and Cat Stephans and me. You remember Cat, of course. You fed him when we were on that trip to London last year. I'm so sorry he scratched you twice! Did the scars on your hand ever heal?

*She prompts the audience for an answer, helping them if they're shy.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

I'm so glad. You know, I once heard that a cat's claws are one of the nastiest things in the whole world!

You can get so many infections from them. That's why I told you to make sure you washed it clean and used hydrogen peroxide every day. You *did* do that, right?

*She looks at the audience member earnestly.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

You told me you did but you wouldn't lie to me, right? I couldn't *bear* it if something terrible happened to my neighbor just because my cat is nervous with new people. You're okay, right?

*Once again trying to prompt an answer.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

I'm glad. That reporter said the only thing worse than a cat's claws was being bit by a human being. But that's like a zillion to one chance, right? The only people who get bit by humans are those who work in mental institutions. Or like, do MMA fighting or something. Wouldn't you say? I mean, no one's ever bitten you before, right? Or me. Or like, anyone I know. I wouldn't even know what a human bite was like. It's you know, like a crazy thing that would be so, you know, *random*, right? You'd just be like--what are you doing? Why are you biting me? What's wrong with you? *Get away from me, Frank! What's gotten into you? If you're hungry, I'll go get some food. It's not a joke!*

*She's suddenly and frighteningly almost hysterical at the end of this and then she stops, both walking and talking, and looks for just the SLIGHTEST second of fear at the audience member and then laughs. It's the most fake-attempting-to-be-real laugh that only white women who are covering for something they refuse to acknowledge have ever learned.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Gosh, look at me getting all caught up in myself like that. Melodrama much, Marjorie? You know me. Sometimes I just forget that I'm not still in the drama depart at Cal State LA. Stop making everything into Tennessee Williams, Marj--no one's paying to see you Hot Tin Roof anymore!

*She laughs again, this time really trying to push off the moment by making herself look foolish.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Anyway, what were we talking about?

*She starts walking again as she says this. Hopefully the audience says 'groceries' or 'shopping'. If so, she responds to that. If not, she brings herself back around to it.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Shopping, that's right! There were so many people at the stores. It was like a summertime Black Friday--but like, a million times worse. People were scrambling to get any food they could find. Have you ever seen anyone fighting over green beans in a can before? I sure haven't--but I did today. A woman threatened me for my can of cat food--and she already had like 50 in her cart. So I'm lucky that I finally got these bags here. This'll take care of us for at least two weeks. Which is totally going to be enough, don't you think?

*She stops once more.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

I mean, you heard the reports earlier, right? About the virus? KFI's news people kept saying that it should all be over in like 10 or 11 days. It's a fast virus and either you get it or you don't but either way, the disease people are claiming it'll have moved beyond contagious by a few weeks from now. So we're good, right? This is enough, right?

*She drops her bags and reaches out almost touching the audience member and then flinching back. She keeps doing this as she talks, as though -trying- to find a way to connect but not being able to do so.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm being a selfish, needy fligamajob. It's just that Frank was gone when the whole virus thing started and they said it broke out in Asia somewhere and he just came back from Shanghai and he had this fever and it scared me a little. He's totally better now

*(a complete lie)*

but for a moment I thought he must have it and, like, neither of us believe in vaccinations--the mercury levels are so bad for you. But I thought, what if it was real? What if vaccinations like keep you safe from things and he was unsafe because he didn't take them and then I was unsafe because I didn't take them? What if we like both got sick and no one came to look for us and then he ended up sleeping for a really long time and then I got even more scared. Because if he died or something--or I died--how stupid would we look to the rest our friends? To the world? Who wants to be the one who shows everyone else how dangerous not protecting yourself is? I'd do anything to avoid that.

*As she says that, she slides a sleeve up for just a second and there's a clear bite-mark on her arm. From human teeth. Then she covers it instantly, desperately.*



MARJORIE (CONT'D)

But I don't have to worry about it, because Frank's fine now. He woke up super hungry and now I've got the food he needs and I'm feeling great, too. So see? Who needs vaccinations? The human body is more than able to fend off any disease.

*She grabs the bags and starts walking once more.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

I think that's why people are panicking so much, anyway. They've all bought into Big Pharma's lies and that means the moment they think they might get sick, they freak out. Because the vaccination brigades tells them "take this and this and this and that and you'll be safe from EVERYTHING." Well, I think Mother Nature has decided to show us all. And then what is Pharma going to do? They'll be shown for the liars they are and the whole scheme will fall apart. And we'll all be better for it, too, in the end. That's what I think. What about you?

*She responds to whatever the audience member says and then when that discussion concludes (or a minute-two have gone by), she moves on.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Oh, I forgot to mention the worst part of my Black June shopping trip. There was this one old man--I mean really legit old, like at least 50--who was just standing there in the parking lot. Wait, you gotta picture this. Put the bags down and close your eyes for a second.

*She waits for the audience to do so.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

So now imagine this old man like I said. And he's sort of wobbling back and forth as he stands in a parking lot. Cars drive past him, some honk for him to move out of the way. But he just stands there, wobbling. Shaking. I don't know if he was sick or drunk or what. But he just stands there. Waving back and forth like a sick penguin who's lost his way home. And then this one pick-up accidentally backs into him. Not hard--the driver totally saw him at the last moment and almost stopped. But he, like, tapped him. And this old man just...he just LOST it. He ran at the pick-up and leaped on it and ran up to the window of the cab and just started hitting it. Again and again and again. SMACK! SMACK! CRASH! And the window broke and the man started bleeding something fierce and the driver leaped out of the truck and ran away screaming. Other people were calling 911 and the old man was trying to crawl through the window and cutting himself bad and the driver was bleeding, too. I think the old man like ripped his face with his fingernails or something and it was...it was...

*She trails off and stops until either 15 seconds have gone by or the audience member opens their eyes again.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

*(whispered just loud enough  
that the audience can hear it  
on the street)*

It was the moment I knew what was going to happen to me and Frank.

*She looks at the audience member, grabs all the bags and leans close.*

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Just put on your next track, Audience Member name. Block it out. While you still can.

*And she dashes away.*

SCENE THREE: FOCUS AND CONTROL. FOCUS AND CONTROL. FOCUS...

*The audience member turns on Track #2. The heartbeat begins again, slightly faster.*

*At the same time, a discordant horn musical instrumental plays, backwards, echoing and harsh.*

NARRATOR

Did you see what was on her arm? That was a bite, right? Like straight up, no shit, human teeth marks bite. Did her husband do that? *Of course he did. Humans are tasty.* I think he did. I think her husband bit the shit out of her. Okay, take a moment. Breathe. *The end is closer now.* CLOSE YOUR EYES. *Can you feel it? Remember the doc's orders. Nothing can save you--STOP IT! YOU DON'T EXIST.*

*Heavy panting once more, this time with just the tiniest hint of a snarl, of gnashing teeth, at the edge of audible.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

There are no other voices in your head except you. The doctor has told you this again and again. YOU are the only one here. *Then what am I?* Everything else comes from anxiety. Remember that. There is me, talking to you. The one and only voice in your head. Get it? Got it? Anxiety, you got anything else to say?

*There is silence, altered only by breathing that sounds loud, close and almost laughing.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

I didn't think so. Now why don't you OPEN YOUR EYES and START WALKING AGAIN. Look, it doesn't matter what Marjorie or her idiot husband did or are doing or will do. Maybe they're just into pain or some shit like that. And if people want to give in to yet another epidemic panic and make a run on groceries, that's their problem. That's what GrubHub is for, right? I'll just order in several pizzas if I have to. Or a bunch of ramen from 7-11. They never run out of that crap.

*Sounds of a helicopter flying nearby. Street noises continue.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

If it were really an actual problem, the government would adopt curfews and martial law and stuff like that. Don't tell me they wouldn't--they've literally trained for moments like these. And half the politicians would love to have any reason to erase rights in the interests of 'safety'. Even those in Sacramento--they're not immune to wanting to protect their jobs over anyone and anything else.

So as far as I'm concerned, the fact that I can still walk down this street without National Guard or cops asking to see my papers is proof that we got nothing to worry about.

*The helicopter gets louder.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Fucking helicopters. They bother me a hell of a lot more than any police state conspiracy theory does. Those things make living in L.A. feel like a war zone on a constant basis. Every time I hear one start flying close, half of me wants to run to a vantage point to see if I can see what they're trying to chase down. And the other half wants to go to that same vantage point with a rocket launcher and shoot the damn thing down just to get some peace and quiet.

*The helicopter gets even closer.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Hang on. Let's STOP WALKING and LOOK AROUND. Can we see the copter flying yet? Because it sounds like it ought to be easily spotted. No, don't see it yet. At least it hasn't flown right over us yet. Sometimes I swear the pressure from the blades is like a physical thing, trying to overwhelm you, drown you in its malevolent, angry assault on your breathing, your chest. Remember that one time a copter flew right above that balcony? It was so much that you thought you died for a second, that you were now just a shambling mess left behind after your soul was snatched away by the THRUM THRUM THRUM of the blades.

*And indeed, the helicopter has begun to get very loud through this until it does feel that way.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

You literally gasped when it was past. THRUM THRUM THRUM. Snap. Snap. Snap. What did you say? *Repetition in thought. A sign of fear and panic.* It's just a damn helicopter, that's all. *Helicopters are a modern harbinger of death. A flock of ravens all beating as one.* Enough! How many times do I have to tell you to shut you up?

*There is silence, even from the helicopter--as though it vanished in an instant.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*How many times will you deny your fate? Fate? What are you talking about? Look deep. Look inside. You will know.* I'm not listening to you. I'm shutting you down NOW. LOOK AROUND. Do you see the helicopter now? Where is it? Why can't I hear it any more? Can YOU hear it still?

*There is silence, except for the heartbeat which has sped up one more step.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Fine. Fine. It's gone, that's all that matters. Let's START WALKING again. If you can imagine other voices, I bet you can imagine other noises, too. After all, there isn't *anything* more frightening than what the human mind can conjure. Every horror movie ever made? Created by humans. Every torture device? Every weapon? Nothing but us just thinking up new and worse things. Day by day. And don't get me started on supernatural shit. Vampires. Werewolves. *Zombies*. Demons. It's like we want to make things as terrible as we possibly can, so we do.

*There is a soft growl. From the front. Then from the sides. Other sounds mix in.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

We make monsters of immigrants and races and sexes. We tear each other apart with words and deeds, stripping our souls and minds and flesh apart with mindless abandon. We shred each other, flesh and blood and bone, ripping. Ripping. Tearing. Shredding. SLAUGHTERING. *Enjoying*. EATING. *Every*. ERADICATING. *Moment*. I SAID ENOUGH! STOP MOVING while we finish this parasitic voice once and for all.

*The street sounds come back, this time with dark laughter behind it--as though something is amused that we are trying to end it.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Voice, do you hear me? Don't deny me. Do you hear me? *Of course I do*. Fantastic. I want you to listen closely to me. Are you listening? Can you do that? *Of course I am listening*. Even better. From this moment on, we will ignore anything you have to say. Both myself and I. Do you understand? You cannot affect us any longer because we are real and you are nothing but fear. Despair. Worry. Brought together and given form to overwhelm our sanity. WE WILL NOT ALLOW THAT. Do you understand me?

*Everything suddenly shuts down in a sucked-up sound of silence. WHIIIPPPP! It is a long beat.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*I understand*. Great! Then goodbye, go away, stop talking and we'll all move on. *Do one thing and I will go*. WHAT? WHAT could you possibly expect us to do that will do ANYTHING but feed into the terror you want us to experience? *I simply want you to recognize the truth*. And what POSSIBLE truth could that be? *You didn't lean back far enough after all*. THAT'S IT!

*The street sounds come back in a reverse of that rush of silence.*

## NARRATOR (CONT'D)

We are caught in an emotion loop. You remember, the doctor told us about these and how to get out of them. When you're caught repeating the same emotional tone over and over, what do you do? That's right, we change our path and that disrupts the cycle. So let's do that right now. Let's TURN OFF THIS TRACK, TAKE OFF THE HEADPHONES and CROSS VINE at the next intersection. That'll break the cycle for good and that voice will be GONE.

## DIRECTION VOICE

TURN OFF YOUR TRACK. REMOVE YOUR HEADPHONES AND CROSS VINE AT THE NEXT INTERSECTION.

## SCENE FOUR: WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS, SHOOT THEM

*As the audience member crosses the street, BRYAN watches them and slowly moves toward them. He's dressed as ready for the apocalypse as he can possibly be and still be one man. Backpack, bags, utensils, tools. Whatever he thinks could possibly be useful-- and a few things that only truly obsessed people would contemplate.*

*As soon as the audience member is across, Bryan walks directly to the member.*

BRYAN

THERE you are, Audience Member X! Why the hell haven't you been answering your phone? I must have left like 2 dozen voice messages for you. I even texted you three times. THREE TIMES! You know how easily they can track your current GPS location from those things, right? I was beginning to think you'd already been turned by the radio waves. They can get through more easily to those who take any medication--I've told you that before, you know. Haven't I. Hey, you are still in there, right?

*Bryan stops talking and stares suspiciously into the audience member's eyes. As he asks the following questions, he waits JUST long enough for the answer before asking the next question. The goal is to get the audience member a little disoriented.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Shit, I should've checked that first. Okay. Stand still. Now answer the questions I ask you. What's your name? What day is it? The year? What is your favorite color? TV show? Who is the President? Who *should* have been the President? What's your favorite number? Why?

*When the questions are done, Bryan stares a little longer. Just at the edge of too long. Then he grins.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Just had to be sure. I think you're still good to go. Which is great, because that's exactly what we need to do--go. Now. FOLLOW ME.

*Bryan walks down Vine, back towards Santa Monica. He waves the audience member up so that they're walking side-by-side if necessary.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

So you saw the news, right? Virus breaking out in Hong Kong? Bullshit fake news like it always is.

You ever wonder why all the pandemics break out in some out-of-the-way part of the world and not in, like, Chicago or London or Rome or, fuck, anyplace normal? Think about it for a second. It's because they need to control the narrative, right? If they said "virus pops up in Paris," there'd be tweets and TikToks and all sort of crap saying "what virus?" So they launch their next 'world danger' from someplace where they control the media and spoon-feed us whatever bullshit they need to do to terrorize us.

*He stops dead and turns to the audience member.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

You can't believe them, man. Doesn't matter if it's CNN or MSNBC or the U.S. Government or any other massive institution. It's all a shell game and we're the suckers betting on the Queen AND the dollar bills we spend AND fucking everything else. It's all one big lie and everyone here--

*He points to cars passing on the street.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

--everyone driving around in their SUVs and buying iPhones and drinking Starbuck's at the corner there and consuming entertainment as an escape valve from the misery--everyone of us falls for it. There's only one way out. You know what it is, Audience Member X?

*He tries to get an answer. If it's not close, he says the following.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

No, come on! How many times have you and I had drinks and talked about this? Are you sure you're okay? No sign of black-eyed children or owls in your memory today, right?

*If they answer close, he responds as follows.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

You haven't forgotten our talks! That's right--you have to step outside the story and look at it from the outside. You gotta break free. Only then can you see the truth.

*He reaches into his bag and pulls out a bunch of papers that have graphs on them and notes scribbled all over the place. He starts looking through them, holding them up for a second--just long enough for the audience to get some sense of them but not REALLY read them.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

So let's take a look at this. Hong Kong virus spreading faster than any on record.



That means they're getting ready to do some sort of false flag population adjustment. Typical cover story for shit like that, right? The CDC said people who show any signs need to be quarantined. So that means we're dealing with squads showing up to cart people away and martial law to guarantee control once and for all. And who is going to get sick? Those that the government wants to eradicate from society, of course. Those who show signs of individuality, of being a potential 'danger' to whatever the real plan is that they're going to launch to help guarantee their control.

*He suddenly stops flipping through the papers and laughs.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

You know who else they're gonna cart away? All those fucking MAGA people. I mean, do you REALLY think that Trump isn't part of this whole thing? I can't fucking think of a better way to distract people from the rising tyranny of the world than be intentionally putting a loud, obnoxious bully on the throne and letting the entire U.S. government grind to a fucking halt. And it's not just Americans who are lost in the day-to-day chaos. Trump's derailed the entire fucking world with his bullshit. And for those few in Europe who don't want to pay attention to him, they gave THEM Brexit which is just as much of a distraction.

*He shoves the papers back into his bag.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

And now they claim there's a virus outbreak? I mean, they've pushed the narrative on this one all the way. I've seen videos of people screaming as they run down a street and SUPPOSEDLY there's people getting bitten by other virus-infected people who are delusional or some such story. But I mean, who believes what you see on a video any more? They can do *anything* with CGI. Here--take a look for yourself.

*He pulls a phone out of some pocket and shows the audience member a video of people screaming and strange cuts to supposed 'biting'. It's not very effective or clear.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

See? Fake news. Scare you from every direction so you don't know which way to go any more. But I do.

*He shoves the phone back into his pocket and yanks a map out of another pocket.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

See this? I've got it all sorted out. We get the FUCK out of this nightmare of a town while we still can. We head right here.

*He points to a circled area in the Colorado mountains. As he talks, it becomes clear that he is obsessed with this idea and has been for a long time.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

I've built a cabin there with running water nearby, solar power and even a satellite dish. For as long as those last, anyway. I've shielded it from overhead searches thanks to a website I read on how to avoid being spotted by satellite. I've built the most secure computer that I've ever made and with it we'll be able to watch what unfolds in complete safety. And if they ever do try to come after us, I've wired the entire thing to blow and booby-trapped almost a mile out in every direction. It might be our last stand but we'll live longer than any of the sheep in this overpopulated, undersane cesspool that represents everything that's rotten in modern capitalism. Anything is better than staying here any longer and spending your entire life fighting for meager resources while sitting in your car for half the day only to pay half your entire month's salary just to have a roof over your head. Whatever happens to ruin the world, it'll happen in Los Angeles first. This is where every fucking dream comes to die, so why not the American one?

*He finally stops, realizing perhaps that he's gone a little far. He smiles, trying to make it lighter but probably just making it creepier.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

If we get there fast enough, we can avoid whatever actual thing is about to happen to the world. I've got enough food for 2 people for 5 years plus we can hunt for fresh meat and fish. What do you say? It's the only chance we have but you have to go NOW. You can't call anyone or email or text or anything of the kind. We leave right now. Tonight. And we vanish as far as the rest of the world is concerned. No time for questions, either. I'm leaving right now. Are you in or out?

*The audience member can say yes, no or hesitate. If they say yes, Bryan responds as follows.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

THAT'S what I'm talking about! Let's GTFO!

*He holds out his hand for the audience member to shake. (Go down to after a No/Hesitate answer)*

*If the audience member says no or hesitates, Bryan gets colder.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Fine. If you're not in, then you're gonna be on your own. Don't say I didn't warn you. Los Angeles is where you're going to die. But hey--it's still a free country. For a day or two.

*He holds out his hand for the audience member to shake.*

*Either way, once the audience member shakes (or if they don't he leans in a little), Bryan stares at them again, startled.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. What is that in your eyes? There's...what the hell is that?

*He leans in even closer.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

That isn't right. It's like...black streaks or something...swirling around across the pupils. Or is it moving? It that...alive? What? What...

*He never gets loud throughout any of that, ending in a whisper as he trails off.*

*He backs up a step.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

It can't be real. It can't be. C-can it?

*He leans forward one more time.*

BRYAN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. I, uh, I have to go. Why don't you just PUT YOUR HEADPHONES BACK ON and PLAY YOUR NEXT TRACK? I'm--I'm...

*The moment the audience puts their headphones back on, he dashes away, leaving as fast as he can from their sight.*

## SCENE FIVE: WHAT BIG TEETH YOU HAVE

*The track begins. The heartbeat starts under the words, faster now, almost noticeable as a repetitive beat. The sounds of the street again playing.*

NARRATOR

What the hell was he just talking about? My eyes? MY EYES? There's nothing wrong with my eyes. If there was something like that, I'd be able to see it.

*There is a soft chuckle from the 'other' voice, soft and dark.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

I told you to shut up.

*The chuckle happens again.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Oh. You think you're clever don't you? I told you to stop talking and you agreed. But LAUGHING isn't the same thing. What's funny, anyway?

*The voice chuckles once more, sighing, breathing.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Stop Laughing!* I swear to you, we are going to STEP TO THE EDGE OF THE SIDEWALK and sort this through before we go ANYWHERE else.

*There is a momentary lull as the heartbeat speeds up and a soft discordant music begins playing.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Now listen up, you fear-born anxiety demon, There's nothing funny about a conspiracy survivalist nutjob going off his rocker because he thinks the sky is falling. Who knows what kind of drugs he was on, anyway? Meth? Heroin? Mescal or peyote or some other crazy shit like that. God knows what people like him get a hold of to 'ward off the mind control X-rays!' So what is so damn funny to you? Are you asking me to speak once more? YES, dammit. WHAT is so funny? You won't like the answer. I don't like YOU whispering to me at all, so what's the damn difference? Well? WHAT is so funny? You are. What the hell does that mean? You. You're so determined to avoid what is happening inside you that you denounce me. You ignore that poor girl. You dismiss the person who sees the truth. You don't know what you're talking about. I'm the only one who DOES. You're the one who's lost. I'm just trying to get home tonight without my fears overwhelming me. That's just it. That's your delusion. No, that's me acknowledging that I've had a lot of problems in the past and I'm overcoming them. Slowly and surely and with a doctor's help.

*But that's not what I'm--If you can't realize what you are--if you can't realize that you're nothing but my fear of chaos expressing itself as a nasty little voice in the depths of my head then we have nothing further to talk about. Keep hiding the truth from--I said we are DONE talking. You. Hey, conscious me. The one listening to this waste of a conversation. Will you PLEASE start WALKING BACK TOWARDS SANTA MONICA? If I'm going to have to spend the rest of the night blocking "fear voice" from mucking up our whole head, I definitely need some Starbucks. Even if that makes me the same type of mindless drone old nutjob railed against. Let's walk.*

*A minute of just sounds of the street. In the background, there is both the heartbeat--now speeding up to being recognizable--and a BARELY hearable growling noise.*

*The heartbeat will get faster and the growling will get louder from here to the end of the show. So a very slow build for both.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

There. We've shut it up for now. Not that it'll stay silent for long. This century's practically be created to generate fear in all of us. Viruses. Global warming. Tyranny. Terrorism. Failing antibiotics. Rich getting very rich. Poor drowning in debt. College loans you'll never pay off. No matter where you turn it's all terrible. Disastrous. Chaotic. FRIGHTENING. You can either turn a blind eye to it or get swallowed up by it. Neither choice is a good one. So we pretend that we're doing good things. Making a difference. Creating art that inspires. Immersing people in moments that make us alive or give us an epiphany. And all the time, there is that voice in the back of our heads. It's coming. The end is coming. We've gone too far. We're out of our depths. We're running from the darkness and it's far, far too fast for any of us to avoid.

*There is a crash of something--a car, cymbals, the darkness itself.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

What the hell was that? Was that the sound of the darkness? Or just another hallucination in my head? GET SAFELY out of the flow of traffic and CLOSE YOUR EYES once more. Please, do it quickly and safely. Okay. Close your eyes and take a breath. *Take your last breath.* No, listen to the real world. Ignore that voice. *I am the darkness. I am already inside of you.* Nothing that voice says can hurt you. It's just your own fear. *I don't NEED to hurt you. You've already lost. I'm just trying to give you a few minutes' warning.* BREATHE. Deep. Slow. IGNORE that voice. *Do you REALLY think that's a good idea? Absolutely. You DO NOT control me.*

*Don't you want to know what the black in your eyes really is? It's nothing; I already said that before. Is it, though? If you want to know the truth, all you have to do is follow MY directions for once. No way! You want me terrified. You want me to give in to you. I do that--WE do that--and we're lost. Lost. Found. These words don't matter any more. ...what do you mean by that? When the end comes, everyone will be in the same place. What? Are you talking about hell or something like that? Everyone's going to end up in hell?*

*There is the chuckle again, but this time it takes full voice, still that 'other' voice but truly amused, dark and nasty.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Don't be a fool. When the end comes, everyone will end up here. Right here. On this dying planet, caught in the death of land and sea. Of sky and air. Of bees and eagles and tigers and everything else. Watching as the world rots away. Flesh and blood turning black and rotten. Families losing so many they stop burying them. Eating whatever remains to survive one more night, even if it means each other. Mindless hordes begging for a solution that will never come and wandering aimless across the land as though there might be salvation somewhere. Finding nothing but what has come before and turning angry, persistent, destructive when they do.*

*The voice gets closer, somehow, in the headphones.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*That's what happens when the end comes. You will all dry up until you're nothing but skin and bones, clawing each other apart in the hopes that some mind, somewhere, will be strong enough to lead you forward. And when none turns up, you will call into the darkness your last gasps of emotion. Wailing in despair. Who needs hell when we've already got all ANY of us need right here. And all any of us deserve.*

*The streets, the heartbeat and the growling for a few seconds.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*I...I don't believe you. It doesn't matter what YOU believe. What matters is that the conscious us is going to follow my suggestions. You can't be sure of that. Of course I am. No one can avoid curiosity in the end. Now you--the us listening to this right now. Follow these suggestions exactly. First, DO NOT TURN OFF MY VOICE. Let is continue to speak to you. Next, TURN AROUND and OPEN YOUR EYES slowly. I promise you, what you see will make sense in the end.*

## SCENE SIX: WAILING IN DESPAIR

*This time, the audio continues to play.*

*When the audience turns around and opens their eyes, they see DESPAIR standing a few feet away from them.*

*DESPAIR is a woman looking haggard, worn, lost. Her clothes are mismatched and haggard as well, her hair and makeup old, somehow. As though once upon a time she cared enough to put it on but somewhere, somewhen, she simply stopped caring--but never took the original off and it's stained and degraded along with her.*

## NARRATOR

*Take a look at the woman in front of you. Is she frightening? Crazy? Scared? Or just sad? Does she make you uncomfortable? Why? Because she looks out of place? Out of sorts? Out of mind? Please stop. Quiet, Sanity. This is not your time. This is mine. This is where our linear path steps out of place--and you cannot understand that kind of journey. Wake when we return. No, please, you're going to kill us. If we return. You can't trust--Shhhhhhh.*

*The heartbeat speeds up. The growling is finally audible, but only every once in a while. Now, however, there is a woman talking. She's speaking in reverse and it's unclear what, exactly, she is saying.*

*Despair has been moving slowly closer. Foot inching, sliding closer. Arm moving lifting in small ticks as she lifts her handbag. She will continue to move closer until the cue to do something else.*

## NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Now, where were we? That's right. The woman in front of you. Do you have any idea why she looks as she does? No, how could you? But there is a way to learn. All you need to do is SLOWLY REACH OUT YOUR HAND. MATCH THE SPEED OF THE WOMAN IN FRONT OF YOU. SLOWLY. SLOWLY. REACH OUT YOUR HAND.*

*Once the audience reaches out their hand, that cues Despair to open her bag, still slowly. She lifts up the bag and waits for the audience to do their part.*

## NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*See the bag in front of you. See the hole that yawns open within it. Anything can be in that bag. It can be something wonderful--but would that be the sort of thing a woman like this would have? It can be something terrible, but would a woman like this not get rid of something that awful as soon as possible? You know the only choice is to find out.*

And that is what you must do. SLOWLY REACH INTO THE BAG. SLOWLY. Sooooo slowly. Be only as afraid as you must. Be careful in case it bites. What could be within such a bag? What could be so valuable to a woman in such a state?

*If the audience member reaches into the bag, it is full of something wet, squishy, cold. It's "meat".*

*If the audience member is hesitant to reach inside, Despair will smile (a sudden, quick one that belies her slow movement up to now) and suddenly reach into the bag, pulling up a bloody, meaty mess high enough that the audience member can see it. The moment the meat is visible, she returns to slow movement.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Do you understand yet? The only thing worth anything in the world now is flesh that is not yours. The only coin of the realm is that which can be devoured, torn apart, eaten by the mindless horde that swarms like locusts even now across the land. Now STEP BACK AND START MOVING SOUTH ON VINE. WHEN YOU REACH BANNER STREET, TURN LEFT. You need to get out of the way of the woman behind you. Because she is Despair, and she is coming for you.

*Despair closes the bag and starts moving towards the audience, ever closer. If the audience moves quickly, she matches them. If they move slow, so does she. Either way, she follows them at a matched speed, watching them closely. Swinging her bag. Licking her lips, hungry. Hungry. Hungry.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Understand this. No matter what speed you take, Despair will follow. So there is no point in running. SLOW DOWN. WALK CALMLY. Running will only tire you out--and the only chance you have to avoid this future is to keep your stamina. You do WANT to avoid this future, yes? Before you answer, really think about that question. Everything your scientists tell you is that global warming has already gone too far. Everything your politicians tell you is a lie. Everything your friends and family talk about is polarized nonsense from a world where people no longer even trust the truth--from any source, anywhere. What possible future can there even BE when the truth is humanity became zombies years ago. The only thing left was for us to admit it. So do you want to avoid this future when you REALLY THINK about it? STOP. TURN AROUND AND FACE YOUR DESPAIR. AND SAY YES OR NO OUT LOUD TO HER.

*The heartbeat speeds up, the backwards whispering gets louder over 10-15 seconds and the growling becomes staccato, louder but strained.*



*When Despair hears the word, she responds to the verbal cue.*

*She runs up to the audience member suddenly until she's just shy of touching them. She either nods if they said YES or shakes her head if they said NO and then begins to slide her hands JUST above the skin along arms and shoulders and in front of the face. NEVER touching in any way but moving back and forth, as though trying to memorize the face and body in front of her. She does this as the Narrator continues.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Your answer gives her a clue to your past. Do you hear her chanting? Do you sense the ritual happening in front of you? Do you grasp that everything you take for granted will be lost in a heartbeat as the world collapses on itself? All that will be left is the meaning each monster makes for itself. All that will remain is the supernatural as a shell for a world that no longer contains any inherent truth at all? Those who wanted the end of truth will have it, and perish. Those who no longer believed in scientists will see their lack of faith punished, and perish. Those who decried medication that can save will be damned, and perish. And in the end, even the good will fall, lost in the chaos and forced into darkness. Where all of us will perish together. There is no answer to whether you want to avoid that future. Because that future has already come for you. CLOSE YOUR EYES RIGHT NOW.*

*The moment the audience closes their eyes, Despair will step behind them and start breathing on their neck. Close and hard. If they move, she will slowly step closer and do it again.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*The path is returning to a time that is normal. You may be happy about this for the moment, but you will not continue so. The linear path is one that has no joy left for you. Do you feel that breath upon your neck? Do you feel how close your own darkness has come? Let us wake Sanity one last time so that we can all end this together.*

*The heartbeat begins to beat tremendously fast. The growling becomes almost overwhelming, making it harder by the moment to hear the voices.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*You're a monster. I am what I am. Your kind made me with your pollution. Your deforestation. Your ignorance. Your hubris. We will find a way to avoid it. We are still healthy. You lost before you began. We will find a safe place. Others who can fight with us.*

*Join others and you only damn them as well. YOU ARE ALREADY BITTEN. I don't believe you! We dodged from her. She caught your back, where you cannot see. It is why I have appeared. It is why you feel me even now.*

*The voices become nearly impossible to hear as the growling grows ever louder, the heartbeat ever faster.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*There is no hope for you, no space left for you to hide in. I come. We have to stand strong! TAKE A DEEP BREATH! LISTEN TO THE STREET. Be calm. I come. WE ARE IN CONTROL. WE are the only voices here. I am the darkness and I COME FOR YOU NOW!*

*The Narrator screams and then there is only the growling, only the heartbeat. It goes on for several seconds. Then it cuts off abruptly.*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Now we will walk amongst the prey and they will fall to us. Person by person. Moment by moment. First, we will WALK BACK TO WHERE WE STARTED. And then WE WILL REMOVE OUR HEADSET AND GIVE IT TO THE ONE WHO STARTED OUR PATH. And with every breath, we will infect Fringe. And then Los Angeles. And then it will all be ours. You are with me now. Now. And Forever.*

*And then there will only be music, playing backwards, for about 10 minutes so that people can get the headset back and/or return to the start.*