

MINDWARP  
IN  
NIGHTSHADE

BY A. R. FOOTE.

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A

CHAPTER ONE

FRIENDS

IN

COMMON

*mind wanders in  
night shade.*

1.

Paul.

"What did you do last night Paul?" asked his pal.

"Nothing much" came the reply.

"Well, we all went to the pool with dad & mum. We always go on a Tuesday night" said his Pal.

"We never go any where, cos dad's on the booze most nights" Paul said shyly. "I just hang around and wait for him to get home so that him and mum can have a row. He beats her up all the time. When they've finished fighting they go to bed and get to be freinds again"

Paul looks at his feet.

"In the morning, my mum has cuts on her face and a black eye, It makes me mad"

Being only six, Paul has no idea of what is right and wrong with the picture generated by his parents. Some of his other freinds have the same problem at home with their own parents. Either way it is not often talked about through the fear of the children getting beat up by either one or both parents when it is discovered that they have told someone about it.

Paul has only one or two mates at school. His neighbours will not allow their kids to go over to play with him because of his parents fighting at night, which everyone in the neighbourhood can hear. He is the last of four kids. The others, all except one have left home. His father works all day, and comes home at six in the evening for a shower and his tea. He then goes out to the pub until closing time when he returns home drunk and itching for a fight.

It is six thirty on the same night. Pauls father is late home.

His tea has been left in the oven for an hour and is dried up.  
Loretta, his wife, places it on the table in front of him.  
"What's this shit, you don't bloody well expect me to eat that do you"  
Bill shouted, throwing the plate at the wall just above the seat which Paul was sitting in.  
Paul ducked his head, giving a little squeal of terror.  
"The boy Bill, Not in front of the boy" pleaded his wife.  
The hell with the boy, a man's got a right to come home and expect his tea to be on the table, and bloody well edible does'nt he?" bill shouted.  
"You're scaring Paul dear, please don't do that" said Loretta.  
"Don't scare the boy?" snapped Bill. "I'll show you what scaring is you smart bitch" as he stood up in one movement and reached across the table towards his son.  
At that moment, Aaron, the eldest son, who was now twenty two "what the hell is going on here" he shouted  
"Mind your business or you will be next" replied his father.  
"Dont hurt me" cried Paul.  
"Nobody is going to do that to you" said Aaron stepping between his father and Paul.  
"Stop it" yelled Loretta.  
Bill let out a punch, aimed at his eldest son, who ducked causing Bill to punch his wife.  
"Jesus, you bloody bastard, look what you did to man" shouted Aaron.  
Paul was now cowering in the corner and crying.  
"Hell, I'm sorry" said Bill to his wife "I promise I will never do that again" he said timidly.

"Ok dear, I know you just got angry, It was all my fault, I'm sorry" said Loretta.

Paul was still in the corner cringing. All too often he had seen and heard the fighting. This time, it very nearly resulted in his being hurt. Loretta had told Aaron that his father was under a lot of pressure at work and that this was only a one off thing. That his father had only hit her now, for the first time, that it had not happened before and that it would not happen again. Aaron believed her, and since he had never actually seen her being hit before thought that it was ok., and was an isolated incident. Bill on the other hand had a conscience that lasted an hour or so, and had gone down to the pub for a few beers with his mates.

All of that evening, Paul was on tenderhooks wondering what his father was likely to do to him when he came home from the pub drunk as usual. His mother had told him not to worry, because everything would be alright, that his father had done it in front of Aaron and that he wouldn't do it again now that there was a witness. Of course Paul didn't believe her, and worried all the more. He was only six, but he knew that if the chips were down and his father beat him, that his mother would take his father's side.

As usual, there wasn't much to do that evening. Paul wasn't allowed to go outside after dark and there was no television in the house. All he could do was sit in his room and play with his few toys. His mother and father never seemed to have any money.

Bill got an average wage of about two hundred dollars per week. Most of it was spent on rent for the three bedroom hole that they lived in. The rest, that is to say the money that didn't cross the bar at the local pub, was spent on power and a little food. Paul's mother loved to go to housie each night for the chance of winning a few bucks. She mostly lost it and as a result, the food budget suffered. All of the family clothes were from mission shops, and the furniture was torn and rubbishy, from many years use of the family.

This is not so unusual, there are many people who live in just the same conditions. Since Paul's mother and father are out most nights, he is put to bed really early and left on his own in the house. He knew that if he defied his father and got out of bed, then he would get a good hiding. Nine forty five on the same night, his mother arrived home. "Are you awake" she said to Paul.

There was no answer. He went quietly into his room and upon seeing him asleep left the room and went in the kitchen to wait for her husband's return.

Paul wasn't asleep. He had pretended to be so that he could be awake when his father came home. It was easier staying awake than being woken by the sound of fighting and furniture being thrown around. As usual he was right. His father arrived home around midnight drunk. There had been some kind of trouble at the pub and he had come home the worst for wear after a fight with a younger man.

"What happened love", asked the dutiful wife.

"It was all that little bastards fault" shouted Bill.

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"What do you mean, he hasn't been anywhere" said his wife.

"He didn't have to be, the little bastard, he got me all churned up and I went out to beat up some prick, I didn't see all of the bastards mates there and they all did me over" he said angrily. "I should kick that little bastards arse.

I'll teach him to be a man and not a snivelling little poofter". He headed into Paul's room and turned on the light.

His wife ran after him, pulling him by the arm.

"He is only a boy, leave him alone. It isn't his fault" begged Loretta/

Paul sat up screaming "don't hit me, don't hit me."

His father lifted his hand to strike the boy, and fell over flat on his back. Unconscious from the alcohol. His wife put him to bed and went back to Paul. "Don't you open your mouth about this" she said "It's got nothing to do with anyone else. It's just the families business".

"But I told my friend at school" said Paul.

"Then you can just go back and tell him tomorrow that it was a lie then can't you. Shit, you wait till your father finds out you bloody loud mouth" said his mother.

Paul was shattered. He thought that of all the people in the world, the last one to hurt him would be his mother.

The next morning, all was quiet at the table. His father was reading the paper and his mother was pouring coffee for his father. He wondered if his mother had told his father about what he had told her the night before, his fears were about to be answered.

"Paul has been telling his school friends about you and me and what goes on here at nights" said his mother,.

"Is that so"? said his father looking him dead in the eye. "You had better keep your mouth shut or you'll really have something to tell your mates do you hear me"? snapped Bill. "Yes sir" said Paul. He was surprised that his father was not as angry as he was the night before. He didn't hit him or anything.

Breakfast passed with no further incident, and he readied himself for school, placed his lunch, of two Marmite sandwiches in his bag and walked to the door. Turning to his father he said, "I love you dad."

"Hmmm" was the only response he got, as he went through the door and off to school.

This day was no different from any other that he had to put up with. Although, at least up until now, he had not been beaten half to death like another one of his mates.

Apparently, his pal had been out playing with some friends and was ten or fifteen minutes late. His father had been put off at work that day and had been at the pub drinking since before dinner. When his mate arrived at home, his father was there and walking towards the back door shouting something about the boy having to do as he was told or he would suffer the consequences of defiance. The boy had told him that he was only a few minutes late but his father, who was drunk as a skunk saw this as cheek giving slapped his face. The boy was shocked at this and ran to his bedroom, His father in hot pursuit. After running into the assumed safety of his room, his father came in after him and grabbed him by the hair and slapped him about the face several times before throwing him at the wall and belting him across the legs with his own softball bat. The worst part was that when



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a neighbour heard the noise and became worried about the safety of the boy and his sister and phoned for the police, The mother had taken the children from the house, and when they finally came home the police had left after all had been satisfactorily explained by him. Nothing was ever done about it because he was too scared to tell anyone who could help. Paul felt that maybe he was better off than Mark but he was still afraid of his father.

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CHAPTER TWO  
SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH PAUL  
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At school, everything seemed to be a muddle and confused for Paul. He was tired and worn out from staying awake late each night until his father was home. All of the trouble of the last year or so with his mother and father had become too much of a burden.

It was hard to get through the morning awake, and this day it was harder than any other.

"Paul Newman," said a pristin Miss Harley, Paul's teacher. "Wake up you lazy boy and get on with your work. You will see me after school and no excuses I'll be bound" she said.

"Yes Miss" answered Paul in a very embarrassed voice, with all of his classmates laughing at him but for one; Mark.

The rest of the day passed with little in the way of distractions and it was soon time to go home. Well for some at least. Paul had to stay behind and see his teacher.

"What is wrong with you Paul?" said Miss Harley.

"Nothing" replied Paul.

"I just wondered, . You have been so distant in the last day or two, and today you fall asleep in class. Is everything alright at home?" she asked.

"Yes, everything is O.K." he answered.

He looked down at his feet as he said in a sullen voice,

"It's just that..." He stopped short.

"What is it Paul?" the teacher asked him.

"Nothing miss" he replied as he turned and ran out of the room.

"Paul, ... Paul, come here this instant". He kept on running, all of the way home. When he got there, he was crying. His mother asked him what had happened. There was no answer, he went into his bedroom and shut the door with a slam..

His mother went in after him, asking again what was wrong.

"You hate me" Paul shouted at her. "You hate me, go away and leave me alone",.

"What the hell is the matter with you, you little swine" she snapped.

"You're on his side

"You're on his side all the time. he hits you and you let him, I'm scared that dad will hurt me like he hurts you" he said. His mother was outraged at this and told him that it was none of his business before leaving his room and slamming the door.

"You wait till your father gets home" she yelled.

Paul cried and cried until he eventually went to sleep.

The problem with that was the nightmares that he had all of the time, not every night, but often enough to make him afraid of going to sleep. It was for that reason that he was stayed awake until his father's arrival home at night. When he got home and finally got to bed, only then was it safe for him to close his little eyes.

It was a cloudy afternoon. The sky was dark and very grey. Two or three fishing boats dotted the horizon over a deep blue sea. Paul had a feeling of freedom that he had never felt before. Above him circled several gulls, and as he turned to look at the sea he began to sense a feeling of disquiet and impending doom. The dark sky had suddenly turned black and the tide had gone out as far as it could go. The waves were barely visible from where he was standing. Paul looked back to the sandhills only to find them swollen by thirty or forty feet, and they were straight up and down to the beach. He was very frightened by now and didn't know what to do. For an instant he glanced back at the sea. It was the opposite of what he had just seen. It was high tide and the waves were coming in thick and fast. The sky was instantly blue and the air warm. To his right twenty or so people were running up the beach and away from the sea. Paul was about fifteen feet from the sandhills as a splash from an expiring wave washed around his feet. He looked at the sea again. It was welling up into a huge rolling wave, all the time rolling back into itself and building up to a tidal wave not fifty feet from where Paul was standing and gasping in horror. All at once it lashed out with all the fury of a thousand caged tigers spewing forth to drown all in its path. Paul turned to run to the sandhills and found a steel ladder there in the hills face. He rushed over and climbed its length, only to find himself perched high on a red tin, outhouse roof with the sea lapping all about him. On his left was a green tower with a painted out window in the side of it. To his right was a long drop to

the sea. Straight ahead of him, about five feet away, there was a large brown building with a large window, that was ten feet or so below where he was perched atop the outhouse. The building was, at its highest point, an apex, level with where he was standing. Between the outhouse and building there was five or six sheets of corrugated iron lying like a bridge over the gap, below which was a many storeyed drop into long green grass. Suddenly, the ladder rusted and fell away from Paul. Opting for the building, he crawled onto the iron. It buckled and collapsed beneath him sending him to a certain death. Not so, as he slipped into the void between the two structures he fell in through the large window. There was a man sitting behind a small tacky desk. "What are you doing here boy" he shouted, "Take the car and get out of here" he pointed at a large American car sitting by a set of double garage doors. Paul went over to the car and looked back at the man, he was doing some sort of paperwork at his desk.

"Get out of here boy, come on wake up....wake up....wake up... Paul's father was shaking him profusely.

"Wake up you fool, I want a word with you" he snapped at him.

Paul got up from his bed and went to the lounge with his father. He was still shaking, He had just been woken from a nasty nightmare. He was unsure just what his father had in mind for him to do. Paul was scared, What if his father had heard about what happened at school? Would he hit him?

He was as frightened as he had ever been before.

Paul was taken to the lounge where his mother was sitting on the old red sofa ,crying her eyes out.Paul ran to her.

"What's wrong mum"he said "Did daddy hurt you again?"

he put his arms around her and hugged her close.

"Well,tell the boy bitch"shouted his father.

"I can't,"sobbed his mother.

"O.K then I'm leaving your mother you little bastard, all she has time for is you and I've had all I can take from the both of you!"He turned and walked to the door.

"No,"begged his mother"don't leave me pl ease...please ...please ,she begged and grovelled kneeling on the floor.

She grabbed on to his leg as if to hold him back,and all he did for that was lift his knee into her forehead and break her nose with one blow of his powerful fist.

Paul ran to her in an effort to comfort her.

"Get away from me you bastard"she screamed at him,pushing his little face into the carpet"You caused all of this".

"No mummy"cried Paul."I love you".

Hi father kicked his wife off his leg and tried to get through the door.Paul ran at him and sunk his teeth into his fathers left leg as hard as he could until he felt the blood trickle into his moth from his fathers body.

"You bloody bastard",screamed his father in severe pain as he lifted his right arm in the air and landed a shattering blow to the top of his small sons hedd,knocking him unconscious.He then turned and continued out of the door .

Pauls mother ran to him in a frenzy.No matter what had gone on in the last few minutes,her motherly instinct prevailed .

"Are you alright Paul?"she cried.

Nothing....He lay there in an unconscious state oblivious to all about him.There was blood oozing from his nose,which was bent out of shape.Oddly, he looked peacefull and unbothered.A state to which he had become unacustomed after so much violence and suffering in his loving little home.

Loretta picked up the battered body of her injured little boy,and ran to the door shouting

"You've killed him you bloody bastard".

Even in her panic ,she saw the need to get him some medical help,and ran next door shouting for help.

"What the hell happened?"enquired the neighbour.

"He hurt himself,can you get him to the hospital please,Ithink he's dead".

The neighbour assured her quickly that he was'nt dead, in fact he was beginning to come around.He then phoned for an ambulance which arrived in a matter of three or four minutes and carried Paul and his mother off to the hospital.

"What happened to him?"asked the doctor on duty.

"He fell"answered his mother.

"Funny that,"said the doctor disbelievingly."There are no cuts on his face,.What did he fall on?"

Pauls mother, seeing that there was blood on Pauls face and nose, told the doctor that he had been running into the house from outside and had fallen up the steps and hit his nose on the kitchen floor causing it to bleed and knocked himself out.

"If that is the case Mrs Newman, Why is there a large lump on the top of the boys head" he sneered. "What have you been doing to this little boy. He has this cranial swelling up here (pointing to Pauls head) that has come, I am certain, from a blow to the head, which I consider to be something less than accidental."

"No, you're wrong. He fell. He fell" she snivelled.

"What say we ask Little Paul then eh. He is just about coherent and should be able to speak for himself".

Pauls mother looked at him menacingly as if to say "Don't you say a word or you are dead for sure"

Paul looked away and began to cry

"Well, what is it to be then?" snapped the doctor.

"He fell, you heard me. He fell up the steps and done himself an injury, that's all"

"Well Paul, is that what happened to you is it?" said the doctor looking at him lying on the bed

"Yes it is, I did do that and it hurt me a lot" said Paul.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, knowing that Paul was lying, and proceeded to set Pauls nose which was broken. Forty minutes later, Paul and his mother were back at home.



CHAPTER THREE  
DREAM WEAVER

There was a tense hush over the pair as they went in to the house.

"What did you think you were doing, you got your dad in such a state"

"Nothing," said Paul, "I didn't do anything to him"

"You were trying to get him into trouble with the doctor weren't you"

"No, no," Paul ran toward his room, "Leave me alone"

His mother chased after him "You little bastard, I'll give you something to snivel about. Your father is gone and it's all your fault".

The door slammed and the window in his room gave way to his pressure and opened in a hurry. He threw himself outside and onto the ground, his legs were going even before they hit terra firma. This was a great state of affairs. Paul's father had beaten him, he had been knocked cold, and now his mother had it in for him. He had no idea of what to do, so he ran. Into the night.

It seemed to him that the only way to get out was to run. There was no rationality in what he was doing. More like a blind panic really. As night approached however, it became more clear to him as to what he had done.

Sky blue, and sky red. Wispy pinkish grey clouds gracing the shadow of a tiring city upon the back drop of a waking evening sky. The screams of a butterfly, a deafening sound, as shrill in the still night air they rebound and disappear into darkness forever. Yellow and orange and blue to green and gold for at least a moment lie ablaze and rampant to the eye of a beholding, dreaming few and many more besides.

Time had been wicked to the weary traveller on his way in the town and life country, It seemed not at all obvious in that era should such a light threaten him with a heinous tortured soul. AH, the soul. a precious possession to some, a toy to others. You fools, he thought. "I will never that I come to you in this time of the gathering of the limpid ones. This is the thought I have for you." "Is it not that you seek to destroy all on the face of his sweet, oh so sweet planet of our fathers, Is it that we seek to consume and rape the cosmos in all its fantastic glory, Or, Or is it that in all of your infinite fucking wisdom, you of you and the beast of man, why must you kill and plunder all around you and others who share your air on this the holiest of places Candomrue in the highest.

The distance yielded the sight of more miles than one could imagine. Heron, that was what the locals called him, was as silly as a two bob watch. In the great war of the seventies he was a hero, yes a real bonafide bloody hero. "All of us here shall now give thanks to all of them who gave their lives etc etc, Jesus what a load of shit" he thought, All the punks in the town thought it too. When Heron walked into town they all gave him arseholes and threw things at him. He never forgot those bastards and what they had always done to him, He remembered how, they had no respect, and how he would get even, DON'T GET MADGET EVEN, and get even he would, KILL KILL KILL KILL KILL He sang a little song, all of the words were the same.

The little sleeping village of Tuemore was in sight to him now as he lifted his load from an aching back and placed it on to the ground. He looked around at over hill and over dale, smiled and crouched to open his bag.

I6a                    addendum to I6

Inside there were all manner of weapons ,no doubt from his war days.Hand grenades,three automatic rifles several assorted knives and four or five pistols one of which he placed under his coat,He then set off in the direction of town.

There was just a small walk to the town, about a kilometre or so. Visions of pomp and pageantry wizzed around inside his deluded head.

"I hope they are ready for me" he said boldly.

Laughing, he walked up the main street and in to the township.

"Look at that silly old bastard" snickered a youth.

Heron looked at him. "You talking to me Jimmy?" he shouted at him. "You, I said you, are you deaf?"

"Oh get stuffed you stupid old git" came the retort.

"Don't you tell me to get stuffed Jimmy" whispered Heron, pointing his finger at the youth. Then he shouted "Or I'll fucken kill you".

The youth took to his heels "You're fucken crazy you old bastard", he squealed.

Heron pulled out, from beneath his coat, the Pistol that he carried around with him. He raised it at the back of the youth and yelled "You're fucking dead"

He pulled the trigger, sending the punk to the ground. Pleading for Heron not to kill him.

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With a bullet in his leg, he couldn't get up and run. Heron walked up, to the quivering boy lying on the ground with his hand held up in front of him as if to attempt to deflect the imminent bullet from piercing his body and taking his life away from him. "Please don't kill me mister" he begged. "Fuck you", the gun exploded into action releasing a multitude of projectiles into the face of his hapless victim. His head shattered as if hit at great force by a gigantic sledge hammer. There was no screaming from him, just the flicking of nerves that would feel no more.

Heron continued to fire the gun until it had run out of ammunition, when it did so, another two pistols were produced and he began firing into the crowd who had initially gathered to watch the events in the street but who were now running for their lives from this maniac with the gun. People were falling like flies on to the street with bullets in their bodies as Heron continued his reign of terror, swapping empty gun for full one as the bullets ran out. there seemed to be no

way of stopping him. Thirty at least people had been mown down by the time the police arrived on the scene, to attempt to stop this tirade of killing.

"Heron was standing in the street firing, not going back or advancing. Just shooting.

"Put down your weapons and surrender" came the call over a police loudspeaker.

"Fuck you pigs" shouted Heron as he spun around and dealt lead at the row of police cars. He was using an automatic rifle. The bullets were leaving little tracks of holes along each vehicle, smashing glass and ricocheting all over the place when they struck a solid object. He stopped firing momentarily.

"This is your last warning. Drop your weapons now or we will open fire" snouted the policeman with the loudhailer.

"No I won't Jimmy" he shouted back at them and carried on firing.

The order was given at the count of three to commence firing which several police marksmen did simultaneously. Many bullets filled the street and the body of

Heron, .His body was being knocked a~~ll~~ around the place as his hands went up with the rifle still firing its dead~~ly~~ load and sending two policemen to the promised land.His body, cut to bits, fell to the ground with blood oozing out of many small holes, one of his eyes was missing, dashed to the four winds no doubt. Still ,lay his demised corpse. Once a hero, now just a body in the street ~~on~~ a hick town, full of holes.

A police car drove over to the body. A tall copper with a ginger moustache climbed out went to it, and <sup>he</sup> bent down, "Hey, what are you doing here, you should be at home." he said "Dont you think your folks will be wondering g where you are, what's your name?" he asked.

"My name is Heron, I mean Paul Newman" was the reply.

"Where do you live Paul, "? asked the kindly cop.

"On the street, anywhere"

"Come on now if you don't tell me then I am going to have to take you into the police station and we will find out anyway" He said.

"I don't want to go home" Paul said "They hate me and my head hurts and my nose has dry blood in it".

"What happened to you?" asked the policeman .He was

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very concerned for this little waif.

"Dad hurt me and ran away and my mum said it's my fault. I don't want to go home or my dad will hurt me again"

The officer picked Paul up and put him in the car. He picked up the radio handset in the car. "C T E to control" he called.

"Control for CTE go ahead", came the answer.

"I have a little boy here found sleeping in Hanley Avenue on a bench, about six or seven years old, caucasian 1 metre in height, blue eyes and red hair. He is disoriented and has some injuries, over"

Control answered "Roger, we will get on to missing persons stand by"

"Roger, I'm coming in to the station with him"

"Roger CTE" came the reply.

Paul just sat there in the passengers side of the police car whimpering. He was beginning to get a little disturbed at the ~~300~~ dreams that he was having. Too much had happened for his mind to absorb to the full. His confusion would lead him to imagine all manner of things.



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It took a little time to get any sense out of the boy. The police decided to get in touch with the local welfare authorities to take care of him until they could sort out his problem. They had spoken to his mother, and were not happy at her attitude. There was reason to think that Paul would be hurt if they sent him home with her.

It was warm in that police station. Paul felt very safe here. He knew for sure that there was no chance of anything happening to him here. Half an hour or so later, the welfare people came and took him away.

At first he was very frightened and tried to make a run for it, but a firm hand reached out and caught him by the collar.

"Paul," said a gentle and reassuring voice, "Nothing bad is going to happen to you. You are coming home with my wife and me for a couple of days. We live in a nice home for ~~happy~~ little children who have been hurt, there are others there like you so don't be afraid of anything"

This seemed to console Paul a bit and he went with them quietly.

The ride was a bit un-nerving for Paul. There he was, with two people who he had never seen before on a ride to somewhere the destination of which he had no idea at all.

As the ride carried on into the night, Paul became drowsy and nodded off to sleep. Ten minutes or so later, he was awoken by the jerking of the car to a standstill.

"Wake up" said the woman.

"Come on son, we are home" assured the voice of the man.

Paul woke himself up and reached for the door handle of the car.

"How long do I have to stay here?" he asked.

"That I can't say just at the moment" was the reply.

"I want to go home!" Paul insisted.

"You are staying where you are put boy" retorted the man.

The moment the car door was opened, Paul made a dash for freedom. However, this was very short lived and he was taken by the hand and led inside the house.

For the next twelve years, Paul stayed there. He became good friends with them, and a brother to those other children who lived there. He had been removed permanently from his family by the courts and had made a ward of the state. At least he had been taken good care of by his foster family, which is more than HE would have got if he had been left with his mother. His older brothers and sisters had refused to look after him, saying that they had their own lives and had no time to look after a brat kid. Either way, He was now eighteen years old and was considering going out on his own. Although he had had a good upbringing, there were still wounds deep within him. He was hurt to the soul and would have to take some time out from all of those who he had come to know and love. This time would sort him out and help to decide what he was going to do. He packed his back pack, said goodbye to

CHAPTER FOUR

WHERE ARE WE ?

The sun was high and hot. It was around eleven in the morning and Paul was rearing to go.

He was unsure of what to do and where to go. He thought he go out to the river and camp there for a week or two. He told his foster mother and father where he would be, roughly, and headed out to the garage to get his motorbike, a SUZUKI 125cc trail.

One quick boot on the starting lever and it fired up, belching clouds of blue two stroke smoke into the atmosphere.

With a quick glance back over his shoulder, and a wave to his mum he turned the bike out of the driveway and into the road. The river was a matter of eight and one half miles away and the ride there was pleasant and uncomplicated. Soon he had arrived at the turn off on the main road to the river. There was a shingle road that runs for thirty or so miles right along the riverbank to the mountains, rising high into the alpine surroundings just barely in viewing range from where Paul was on his motorbike.

Since there were a few people camping around the river, he thought that it would be better to head up towards the mountains. It was not cold at this time of the year so there was no need for any special gear or anything.

There was this feeling of well being associated with the freedom of the countryside. In the city there are always people around you and there is no such thing as proper privacy because there were neighbours less than fifty feet from his house. He loved this feeling out here, there were birds and cows and sheep, and the best thing of all. Not another human arse in sight anywhere. Oh bliss.

The day was beginning to wear on a bit now. His stomach was sending hungry messages to him so he decided to pull over and have something to eat. The bike pulled up with a jerk and Paul had a quick look around to find somewhere to camp. He looked left and he looked right and saw a nice little spot down towards the river on his left.

"That looks like a good place" he thought to himself. It was a sheltered spot, there was a place for a fire to be lit safely, and room enough for twenty tents if the need arose. He rode the bike over there and pulled it onto its stand. The ground was hard so there wasn't a problem with the bike falling over. He put his back pack on the ground and removed the tent from the bikes sissy bar. Quickly, with the speed of lightning, he put up the tent and set about sorting out his provisions.

In the east, there was a red friendly glow in the sky. all about him had become strangely dim and the sun had gone partially from view. There was an odd greenish tinge to everything in that part of the country. Very weird, considering that the sky was so red. Paul looked up at the sky. "Wow, what the hell is going on here?" he thought.

The whole thing was a bit scary for him, although he had had dreams of this sort of thing before he had not come across it as a phenomenon in his experiences before.

He thought that it must be the drugs that he had been using that were causing an hallucination or something like that. "Shit" he thought. "Maybe I need another hit. This can't be natural, can it?".

In his back pack, there was a variety of necessities for his survival. Tins of beans, dehydrated vegetables and milk, a supply of fresh water, some bread, sausages, apples and sweets, and an ounce of Panama red and some tissues.

"This ought to do the job" he said to himself as he rolled a number. The rich coloured smoking gear was appealing to him aesthetically. It matched the sky. After a few tokes he began to feel totally out of it. Inside ten minutes, he was wasted. It had begun to grow dark and the last dying remnants of the sun's rays were casting long purple shadows on the ground.

"Fuck I'm starving. The munchies it is, Jesus, I hope I can crawl my arse over to those fucking trees to get me some fire wood." That was all very well, but for the fact that he was out of his tree and had no idea where he was going. The trees seemed miles away and it was near as damn it to dark. Never the less, he started to walk in that general direction. A few bits of wood would be enough to start a fire and crank up a feed to quell the munchies. It had seemed to take him at least an hour to get to the trees. They seemed so far in the distance and no matter how fast he went, there was no real ground gained. It is like that when you are wasted. "Shit" Paul said to himself. "Drugs fuck you up real

bad. Gotta get that wood and get back before dark. Fuck, I'm so out of it, shit, what the hell is that over there?" he shouted. He was not really shouting, it is like that when you're stoned. Bad shit, unless you have a reason to hate everything around you or you are in a pissed off mood and you can't give a shit. He stared in to the darkness and saw nothing at all. There seemed to be a figure in the scrub to his right.

"Come on man, I can see you in there, bring your arse out here so I can see who the fuck you are." There was no reply, no voice came from the depths of the woods to hail him to their kingdom. No

squeals of surprise came ~~to him~~ <sup>as</sup> from a small animal ran for its life from an unknown terror. There was nothing.

"Shit, I'm bloody seeing things, I feel that I have been here before, I know this place." From where he stood, he could see the lights of a small town. There was a very unusual feature of these lights in that they were all red, blood red

Down in the valley, the town was isolated. Trouble was that where the town was, there was a river, ~~there~~ and there was no way that the town could stand where it did. There was only one road leading in to it and no way out. Paul turned his head and looked back at his bike. It was still there leaning over onto its side stand by the tent. He looked back to the town. It was gone, and in its place there stood a raging wall of water. As if the river had flooded the town and drowned it and all who lived there.

"I must be dreaming" thought Paul. Quickly, he gathered up some wood and headed back to his campsite. It was very dark by now, and the moon had taken a break from its duties. There were no stars in the sky because of the heavy clouds developing from the south and directly overhead.

It was not long before Paul had converted his pile of firewood into a mini inferno. It lit up the surrounding area and all of its little corners to reveal the absence of anything sinister. Now was the time to take stock of what he had brought along with him. He opened his pack again and pulled out everything. Apart from the food and tent, there were a few trick items. Just about everything that you could ever need. He smiled to himself, and set about heating a can of beans in the fire.

A few minutes later, he was eating his beans, sitting beside the fire. A voice came out of the trees. "Hey you", it said. Paul jumped. "Who is there?", he shouted.

"You know who it is, it's me" came the answer.

"Who, who is it, I have no idea who you are" Paul said back.

"Really, don't you know Jimmy, it's fucking me

You know who Jimmy"

"No, you can't be real. You are out of a dream".

"Oh now isn't that sweet, you remembered me"

"Yes, you are Heron. I dreamed you up. In my dream you killed everyone you fucking asshole"

"Now really matey, how can I be an asshole when I am only a dream eh?"

Paul did not like the way this conversation was heading. He rubbed his eyes and then pinched himself to make sure that it was no dream. On finding it not, he grabbed his pack and ran into the trees. Heron followed.

"Hey Jimmy, come here eh!" he shouted as he laughed. "You got nowhere to go matey, I'm gonna get you and rip your fucken head off you poofter homo cunt!!!"

Paul stopped short and squatted behind a large old oak tree. Heron was only a few feet away from him by now and he wondered if this was his last sight of the world. He closed his eyes and waited for the inevitable. But when he opened his eyes, he was still there. He looked around and saw that he was still in the same spot. He was only a few feet away from him by now and he wondered if this was his last sight of the world. He closed his eyes and waited for the inevitable. But when he opened his eyes, he was still there. He looked around and saw that he was still in the same spot.

was a dream. Heron was now at the tree where Paul was hiding. It seemed that the best thing to do would be to jump Heron and try to dissable him. If this was no dream then a lot of innocent people were going to die. That split second Paul jumped out from behind the tree with his knife in his hand poised to deliver a fatal blow to this evil man of the most evil. As his knife came down at the chest of his prey and his body was flung forward, he felt himself carreering to the ground. Heron was nowhere to be found. Paul looked all around him. His mind unable to grasp the concept of what had just happened to him.

"Jesus, what the fuck is going on.? I must be fucking crazy. It is the dope. I just know it." There was nothing around but the trees. He looked back to where his campsite was and could see the fire and he could just make out the shape of his tent and motorbike. All this was too much for him .He went back to his camp, and ate. Tonight was not going to be like any other he thought. When he had finished eating it was time to sleep.

Fears of trouble in the night turned out to be unfounded. Paul arose and packed up everything into his pack. After a quick meal of cold precooked sausages he was on his bike and away. The road was long, with many a bend and water race across it. There had been no rain for weeks so these small channels were quite dry. Nevertheless it was tricky going, bouncing along a shingle road on a motorbike at high speed, so he thought it would be better going cross country. There was the river to his right , and on his left, an embankment. Leaning in that direction, he pulled off the road and up onto the bank.

His initial thought was one of extreme surprise. What had happened to all of the countryside ? Everything had gone, he seemed to be inside a void of some kind. All in his minds eye was glowing a peculiar purple colour. Deep purple like a negative of a



photo. All around him was purple, purple. It was as if he had passed through a new dimension in time and space. A purple wall.

A journey of the spirit in this odd and eerie moment was on the verge of tossing Paul over all together a new threshold in...in...in...? A picture was beginning to emerge. Still in that lovely shade of ppppppuuuurrrpppllllee. The picture of a man and a small calf. They were red and all else was purple. the man turned to the calf and held out his hand.

"Come here little one" he said in a shrieking voice. The calf remained there rooted to the spot. Paul reached out his hand to the man and cried for help. The man turned to him and lifted his staff, pointing it at Paul.

"Ask not fo help from the devine you scum, you trash." he said.

"Help me "cried Paul.

The staff was waved in a counter clockwise direction and jabbed at him. A flash was emitted and a huge "boom" resounded through the dimension. Paul felt his frail body being splashed eternally through the passage of time, like snow to the four winds, and coming to rest all at once ,albeit suddenly .His eyes opened and revealed to him for the first time, the sight of a rotten human corpse. As he watched it for a moment, he became aware of a certain physical change in its appearance. Visible organs were reassembling to original shape and size. As this was occuring, the rotten away parts were also reforming themselves to perfect condition. Over several minutes this human corpse returned to such condition that its face was beginning to assume features in the face. This frightened the crap out of Paul as it unfolded. Nails were growing, hair eyelashes. The face. That face, and he knew all to well who it was .The corpse sat bolt upright.

"Hey you", said the voice. "I`m talking to you Jimmy" it said.

"Fuck!!!", exclaimed Paul.

"What are you sayin fuck about,you look pretty bloody rotten yourself Jimmy" snapped Heron in his typically scottish accent.

"No,it's not that,what the hell are you doing here mate?".

"Eating plum bloody pudding,what do you think I'm doing"

"Where are we,and how the hell did I get here?"asked Paul of Heron .Pauli looked down at his hands,they were numb.

"Euchh!!"he squealed."I'm bloody rotting away.

"No matey,on the contrary you are being reborn,or something like that anyway"Heron snickered.

"What is that supposed to mean?"asked Paul trying not to vomit at the sight and smell of his partially rotten body.

"We came in here through a hole in time mate.I like to call it  
the purple wall ,on  
account of me liking the  
colour

purple."

"Shit,sounds freaky%"said Paul.

After a few moments more of regeneration,the two stood up and looked around them.It was nothing like what they had seen before getting into the time warp or whatever it was.

It was everything they had ever seen in one place.A kind of maze,a riddle of time.

"Where are we,what the hell is this place?"

"Jesus Jimmy you must be a bit dickie eh? I mean to say if you do not knoe where we are then you will nay know where you are going.You see, I have been here so many times now that it is like a home to me.You see ,as I travel in the imagination ,you travel in the earthly dimension.We are in all mans land"

All mans land was a good way to describe the dimension. All that you could want or need was there to your every whim and wish. read on

"How do we get around?" asked Paul.

"Just take what you need. Follow me."

Heron stood in a riding position on the flat ground. A motorcycle appeared beneath him. He looked at Paul and smiled.

"Easy as shitting prunes, all you have to do is know that something is what you want it to seem to be and it is as it seems and will be." said Heron to the confusion of a terribly bewildered Paul.

Paul stood in a riding position on the ground. As if a motorcycle or some other transport would mystically appear beneath him and he would ride off into distance with Heron. Obviously, he fell flat on his arse.

"What the hell is so bloody funny arsehole?" shouted Paul.

"You ya sasanach git, haw haw haw. You have no faith in the invisible, in the unbelievable. You think if it is one of these things, then it is not true, it defies your life taught principles of every kind. In other words, you have been told by conformity. All you hold dear is in your preconception of time and space. You must believe, really believe and the universe will be yours." said Heron.

"I think I know what you are saying" said Paul. He stood in the position again. Believed that there was a 250 motorcycle like his own one under him. It was there as new as could be. He kicked it into life and rode off into the distance. Heron had already gone by now and Paul had a wee way to go to catch up.

Into the valley he rode. His machine roaring and screaming into this a non earthly landscape. The odd thing was the contours of all of the surrounding land, they were all the same as the plane that

he had left through the purple wall. The covering on the land was different though. The sandy little bank that Paul had ridden up onto had become a small burnt plain with the smallest covering of brown grass and the odd clump of weed. It was littered occasionally with red leafed trees, all of which remained shorter than three metres but for one. It was a green tree, and it was right in the centre of the plain area. Behind the plain was a large hill, or series thereof all covered in thick, lush foliage. The bottom four metres of these hills was grey and barren. No way to ride a motor cycle up and over. To the right of the plain, there was a river. It was stony and rocky and wound its way into a steep gorge. It was grey, the water moved fast and had white caps on the waves being thrown up on the bank. It looked about two hundred feet wide, the river that is. On the other bank there were two large mountains in the front, about one thousand feet high, and a much larger mountain range in the background, which towered over them. The mountains were purple and green, and all on that side of the river looked like winter and death. All on the other side of the river looked like summer and promise.

The choice was clear. The hills looked a lot less challenging although there was no apparent reason for just why he was brought here in the first place. He headed for the hills.

CHAPTER FIVE

MYSTICAL MOUNT

The hills turned out to be unchallenging. As Paul rode to the top of the dry grass covered hillside, he found himself standing at the top and looking over an enormous expanse of green hills and dales. Like a paradise in the middle of the desert that you can only think of when you are lying there dying of thirst in one hundred and thirty degrees and no shelter at all. Anyway, you die and that is all there is to that thought. Here he is, standing on the top of the world looking into this beautiful valley and his bike disappears from under him as he goes to ride off.

"Fuck" he snorted, rubbing his bum since he fell on it onto the ground.

"Well what the hell do I do now, this place is so beautiful".

A picture arrived in his mind. He could see himself flying down this long valley to a destination at the end, somewhere miles away from him. There was a goal there and he had no idea at all just what it was. He knew that it must be something really far out. He was already really far out, really far out of his own dimension. He was in a dream. Unbeknown to him, he was in the fourth dimension. A dream inside a dream. Here, anything is possible.

Paul walked over to a nearby tree and climbed it to the top. It was only when he reached the top that he realised the vast expanse of what lay in front of him. There was some task maybe or some place to go for whatever reason, he would find that out in due course. For about two or three hundred miles all around, there was nothing but undulating hills. All cloaked in a deep vibrant green shield from the sky. He climbed down and went over to his entry spot. The one on which he had last sat on his bike. Bending down, he took another bike.

"Shit!, what the hell is this?" he thought out loud. It was a little 50cc trail bike and it looked very old. In fact, it was a Suzuki

TS50, it was blue and shiny, an old new motorbike, from the point of view that that particular model had not been on the market for ten years or so, he thought that it was a bit small to go where he wanted it to but that mattered not at all. Off he rode down the hill with a wee fart and splutter from his foot saver. There was a large cloud of dust in the near distance. A few seconds on revealed that it was in fact only Heron.

"What took you so long Jimmy, I been here for ages, the ride is long and my arse is bloody sore from that wee seat on the bike. Where to smiley?" he asked Paul.

"Jesus "retorted Paul. "I don't bloody know, if I knew where the hell we are then I would know where to go eh?"

They rode off into the hills. Downwards all of the way. What a strange place this is. These hills appear to be only low altitude but no matter how long you travel down them, you seem to be no closer to the bottom. On and on they go. The hill gets smaller until it is only a sandy trail among the dried grass and green weeds. Paul was still unable to grasp this place. Nothing here is conventional, worldly or understandable to a mere mortal soul. Why was he here? what was happening to him? Was there even an answer to this wierd puzzle of time and altered states?... He doubted that.

The two bikes raced around the trails for a while, The little one was a lot slower but it still was a lot of fun, Before riding away from here and back on the road to whatever. These trails, roads of dirt and cinder went on for ages there was a small rock pile in the distance, or was it a small mountain. Here, who knows?. As it came into view a bit clearer, it was obvious what it is. It is a hill of large boulders.

"Should be pretty easy to get over" said Paul.

"Yeah!...not on that it won't boyo!..." came the retort from Heron.

Never a truer word was spoken. The little pile of rocks was a big pain in the arse. A large tri coloured dog sat on the top. It was like riding on a pile of cigarette ash with the odd butt jutting out, just to make things more difficult for all. Where has that dog gone anyway? Nowhere at all, is it to be seen. The bikes are there though and there is a red brick church in the distance with a wee white cross on its top. There is a bell ringing out the tune of warning to the surrounding peoples, that is if there are any, or if it is only the depraved mental wanderings of an over tired writer. Shit, Whos story is this any way?. Mind your own business.

It is just that that red tree is not where ,as or what it should be. There are people down there.

The smell of new mown hay has filled the air. So sweet ,I think it's going to rain, at least it smells like it. No, it's not hay, more like grass. Sweet sweet grass. The way it smells just before it rains. To the top of this little hill is so far, so good. Now we are at the top, with nowhere to go. Jesus, it is beyond me how I got into this place, I suppose it doesn't matter a shit .The important thing is that those people in the distance are still there ,and with any luck at all ,they will still be there in an hour or so. That is the time it will take me to get to that place. Witches rock. That is what I will call this little hill. I give not a shit whether or not some other man has named it in any other fashion. It is mine.

Down I go. Heron is at my back. I can not trust him. I continually remember him executing all of those people in my dream. Was it a dream?. I'm losing touch with reality. Helpless, Little baby. Follow the leader. Shit ,I hope he knows where we are going. First behind now in front. I need my own destiny. I am in his dead world and he is some kind of traveller in time or my mind. Do I still have one? I feel strange. Sleep.....Sleep.....All is black.



THE  
MIDDLE  
ZONE

CHAPTER SIX...

Paul awoke into the cold stab of the bite of a winter chill, so deep as to open up his gut, stick in a hand and rip his balls out through his throat. In those twilight amblings he had crossed the river at least in part. Part of him. It mattered not a damn where he had gone - where he had been or come from. This was another dimension for him to consider. Where was Heron? It was becoming clear as to what his theoretical goal was. His purpose. He was brought here for a reason, not just an accident.

Climbing slowly, painfully to his feet, Paul stood and scanned the area. He was in the midst of a huge nothing, a non live area. There were people of a sort all around his distorted body. More apparently neanderthalic face peopleoids for want of a better word.

"Jesus! What the fuck are you?" he revelled.

They said nothing, just looked... Looked and stared baring his body to the essence of its flesh. What were they thinking? Were they in awe at his incredible untwisted form, at his pretty face? Or was it that they wanted to make certain that he was alive so that he could be killed and consumed in some weird religious rite. Either way, it didn't matter much. They were hideous and meant him no good. He missed his travelling companion. Not for the better, just that Heron seemed to bring some kind of normality to this absurd situation. He had known Heron in the first dimension and like it or not he was his only link with his own original state and his own plane. Paul believed a motorcycle and it was. He rode off in the direction of Cyphides. It was written on the signpost back there on the roadside. A road? More like a small dirt track, wellworn from many a traveller, estranged from his own land or maybe not. Must take care. It would be nice, he thought, to run  
 Tightpanshoreprwhenhawhedeapbakdaygiblwandheopefullmetshawinsome

Time passed, as did half of the day. It was about this time that his hawkish eyes picked up a dot on the horizon. There was a certain type of speculation within the confines of his confused mind. As he closed the distance between himself and that ghostly apparition it became clear what it was. His pulse raced and his balls tightened as he came within spitting distance of it. He stopped the bike thirty feet or so from it and dismounted. The bike disappeared. It was a gas station. All clean and sparkling.

"Hello" yelled Paul. "Is there anyone here?"...silence. He wandered through the place wondering where the hell everyone was. There must be somebody here, he thought, because the place is so clean. Not that that was anything to go by since nothing else here makes any fucking sense!!! He thought to himself.

He had come here through the purple wall. He had followed Heron all this time. He had sought him but not for any other reason than by accident. Heron was his only connection with the lost dimension. In the beginning he had gone to the river to have time out to "find himself". Was this, by any chance why he had been brought here to this magical land, and was Heron the way to his answer? Was this the true reason he followed Heron with such fervour". Well, one thing was for sure, he was not at the little gas station, the dirt bike tracks in the sand outside suggested that he had been there, not long before Paul. He followed them.

The odd thing about that place, thought Paul, was that there were only dirt floors there, there was no cash register or those things you normally find at a gas station. He turned his head and looked back. It was gone, only an illusion and now all was desert. Hot yellow sand, so hot. Paul thought that he might die if he found no shade. Everything was swimming in his mind, and he found it impossible to hold on to the illusion of his motorcycle. He fell at speed.

As if by magic, before him appeared a most delightful apparition. This place is as full of surprises as a warehouse in Horotane.... From desert sand to this in the blink of an eye, it's impossible to tell what is real. Paul rubbed his eyes.

"No, no I'm not dreaming. It's all real" he said to himself plucking out a handful of long grass from the ground. It smelled about as sweet as anything he had smelled in his life. He raised his glance to survey his habitat. All around him there were trees, Poplars and pines. The ground was flat and even and a shadowy mist hung over the whole area. A few hundred yards away several cows stood about idly waiting for the sun to rise and set again in a never ending pattern that would drive any intelligent being around the bend in quick time. Although the sun was only a degree or two above the horizon, it wasn't clear whether it was in the ascent or descent time. Paul cared not. The picture was perfect and serene so why should he. Time for a rest before something else happened.

It seemed so odd to be sleeping in a zone in which there is no provision for this. Paul closed his weary eyes. Nothing happened. It was all the same still, in the same plane, the same time, and the same landscape. In fact, it was as though his eyes were still open wide. The sun never moved. The light remained unchanged. Its husky golden glow announcing its permanence in the sky, defiant to all. In the distance howled some wild animal while here the sky, the sun, the land remained the same. It was deathly quiet here. Even the cows said nothing. Not a moo, grunt or a fart came from them. Was this the end?

Paul lay bewildered. Is this the end? he thought. Is this what it all comes down to. Will I die, will I live, will I get to run naked up the main street of my home town? And is there a meaning to

life? He thought. How felt pretty silly lying on the ground with a few cows (his best headed barn, a) standing guard followed....

life? he thought. He felt pretty silly lying on the ground with all of those dead cows (if that is what they are) standing around him. He got to his feet and went South. The distant figure followed.

The curious thing is that whether your eyes are open or shut you still see. When you shut them, your mind's eye is your pictorial dictator. When they are open, they may perceive only a fraction of what they see. It is like hearing without listening, nevertheless, with your eyes open, you are much more likely to see that hole in the ground before you fall in and smash your head in on some sharp painful thing. There was this compulsion for Paul to walk into the woods at the edge of this hard to believe setting. Oh how he fought it but it won over his weak mind with its huge power called curiosity. He knew that it may be a mistake to but he went in there anyway. The sun had one down on him. He had his eyes open now and he knew. As he entered the wood the trees closed in around him like congealed blood on a wound to stop infection from penetrating. He looked back and saw it was hopeless. On again since there was no other way. There was a rumbling which grew with every step that he took nearer. A deafening roar, like a gigantic waterfall or something waiting to engulf him. Horrified he went on. The sound was now so loud that his ears began to bleed. Thin lines of blood ran down the sides of his head, now his nose bled in a gusher that squirted to the ground and mingled with the lowly mud and animal shit to form a slimy green mess. Staggering through it all, on he went. The sound grew weaker. All of his blood had drained from his body and he had turned white. Suddenly there was a huge explosion and all was gone.....

"Wake up boy" came a

squeaky voice

"Who are you?" Paul shouted. "Get away from me, get the fuck away"

Through his strained eyes Paul could see the outline of some horrible being hovering over him like a zombie. He could not clearly make out what it was, but he was not sure since his eyes were fading. Blind terror struck him. He thrust his body at the figure and knocked it to the ground. Paul got to his feet and made off as fast as his feet could travel. The figure rose from the ground as if by magic. No part of its form moved to that end. It was just standing there, then it spoke again.

"What are you doing here human, you cannot leave here this is the middle zone. You must die" He laughed as he finished this oration. Paul kept running. The figure lifted his right arm, in which he held a blunderbuss. "Die fucker!" he said in a satanic voice, and pulled the trigger. The first shot missed Paul, as did the second and third. "You must die now!" said the figure as he raised the blunderbuss one more time. This time, his aim was perfectly on target. He slowly squeezed the trigger and laughed. His laugh stopped short as he swung his head around to face a new threat. A dark man astride a large black horse. "What are you doing here human? You cannot leave here this is the middle zone, you must die" he said to the man on the horse.

The figure took aim at the man on the horse, and pulled the trigger. Paul fled. A shot rang out. It was the hooded figure.

"You must die now, you are dead!" he said to the man on the horse.

"Fool, it is you who will die" said the man on the horse. His voice was deep and vibrating. It cut to the soul and beyond. The hooded figure lifted his weapon once again and fired at the horseman. There was a loud explosion as the gun went off, then nothing.... All fell silent.

"Who are you, who are you. What do you want of me?" asked the hooded figure.

"I am death, your pathetic weapons cannot harm me. I want your soul. Now you die fucker" said the horseman.

He lifted his cloak and pulled a cut off shot gun from a pocket in his waistcoat.

"No,no" begged the hooded figure.

The horseman just laughed as he took aim and pulled both triggers simultaneously. The roar was unmistakeable. Paul looked back to see the body of the hooded figure lying on the ground flickering with the remains of its last nervous twitches. He was still close enough to see small jets of blood squirting from its neck where once there was a head. The man on the horse turned to Paul. "I hope you find what you are looking for" he shouted after him.

Pale and uncertain at what had just gone down, Paul turned his back on the apparition and walked away. The man in the cloak looked familiar somehow, could it be a shadow from the past haunting him. Maybe he was on the way out of this god forsaken hell hole.

There was nothing here that could hurt him however, as it would try so would there an adversary interject and control the dark side.

In the far off distance there was a strange purple light that filled all the land and all the air. It was vague from this distance but it held some kind of huge magnetic force which was beginning to pull him to its heart. There in the distance it stood. Was it a sign?

What was it He knew only one way to find out.

CHAPTER 7

INTO THE OUT DOOR



Could this be what he sought with all his energies and vigour? There was a light in the distance. It was like a welcome glow from a warm fire on a cold, rainy night. The end was near, he could feel it in his bones. This place was so inhospitable. At every turn he came up against odds and situations that were beyond his control. There was this glow on the horizon. So warm. So inviting. Was this the end? The glow. Ah! the smothering intensity of the purple haze on the ground, in the air and everywhere. It was all around him. His very being was engrossed in the feeling of warm comfort. He stood naked for all to see in this unexplainable paradox. Naked as a new born babe. Vulnerable as a newly hatched chicken. Through that hole in the light, he knew was the answer. Although bare he stepped forward and into the blazing, glaring incredibly hot purple haze. His being was lifted up and then dashed onto the rocky slopes of eternity and back again. This was as though he had been trapped inside a huge barrel full of petrol, and someone threw in a match. There was no feeling for Paul as he was twirled around and around. He had become unconscious and was drifting. All of the terror behind him. Is there anything ahead. On the road to nowhere. Nowhere, there leads a road. Forever.....

Sky blue. Sky red. Wispy pinkish - grey clouds gracing the the shadow of a tiring city upon the backdrop of a waking evening sky. The screams of a butterfly, a deafening sound, as shrill in the still night air they rebound and disappear into darkness forever.

Yellow and orange and blue to green and gold for at least a moment lie ablaze and rampant to the eye of a beholding, dreaming few, and many more of the enlightened.....

A naked young man sat at the edge of a wood by a river. His motorcycle stood beside him.

Slowly, he got to his feet and looked back at his motorcycle. He was astonished to find himself naked in the middle of nowhere. It was cold, especially since he had nothing on, so, gathering his thoughts he walked briskly to his tent. Slipping inside, he found his pack and pulled a set of clothes out and got dressed.

"What has happened to me?" he whimpered. "Jesus, it must have been that shit I smoked."

Nothing was clear to him. He was confused and very light headed, as if he had been drinking heavily. One thing for sure was that he wanted and needed to go home, and as quickly as possible. He felt as if something terrible had happened while he had been away from home.

Gathering all of his things together and throwing them all into his pack, he placed them on his bike, put on his helmet and put the key into the ignition and turned it. One kick was all it took and the machine fired into life. It was dark. Very dark as he rode off into the night. With the air temperature at only six or seven degrees Celsius he was cold and this made the ride home long and hard. If he had stopped for a moment and put on something warmer it would have made the ride more comfortable but it may have used up valuable time. The feeling of urgency welled up inside him to the point of desperation. What had happened? What was wrong with him? These were questions he asked of himself time and again on this long ride into the

city. As he drew nearer, the light was becoming only a glimmer. On his right loomed large, a line of factories. On his left shops, a row of single storey structures which had stood the test of time. The streetlights revealing nothing within their sultry orange glow.

"Shit, where is everyone" he thought. "There should be people around. Where are they?"

The sun cracked its dawn with an eerie brown light which seemed to hover in weird omnipresence. Paul stopped his bike and stopped off. Things were becoming clearer as the light increased. He walked along the centre of the road cautiously. What was wrong? Where were all the people? Not even a street cleaner was about. In the distance a radio played, with a single voice.

"Is there anyone out there? If there is, call me. My number is 3386672." This solitary voice echoed the same message, over and over. Paul walked to a nearby phone booth and lifted the receiver. He rang the number on the radio in anticipation of some light being shed on the reason for the absence of life. The phone rang in a building just down the street. There was no answer. Paul hung the receiver down by the phone and walked towards the sound. Louder and louder came the ringing. He stopped short outside a large stone structure and looked to his left. The peels of a ringing telephone were coming from inside here. A sign out the front read "Radio PLX New Consadine"

He went in. There were lights on but no one was about. Over a speaker, Paul could hear the voice of the man on the radio. He went into the next room, and saw through a large plate glass window, the shape of a man. Walking hastily towards him, Paul opened the door and stepped over to the shape. There was a man there all right, though he appeared almost dead. As Paul approached, the man's

left hand shot up, clutching him on the shoulder, .  
"We're done for" he said "Dead, they are all dead.....a bomb, a big

...at that instant the man in the chair died, gasping his last breath, then nothing but the moaning wheeze of the air escaping from his expired corpse. Paul ran out of the radio station and into the street. It was light by now and he raised his hand to shade his eyes from the blazing morning sun. He looked around in horror. There was no street, no buildings. His pulse quickened as his heart pounded from deep within his chest as though trying to rip its way out of his body. Shocked, he spun around to look where he had been. There was nothing there. Desert sand was all around. Far off to his left he thought he had seen something move. He looked hard, straining his eyes to the limit in order to get an idea of what it was. It seemed stupid to stand in one place so he headed off towards the speck in the distance. For hours he trudged in the red hot sand. For hours he inhaled the scalding air, but he got no closer. Finally, his body succumbing to the tremendous heat, Paul lay his bones down to sleep.....

On the next rising of the sun, a peculiar green light filled the sky, radiating its eerie presence over all which it stood tall. The mountains, the trees and a river which all stood before him were all tinged in this eerie light. He thought at first that he was still asleep and in the middle of some weird imagining. Reaching down, he pinched at a bit of the dirt at his feet and put it on his tongue. It was sweet and very soft.

"This dirt is sugar" Paul said to himself. He decided to climb to the top of a nearby hill to get his bearings. He did this with quite a small amount of effort, since every time his foot moved forward up the hill, the ground beneath him became level. It was a strange place indeed. At last he reached the top and surveyed the land. There were strange little animals everywhere. Black and furry. They were eating each other. Some would eat ten or so others

before being eaten themselves. As they did this a giant queen laid more of the animals. They were coming out in the hundreds only to become the snack of another. They didn't seem to mind. Suddenly, Paul felt a chilling sensation down his spine. Immediately he spun around to see what it was that felt so wrong. There was nothing. He turned back only to feel the sharp crack of something cold and metallic being shoved in his face.

"Remember me Jimmy, I'm here. Time to die"

Paul didn't know what to do. There was nothing he could do. He heard the beginning of an explosion and the immense tearing sensation in his brain.

"Aaarrrghhh" he screamed as his eyes opened, wide and red as though they were about to squirt from his face onto the floor. He sat up clutching a male figure.

"Paul, Paul, it's your dad, I never meant to hit you so hard I'm sorry" said his father as he hugged his only son. His mother stood beside his father looking on.

Paul told them "I had this dream, nothing was real. I thought I was really there but I wasn't"

There came a distant laugh. Paul seemed to recognise it.

"Didd you hear that?" he said to his father.

"I heard nothing" said his father. Paul lowered his head for a minute or so. His father tapped him on the shoulder.

"Are you ok son?" he said.

Paul raised his head slowly. His eyes were red, and his face and hands had become disfigured. He looked his father in the eye and said "I'm fucken fine Jimmy, how about you?".

His eyes widened to the size of a tennis ball. As his father began to duck away this horrible apparition. Paul's eyes exploded sending

two gushers of blood at his father

His mother screamed. Paul looked at her, as he did, the terrible stream of blood covered her body. The stricken ~~man~~ were trying to find the door, trying desperately but in vain to escape this disgusting terror. The blood continued to gush from the unrelenting eyes of the horror until the walls could stand no more and burst their seams releasing a thick red deluge with its cargo. Police were called to the house. The front door was open and the red slime had spilled out all over the front yard and out the windows. Onlookers had gathered to watch. Some vomitted, others screamed as they realised it was blood. The police stood around waiting for the fire department to wash it away. All was crazy and confused.

"Look", shouted a little girl pointing at the house "Its going away".

The slime was in deed receding. As though putting time in reverse, the red slime was rolling back into the house. It took only a few seconds and it had vanished completely. Finally two policemen built up the nerve to go in. Slowly through the front door, looking left into the lounge then right into the kitchen finally coming to a stop at the only closed door in the hall. Slowly a cop opened the door as if expecting some sudden horror. The door opened fully now, he gasped. There were two people lying on the floor. Their bodies had decomposed, as if dropped in acid, and a small wisp of green fog rising from each one. Only the clothes were recognisable.

"Holy shit", said the cop "what do you think did this".? as he surveyed the scene. Paul stood there staring at the two.

"Hullo Jimmy", he said as his body exploded.

"Jesus Christ". said the other cop as blood and entrails smeared them and the room. They ran screaming from the house as a thick pall of smoke followed them. Within minutes, as the crowd watched the house was gutted, leaving only a foundation with smoke rising from it. One little boy looked at the sky, he turned to his friend and said "Look at the smoke in the sky, it looks like a man with a long coat on", then it was gone.

THE END

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