



FOR HIM.

Pay no attention to the Narrator of this horrid festering clump of a novel. She is undoubtedly, one of the more heinous, hideously debaucherous wastes of organs ever to crowd up this terrible earth of our un-chosen impermanent habitance...and a fiend of the most wretched kind...

A<S SJJFNUHHASsdaaadfrh jmjooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo.

...Mand has been temporarily indisposed. Don't listen to a word she says, she's crazy, and a goddamn fool !!!

Please continue for Christ's sake...

ONE: Failed Suicide, A new Job-Op, Acid at the Astoria and Absinthe Oh My.

The blade had nearly plucked up blood before I pulled it back. My hand shaking, a mellifluous ringing sounded in my ears coupled with a tingling heart palp. The last drop from the bottle of Spanish red kicked in and I realized I'd been carrying myself rather well until I wasn't. Drunk, both on wine and heartbreak -- I was drenched and thick with despair. The end was near. All that was left to do was puke and pass out to the black abyss.

I woke some time around 2:30 P.M., my head a fog and my belly swimming. Nasty business, hangovers - so I made myself a Bloody Mary and took a full-bodied drag off my Marlboro Red and sunk into the day. It was a good day. Out on the patio, sat bright with birdies and a dry warmth. I glanced down at the newspaper, stained by my coffee and tomato juice, and spotted an ad for "writer wanted." A local dime rag called "The Tribune" with the stylings and swagger of the likes of Creem Magazine was in search of a columnist. What better was there to do on a day like this, I thought, than seek employment? Intrigued, I smoked a cigarette and went inside to put on some ginch and socks.

The building was short, not a high rise like one might've assumed. A doorman stood outside in full attire. I greased him a dollar as I entered. The lift was moving at a glacial pace and I wanted to go fast. Eyeing the elevator attendant, as we approached floor 3, I popped open a clear baggie of pure powder I'd obtained from a salacious Columbian - more on that later - using the nail tip of my pinkie finger I took a heavy whiff and then it was his turn. I offered to share, which seemed the

polite thing to do. The elevator attendant accepted the invitation and knocked a bump back. I did another. Surged with euphoria and a savage horniness, I kissed him then in a charge – hard and sloppy; our teeth banged together and I stopped as the elevator doors dinged ajar.

The room was a hive, full of buzzing bodies itching to drive some deadline or other and I walked through it mis-fittingly. My face and tongue went numb somewhere around the time I got to the receptionist's desk, "I'm here to see the Boss Man, man," I mumbled in what didn't sound English. She stared at me without blinking, and then pointed to a chair opposite her desk, "Wait there," she said. I sat. Waiting. Sounds started to percolate, the clacking of talons on typewriters, the clunk of a boot heel sliding to a stop on a turn. I pulled out a Marlboro and before I could torch the tip the office door flung open, and a Hell-born-She-silhouette called my name.

My pupils adjusted to her backlit office and I saw she wore dark horn-rimmed glasses, her tights were ripped at the back and I wondered if she had realized it yet. She seemed like the type of broad who wouldn't care even if she had. Her hair was uncurled and she stunk of perspiration and ink. I liked her immediately. A metal desk separated us, and a scattering of papers and manila envelopes flooded its surface. She peered over my resume. My fingernails, all but one had been chewed down to the drawing of blood and I resisted the impossible impulse to bite them.

"Why do you want to work here?" she asked.

"I don't. I need money," I said.

Her chair made a high-pitched squeaking sound as she swivelled. I attempted to hide my annoyance as it penetrated the awkward pauses between her reading and my trying to concentrate.

“Blunt.”

“Honest,” I shrugged.

She scoffed, though she was laughing, but not at me, and then she smiled, and I said nothing. I felt like prey. I shifted uncomfortably in my seat, aware of a bead of coke sweat that had been forming on my brow.

She set my resume down, “Fuck it. There’s a band opening at The Tiki Hut tonight, watch the show and interview the band and write a piece about it. If I like it, I’ll give you something else.”

Fair enough, I thought. I stood and shook her hand and as I turned to leave, I wiped the drug-infused salt water from my temple. This time I took the stairs.

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Six months prior to this, I was sitting in a bathtub smoking a joint when my fiancé Stephen, walked in to tell me he was flying to Peru. For some months prior to that, Stephen had been admitted to Emhurst Hospital for what appeared to uncover itself as a nervous breakdown. The psycho had been in a manic and crazed state for weeks before finally cracking, but he wasn’t like that when I first met him. When I first met him he was all pin stripes, slick-slacks, shined-up black bluchers and perfectly-pomade gelled hair – enough to wet the nickers of many a honourable woman. I digress. Peru. Stephen decided he was destined for aviation. So broken

became our engagement and he took up flying lessons venturing off into the purple sky and such was the beginning of the end – or the end of the beginning.

In the stairwells, I polished off the last of the coke and took a hearty swig of cheap whiskey from my thigh flask. I hailed a cab and got in the front seat.

“Home!” I yelled.

The cabbie dropped me at the Astoria, some 40 blocks from my apartment building. I guess he thought I looked the starved artist. The fare was all I had in hand, so I gave it over and decided to walk the blocks back, but not before procuring some hallucinogens.

Inside the Astoria the floral paper cracked and peeled off the walls like the decaying skin off a dead animal carcass. It had a stink to it. Discernable and pungent of sweat foot and sour yolk. The soggy carpets made the air thick and damp. I braved the climb up to the top where Julio lived with his girlfriend Bingy. I met Julio at a jazz club two years ago, a fellow indulger of all things debaucherous, a sax-man and an all around cool cat and compadrè. I knocked 4 times as was routine. A slat opened at the bottom of the door just around my kneecaps. Julio was a paranoid bastard; he owed quite the chunk of change to various drug dealers and bookies about town though somehow had managed to evade them all until absolutely necessary. And by absolutely necessary, I’m referring to the luggies paying home visits with the sole intention of busting kneecaps. Julio dodged them all though. Slippery little fucker.

“Passcode,” he said in his meaty accent.

“Pass-word.”

“Whatever, say it!” Nervous reddened eyes peeked through the slat aiming for a glimpse at me. He knew it was me of course, but it was tradition and truth be told I think he got a real bang out of it.

“Ellington takes the A train to dogfame, know what I mean funkybean?” I rolled my eyes as I spoke the words pouring like sour milk from my mouth.

“And?” he pressed.

“...and the phony baloney banzai brigade don’t wait for no day, Compadrè.”

“And?”

“Oh let me in damnit! It stinks out here!”

“Mandie!” yelled Julio.

The door swung open and I hugged my friend. Bingy sat smoking what I can only decipher was crack from a gunky blackened clear pipe. She sat on a ragged mattress that stunk and soaked the room rank.

“Ugh, it stinks in here too,” I said.

Julio cracked a window. Bingy looked less glamorous than last I saw her. I realized then that this was the first time I’d witnessed her without her sequins and thongs. The sight didn’t sit well in my stomach.

“Is she okay?” I whispered.

“Bingy? Oh, fuck yeah. She’s in a rocket baby, she’s on the moon, right baby?”

Bingy flashed her staining smile and giggled at me. Julio crooned *Fly Me to the Moon* and I rolled back into a chair that rocked a little, “Mushrooms?”

“Ain’t got no shrooms kid, but I did manage to sneak some acid out of The Red Room last night. You want?” Julio rummaged through a shoebox.

“Please,” I said lighting the tail end of a half-joint.

He pulled a pink package out from a yellow envelope and set it down in front of me, “It’s pink,” I think I said before I was back outside again braving the city in a new state of dis-control. I felt bad for a minute, but Julio wouldn’t mind, I’ve never been much for goodbyes.

The sidewalk was torrid, burning the soles of my sandals and melting the rubber into gooey tar. I walked as though suction-cupped to the pavement.

“What are you looking at?” I screamed at an indigent watching me in this horrid and twisted state. She returned to her trashcan and muttered profanities under her breath.

At an intersection some minutes later, how many I couldn’t say, I watched the buildings come to life. A sky-rise morphed into a dancing blow-up balloon fifty feet tall. It was now somewhere between 6 or 7pm as the sky was not yet dark enough for evening. Girls wearing assortments of pearls walked past me like a mirage, I watched the clam-stones bounce happy on their chests. I watched, again, as a long arm reached out for one, and to my appallment discovered the arm was attached to *me!* The necklace snapped broken, and a showering of white balls danced on the mud-stuck street. I laughed in a mesmerised stupor, but the girl screamed, “*Theif!*” And swatted at me like a cat. I squatted low into a crouching tiger stance, or what I thought might be that and screamed with all the veracity I could muster. The girl’s

eyes sprouted tears and I fled not having my wits enough about me for an intoxicated quarrel with a debutante.

My thigh flask was almost empty. I went in search for a refill.

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The girl at the till must've just turned 21. She had braces with miniature colored rubber bands pulling her chompers shut. I thought then, that I was lucky to never have had to tolerate that special kind of toothy Hell. Ouch. I perused the liquor isles debating on my selection, when, the dangerously spectacular bottle of Absinthe came into view. I plucked the glittering green vixen from its showcased cage and hugged it into me. Curious, I checked the price - \$68.50. Well, there was no denying it, I had only pant-pocket's full of microscopic remnants of blow and a half-smoked pack of Marlboros. This Absinthe was a dangerous temptress and I deduced it as such. However, my mind was made - it would have to be stolen.

Brace-Face glanced the large circle disc mirror hanging above the isle. I squeezed the bottle tighter, not wanting to admit defeat and sauntered down in the direction of The Beer Room. The Beer Room was a large walk in fridge, with one security camera stationed in the far left corner. I stood underneath it and shoved the bottle into my waistband, tightening my belt to secure the bounty. Clutching a six-pack of beer, I made my way to the foreboding till.

"I like your braces," I said as she swiped the barcode. A widening metallic smile and I could tell she liked me.

"ID?" she lisped.

I faked looking for a wallet, "shit." I looked up at her and shrugged.

"I'm sorry, my manager..."

"No No, it's my fault, I'll be back," I said with a wink and she watched me exit.

I held my breath as I crossed over the threshold. No alarms. No whistles. No sonorous bells of entrapment. I was in the clear with a mickey of Absinthe to abuse and a concert to get to.