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Devour

By Adam Gross

Miss, you okay?

I can't remember when I had my first waking nightmare.

They're too disturbing to call daydreams.

I never talked about them with anyone.

They never made any sense to me...

then I found the Pathway.

Now they're all clear, every one of them.

Breakfast of champions.

When was the last time you slept?

I'm happy I can stand, man.

I'm on a three-day rage.

Your father will kick your ass

if you flunk anything.

Since when did he need an excuse

to do that?

At least you're out of the house.

Hey, I'd trade places with you any day.

- What up, Jake?

- Darius.

What's up?

So you playing ball next year?

- I don't know, man.

- Get with it.

That's what you said last term, dawg.

Man, the guys around the gym,

they tell me you're the real deal.

- What are you staring at?

- It ain't your truck, homey.

- Easy.

- What's he got there, Jake?

- Nothing, man.

- Bullshit.

Let it go.

- Just keep your dog on a leash.

- All right.

What the fuck were you gonna do, shoot him?

Chill. It only told me to scare him.

"It"? What is "it"?

Just give me back the piece.

No, man, no. Are you crazy?

What, do you want to get arrested?

Where did you get this?

Later.

Happy birthday.

Joseph Campbell believed
that the power of myth...

related to certain intrinsic universal values
found in all cultures:

The need to worship God,
to protect the family...
to coexist in harmony with nature.

Now, from these very ideas
stories were created...

and passed down

from one generation to another...

each having its own central hero character.

Want to see what you missed?

If I wanted to see it,
I wouldn't have missed it.

Campbell termed this ennobled path...

- Just trying to be helpful.

- What a shame.

I thought you wanted to get in my pants.

It is my birthday.

Works for me.

But little more than the stories

we grow up hearing...

and the tradition of telling them...

is what binds together

even the most disparate of societies.

Happy birthday, handsome.

- How does it feel to be 21?

- Like I'm on the verge of nothing.

Mr. Gray, am I interrupting a celebration?

Sorry, Prof. Hartney.

Tell me, Dakota, what are we to make

of this Dionysian offering?

Mimosas.

All right. That's enough for today.

Thank you.

- So we drinking this tonight?

- We'll be doing a lot more than that.

Dakota.

In my office in 30 minutes.

Get me out of this town.

You must be Jake.

Yeah. How did you know that?
Hey, Jake, this lady needs help
with her laptop, okay?
Okay. What's the problem?
It just stopped working.
They do that.
Okay, let's see.
- That's what it looks like in there.
- What did you expect?
Lots of little guys running around
doing my errands for me.
Okay.
You've got some red wax.
Wax. My tarot cards.
- Sorry?
- I burn candles when I read tarot, so...
They help you see into the future, right?
Yeah, and the past.
Okay.
It works.
- What do I owe you?
- No charge.
- Really?
- Yeah.
That's so nice. Thank you.
Jake.
You could have got \$75 for that job.
- It was a piece of wax.
- Yeah?
Well, I'm docking your salary.
What the hell for?
Because your time is my money.
And please, watch your fucking language.
Aren't you going to blow it out?
Are you going to sing me "Happy Birthday"?
I stopped singing the day
they kicked me out of the church choir.
Did you go see your mother?
No. She wasn't feeling well today,
so I'll go see her tomorrow.
How are things going at the mill?
Still got a job.
They'd have to close the place down
if they got rid of you.

Thanks.

You going out tonight
with Conrad and Dakota?

I'm legal.

They look up to you, Jake.

But they're still caught in the rain.

What does that mean?

Don't get wet.

Ludes? X? What's your poison, lover boy?

- Are you peaking or crying?

- I've had better days, Jake.

- So what happened?

- Hartney hit on me again.

- What did he say?

- Fuck or fail.

That's got a nice ring to it.

Well, I ran out of the office.

I bought myself a few days.

Why don't you report him?

He does this all the time.

- Dean Glick won't do anything.

- Why not?

I'll give you one guess.

Come on, huh?

Shit.

Fuck. I'll fucking nail both of you, man?

- I didn't call for back up.

- You're welcome.

So, Valerie Gaines, behind the gym...
senior prom.

You guys thought that we were
powdering our noses.

Her nose was up my skirt.

Man!

Jake, what's our zip code?

Had you heard that one?

Personally, I found it depressing.

That's just because you weren't there.

Exactly. What year were you born?

Same as you, dumb-ass.

So what's your weirdest family holiday?

Fuck that. We'll be here all night.

What was your weirdest family holiday?

Thanksgiving, a couple years ago.

I was building a ramp
for my mom's wheelchair...
and Father Moore came by to visit.
They were all inside watching football,
Dallas-Tampa game. Dallas lost.
That was your weirdest family holiday?
So I had a hammer in my hand...
and I look up
and Father Moore was smiling at me...
and all I could think about
is just bashing his head in.
Over and over,
and then I'd smash my parents' heads in.
Then, like, half the people I knew, just...
So then I started thinking,
what else would I like to do?
And all this crazy shit came into my head.
So then what happened?
I finished the ramp, and we ate turkey.
Dude, that's sick even for me.
Dude, I've castrated my dad
Three of a kind, huh?
Let's play a real fucked-up game.
"Welcome to The Pathway. "
The Pathway.
I've never played this before.
Dakota, it's a secret.
Well, it's not a very good secret
if you know about it.
Serious.
You give it your phone numbers and stuff...
then it calls you
and gives you bizarre things to do.
What kind of bizarre things?
Well, you don't know unless you play.
- How do you start?
- You already have.
Happy birthday.
Oh, shit. It's, like, my entire life.
Wild or what?
Dude, you'll never be President.
Turn this off.
Somebody could be reading this.
Nobody cares about the \$243

you got left in your bank account.
Abort.
Fuck!
God, I'm so drunk.
I need another drink.
Oh, body shots.
- I'll be down in a minute.
- Enjoy.
What are you doing?
Your charity case dropped that off for you.
Did she leave a number?
What do I look like, a secretary?
By the way, you're fired.
Yeah, right. I was 10 minutes late.
Look, my nephew got out of rehab,
all right. He needs a job.
- So do I.
- Oh, I don't know.
Sell pot like my nephew did.
He made a killing before he got busted.
I need the keys.
You've got to be kidding me.
You know, you owe me two weeks pay.
Sue me.
Son of a...
What?
Your boss fires you
and all you do is hit a desk?
Who is this?
I know what the voices in your head
really tell you to do.
I don't know who this is.
I don't have time to play games.
You wouldn't have let Conrad sign you on...
if you weren't looking for a distraction
from your dreary world.
Happy birthday.
This is the Pathway?
Today we find a way to get even
with an asshole of your choosing.
- Have anybody in mind?
- My boss.
- What would you like to do to him?
- Kill him.

You'd only be doing him a favor.
Enjoy your first day off...
then come back tomorrow
and see what the Pathway does for you.
Somebody order an orchid?
Don't expect a tip.
So you been thinking about me?
Only between my dance classes.
- How are you doing?
- I'm good.
- Yeah?
- Yeah.
How's your job going?
It's going great.
You and your dad getting along?
Yeah, like family.
That bad, huh?
Maybe I should move back home.
This place is breaking us.
No. There'd be no one
to look after you all day.
Dad and I are fine.
You were always such a terrible liar.
Where's your blanket?
I'm going to get you a blanket. Hang on.
Excuse me, nurse.
Can we get a blanket for my...
- Marisol.
- Jake.
What are you doing here?
You two know each other?
Yeah, she came into the computer shop.
Jake saved my life.
It was just a circuit board.
So you're the one
that brings Kathy the orchids?
Yeah.
- You wanted a blanket. I'll get you blanket.
- Thanks for the cards.
- You're welcome.
- Small world, huh?
Yeah. I like it that way, though.
Behave, Mom.
Why should I start now?

There he is. That's the kid that robbed me.

- Arrest him.

- Take it easy.

No. I fired this kid yesterday.

He comes back last night and rips me off.

I just came by to get my money.

He owes me two weeks pay.

- Were you in here last night?

- No.

Okay. All right. You know what?

Let's check out the hidden surveillance cameras and we'll see what we see.

Didn't know we had those, did you, Jake?

I'm just going to start this from when I left here last night.

What the...

That can't be me.

You doctored the tape.

You little prick. Don't you see?

He's goddamn smart.

God, you screwed me, Gray!

How'd you do it, huh?

So then who were those guys on the videotape?

I don't know. That's why I'm trying to hack into the site.

Well, whoever they are, I wouldn't piss them off.

Yeah.

Shit.

Since when are you into voodoo?

They're spiritual interpretations of universal ideas.

That's what it said on the box.

So what did it have to say about these guys?

"The figures suggest youth, love, and virginity...

"before they're corrupted by desire. "

Remember taking my virginity?

If I recall, I think it was you that took mine.

Details.

Should we light a candle or something?

So much for cuddling.

Well, Jake, you got what you wanted...
and I get to keep playing the Pathway.
You just made love to me
because the Pathway told you to?
No, Jake, I fucked you
because the Pathway told me to.
When did you start playing the Pathway?
Like you care.
Like you've ever really given a shit
about me, Jake.
Like any man ever has.
See you on campus.
Hello.
Feeling distracted?
Beats watching TV.
Are you ready for another test?
I thought that was Dakota's test.
Besides, it's not exactly our first time.
With her in control it was.
I thought the point was to entertain me.
No, the point was to see
what's inside your head.
Dinner's ready.
Trying to break my hand?
What's the matter, you pull something?
Just throw the goddamn ball.
Let me see.
- Darius do that?
- With a little help.
Damn it, Connie, I can't baby-sit you
day and night.
Who asked you to?
Don't give me that shit. I've been covering
your back since we were nine.
Why don't you stop already?
Okay.
Sorry, man.
I think I'm building up a resistance
to my medication.
Yeah, I think we're both losing it.
Listen to this shit.
The other night, I'm down in the basement.
I get a phone call from the Pathway.
I turn around.

There's a big creature staring at me.
A creature.
Half man, half woman.
Anyway, I have this dream
where I go upstairs...
and I shoot my dad in the back of the head.
Has trippy stuff like that
been happening to you?
Every goddamn day.
Great.
- I'll take it easy on you.
- Right.
- Hello.
- Jakey.
Got two girls in my room.
- I can't get them to leave.
- Nice, man.
Why didn't you give me a shout?
Yeah, like I'm going to have you by.
They would have taken one look at you
and kicked my ass out of bed.
Is something wrong?
I don't know, man. I'm spent. You know?
All right, dude. Be careful.
Why don't we get breakfast in the morning?
Okay. I'll call you in the morning.
- Hey, Jake.
- Yeah.
Fuck you.
Dude, what the fuck do you want now?
Nobody knows how fucked up
you really are.
And nobody really gives a fuck, do they?
What the fuck!
Connie.
Connie, let's go get some breakfast, bud.
Or more like lunch.
Connie, wake up.
Uncle Ross.
He didn't sound good.
I should have come over.
You could have wound up dead, too.
Conrad wasn't a psychopath.
He was always on the edge. This thing

with Darius just pushed him over it.
No. Those guys would fight one day,
and then they'd get high the next.
I'm sure their parents will be comforted
to hear that.
Did you help Conrad steal that gun?
What?
The serial numbers matched a .38
stolen from Sid's Sporting Goods last week.
- That's impossible.
- Why is that?
- Because I threw that gun into Cove Lake.
- You what?
I took a gun from Connie...
I didn't want him to get in trouble,
so I threw it in the lake.
How would Conrad
have gotten the gun back?
He couldn't have.
This is a bad time to start lying to me.
I'm not lying to you.
You think I don't want to find out
what went on in there?
You going to tell my sister or am I?
Yeah, I want to go to the hospital now,
if I can.
You know, I'm your uncle.
You could have brought the gun to me.
Are you okay?
It's the worst day of my life.
You want to talk about it?
Not here.
Meet me in front in five minutes.
Okay?
Okay.
I just don't want to end up like my father.

Go to work at 6:

Do it all over again the next day.
What do you want to do?
- I wish I knew.
- Have you ever thought about leaving here?
- Who'd bring my mom orchids?
- I'm sure she would love postcards.

Looks like you like to travel.

Yeah.

I like collecting things.

- How did you end up here?

- A man.

Sorry, I didn't mean to pry.

No, it's okay.

I'm just enjoying this one too much.

So how about you?

Are you seeing anybody?

Took you long enough to ask.

- I take that as a no.

- No.

But who knows, I could always run into someone when I'm not expecting it.

That never happens.

What timing. All I want to do is leave this town, and you just got here.

We just have to meet somewhere in the middle.

Okay.

Well, you were right. The day did get better.

I'm sorry about your friend.

So I'm going to try to play it cool and not call you for at least an hour, okay?

Okay. Bye, Jake.

Bye.

I remember when you and Connie first met in Sunday school.

You're drinking?

Well, I'm not praying.

You're going to throw away five years just like that?

You think I don't know what you and Conrad have been doing to yourselves, Son?

You think I don't know that?

What Conrad did has nothing to do with me.

He's gone to hell.

I don't have to listen to this.

Wait just a minute, Jake.

Wait a minute. Wait.

We're not going to be able to save you now.

Don't preach to me

with a drink in your hand, Dad.

You ungrateful punk.
You realize that we have sacrificed
everything for you here?
Sacrificed? You sacrificed?
I could've gone anywhere,
I could've done anything...
but I stayed here for you,
I stayed here for Mom.
What did you ever give up for me?
My beautiful wife.
What does that mean?
- I thought I could do this, but I can't.
- Thought you could do what?
What are you trying to tell me?
You're blaming me for the way Mom is...
for the accident?
You're gonna blame me for that now?
The day after my best friend kills himself,
you're gonna blame me for that?
It's not very much, though, Jake.
The day I need you the most, the day
I need help, the day I need my father...
you do this?
Shame on you.
Jake?
I don't know whether to cry or scream.
I know what you mean.
You know, I called you six times.
I'm really sorry about what happened
the other night.
Don't worry about it.
- So why didn't you call me back?
- I was hanging out with a friend.
Who is she?
Her name is Marisol.
- Sounds exotic.
- She's different.
- I'm super late.
- Dakota, hey.
You heard what Conrad
did to himself, right?
Can't stop thinking about it.
Well, the other night,
after I got off the phone with the Pathway...

I had a dream
where I did the same thing to myself.
You think that the Pathway has something
to do with what Conrad did to himself?
Yeah, maybe. Are you still playing?
It hasn't asked me to corrupt anyone else,
if that's what you're asking.
All right. Do me a favor.
- Anything.
- Stop.
Sure.
Come by the Tomahawk tonight.
Dinner's on me.
And bring your friend.
You sure you want company tonight?
- No, but I like being with you.
- Good.
Okay, now I'm jealous.
- Marisol, this is Dakota.
- Nice to meet you.
- God, Marisol. That's such a beautiful name.
- Thank you.
- What does it mean?
- It's Spanish for "sun and sea. "
Oh, my parents named me
for where I was conceived.
I would really love to stay here
and chat with you guys...
but my boss is totally riding my ass.
It's okay. We're just going to do take-out.
So two burgers, two fries, and two beers.
- We're not staying?
- No. I got a surprise for you.
Now this would be the part where I get ill.
Sorry. Looking for the men's room.
You know where the men's room is,
Professor. You eat here twice a week.
So, have you thought about
our little conversation after class?
Professor, you twist that ring any harder,
and your finger's going to come off.
I've got plenty more.
Asshole!
- Tomahawk.

- Even Hartney knows you are weak.
Every man does.
Why do you think Jake would never
be with you for more than one night?
He knows you've fucked all his friends.
Who wants a girl like that?
I know. It wasn't your fault.
Daddy was a monster.
But then, let's face it.
Lots of girls have bad fathers,
and they don't end up like you.
Get used to it.
You let Hartney fuck you over...
and you're going to be working in dumps
like this for the rest of your miserable life.
- Is that what you want?
- Fuck you.
Fuck all of you!
That's my girl. Didn't that feel good?
Don't you understand
that I want to help you...
make you feel better...
help you get even with Hartney
before it's too late.
Yes.
Don't be afraid. It's time to play.
When I was nine months old,
my folks moved here from Seattle...
to be near my uncle, my mother's brother.
There was a blizzard
and my dad lost control of the car.
It was a miracle any of us survived.
There's a higher power looking out for you.
Is she okay?
- I'll call her later. We are late.
- Late for what?
It's so worth the pain. I promise.
I need some more medicine, nurse.
- Ready?
- Yeah.
One, two, three, go.
I hope you can fight.
I never put an orchid on a guy before.
It's for my mother, Walt.

Okay, now you're breaking my heart.

Sorry.

Quit smoking yesterday.

Great.

Jake.

What have you and your friends gotten into?

Nothing.

First Conrad, now Dakota

kills your professor and mutilates herself.

This is no coincidence.

You could be next.

I am not going to let that happen.

All right, can you take him home?

Make sure he gets some sleep?

Listen to me. First thing tomorrow morning,
you meet me at my cabin.

No one will disturb us there.

But we're not leaving

until you tell me everything you know.

Uncle Ross.

Nine points?

Didn't hear you drive in.

So, how are you holding up?

- Fine.

- Yeah?

What's in the ground?

After a hunt, we bury the animal's remains.

Native American ritual I taught Jake
when he was a kid.

Returns the animal's soul to the Earth.

Well, come on in.

When we started,

the Pathway was just a game...

that had this strange ability

of knowing what we were thinking.

But then Conrad used the gun

that I threw into the lake...

and then cuts his tongue off...

the way that I did

after a beast in a dream tells me to.

So I'm thinking maybe it wasn't a dream.

Maybe it isn't just a game.

I feel like I'm going insane.

No, I think you're just looking for an answer

for something so horrible it has none.
I like it here.
It's peaceful.
Thanks.
Well, I have to meet the FBI in my office
in a couple hours.
I'll ask them to check
on this computer game of yours.
Why don't you spend the night here?
It might do you some good.
Sheriff North.
What is it?
Something's wrong.
I'm sorry, I think we ought to go.
Okay.
Jake, talk to me.
Shit.
Give rest, O Christ, to your servant
with your Saints.
Where sorrow and pain are no more.
Neither sighing, but life everlasting.
You only are immortal,
the creator and maker of all.
We are mortal, formed of the earth...
and to the earth we shall return.
For so did you ordain
when you created us, saying:
"You are dust, and to dust you shall return. "
All of us go down to the dust...
yet even at the grave we make our song.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.
You know, you say there's a higher power
looking out for me?
Well, I need him now. He's not here.
Jake, what is it?
I have to go see an old friend.
Jacob, why this sudden interest in Satan?
Do you think he really exists?
Many in the Church take the Devil
quite literally...
but I think of him as a symbol of temptation,
not as a beast with a pitchfork and horns.
What does it say in the Bible
about possession or self-mutilation?

You think that your two friends
were possessed?
Maybe.

Here in Mark 9:

"When Jesus saw that a crowd was running
to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit.

"'You deaf and mute spirit,' He said.

'I command you to come out of him. "'

Again, sorry about your friend.

Thanks.

So when did you stop worshipping Satan?

Ten years ago. I'm a Christian now.

It's more forgiving.

Why'd you even start?

Some folks want

what God ain't giving them:

Money. Power.

Me? I wanted to get laid.

There's more pussy at a Black Mass
than there is at a Metallica concert.

What happens at a Black Mass?

People get naked.

Then they sacrifice something.

A cat or a dog.

Satan rewards you for killing a dog?

The more you give, the more you get.

What happens if you kill a human?

My group was more bankers
and housewives...

looking for a different kind of picnic.

Do you know any people

that are more devoted?

You don't cross people

who are willing to give up their souls.

Walt, please.

Yeah, I know a guy.

Just do me a favor.

Don't tell him I sent you.

Coming. Sammy.

Mr. Reisz, I'm Jake Gray.

I called about an hour ago,

said I was coming by.

Yeah.

I get \$50 an hour for consultations.

Right.

I should charge more.

The guy who fixes my car gets \$80.

Barely knows where the sparkplugs are,
much less how to conjure up Beelzebub.

I ever sell books to you before?

No.

You say it's called the "Pathway"?

Yes. Why?

Because that's what we call the connection
between the Devil and the possessed.

So how did I resist?

We're often unaware of our strength
until we're tested.

Why does the Devil need to use
computers or games?

Think about it.

It's a very effective way
to spread a message.

I mean, imagine if Hitler had
had the Internet.

Maybe Satan's found someone
to do his bidding again.

I've seen this man...
in my head.

So have I.

What makes you think
this guy can conjure Satan?

Because I taught him to.

When Aidan Kater came to me
to learn the black arts...

he was a geek
living out of the back of his van.

I stopped teaching a few years later...
but by then he was very skilled.

Why did you stop?

I was going to be a father.

Was?

Anne Kilton was a student of mine
before we were married.

The pregnancy was hard on her.

She had a bad premonition...

and asked me to perform a sacrifice

for the health of the baby.
A human sacrifice.
I refused.
So Kater took your place.
I came home one night
and found a pentagram in my yard.
There was blood everywhere.
I thought at first:
"Anne must have sacrificed
some kind of animal here. "
But Anne was gone, too.
When they found her bloody clothes
in a ditch two days later, I knew...
Aidan Kater had sacrificed
my wife and unborn child.
I'm sorry.
What did the police say?
The police were very helpful.
They made me their prime suspect.
I spent the next five years
trying to prove that I didn't do it.
And that's what I have left
to remember them by.
An empty grave.
The Devil uses the Pathway
to possess people.
And then forces them to kill...
and commit suicide?
She seduces them.
The Devil's a woman?
I don't know.
It can be whatever it needs to be.
Or what you want it to be?
I didn't want it to be a woman.
You think Conrad and Dakota wanted
to die like that?
Some part of them did.
You didn't even know them!
I'm not saying it's your fault.
I think that you're angry because...
Yes, I'm angry.
My friends are dead! I'm angry!
But I'm not crazy.
This Kater guy is behind this...

and I gotta do something.
I can't just stand here.
What are you gonna do? Throw holy water
on him? Burn him at the stake?
You believed me
when I said I saw something.
I did. I believed that you had a vision,
maybe, or an apparition.
The bitch was in my basement!
Okay. You know what?
This is getting a little bit too heavy
for me right now.
I adore you,
but this is getting to be too much.
I guess I shouldn't have come here.
I'm sorry.
Fucking shit.
We're not going to be able to save you now.
You are dust, and to dust you shall return.
He's gone to hell.
Where you going with those, Jake?
To your mother and father?
You can't do that, man.
You'll ruin everything.
Jake.
I didn't have a choice.
Neither of us do.
Are we in hell?
No.
But hell ain't so bad.
You'll see.
You know, you remind me of myself
when I was your age.
Smart.
Angry.
Trying desperately to pretend
that I was something good...
but somehow deep down inside
knowing you're not.
I'm nothing like you. I don't kill people.
No, you just dream about it.
Is this how you got to Conrad and Dakota?
You mess with their minds
until they do what you tell them?

It was a test.
They failed. You passed.
You stared the Devil directly in the face...
and you never looked away.
But when you finally did...
we knew that we'd found you.
You used the Pathway to find me?
Why?
Because you were stolen from us...
and we needed a way to get you back.
Stolen?
By who?
Those people you call your parents.
They found your mother where
she was hiding on the night you were born.
She was too weak to fight them.
You're insane.
You were taken from your real mother
on the night you were born.
My real mother?
Anne Kilton.
Bullshit.
Anne never had a child.
You made sure of that.
Every son wants to believe his father...
but faking Anne's death
kept Ivan from the truth.
You belong to us.
You always have.
Anne had a plan...
but when Paul and Kathy interfered...
you went from being a Prince of Darkness...
to just another fucked up kid.
Look.
Your whole life is a lie.
Why are you doing this to me?
Why?
Don't be afraid.
She'll explain everything.
Where is she?
I know who you are now.
Why?
No!
There's a higher power looking out for you.

I had to make sure
my son still belonged to me.
Oh, God.
You had to kill
before I could show myself to you.
They took you from me...
but I'm sorry I had to do this to you.
That isn't your blood.
Drink this.
Accept who you were born to be...
or go back to the life that you hate.
Will you be with me?
I'll be whatever you need me to be.
You're a monster.
My God, they think I killed them?
The Devil couldn't kill her child,
so this is how she makes me pay...
for wanting to be human.
But maybe they're right.
Maybe there is no Pathway.
And this is all a fantasy I've created
to live with the horrible things I'd done.
Wake me from this nightmare.
Please. Help me.
--The End--