

"Cops and queers.....
Make good looking models....."

-Marilyn Manson, The Dope Show.....

Part One:
STUDIO LIGHTS

1. STUDIO LIGHTS

Los Angeles: Thursday 24th May 1990.

I just don't wanna be here right now....

The studio lights are bright... Very bright.....

Too bright.....

Blinding.....

The host is some creep called Max O'Brien. He's what the yanks would call 'An asshole': Bright white veneers; comb back bouffant; a tasteless pinstripe suit... Predictably Blue....

He has the facial expression of a dead fish. He shuffles his cards, banging them on the desk in front of him. He bangs the cards aggressively. His aggressive gestures let everybody in his immediate radius know of his importance..... This man....

This man interviews celebrities for his livelihood. He hosts a major television network show at a primetime slot. He addresses the President by his first name.... You there! Down on one knee pal.....

"You'll be fine," he coldly states, staring ahead at the audience.... No eye contact. I say nothing but look at Hymie, giving him 'the look'..... This was his fucking idea.

The producer- Guy called Len, is keen to ease the tension in the studio; it's his job to ensure the show runs smoothly. Max has little time for me because he doesn't know who I am.

Backstage he was kissing the arse off the other guests: An overweight, bald comedian; an old hippie Princess, clutching a battered looking, green guitar; some ugly, ginger child actor with a load of freckles.....

Good ol' fellow Americans....

He flashed his crocodile smile and gave the bullshit chit chat. When he came to me, his face dropped- Visibly.....

The dead fish expression was in place of the crocodile grin.

"You're the writer guy?" He said, trying to sound like he knew what he was talking about..... Trying not to sound ignorant in front of the other 'guests'...

He said:

"I don't really agree with what you write about, I have to say..."

I responded:

"Which of my one of my books has troubled you Max?"

I doubt he has ever read a book in life; that's why I asked the question.

At that moment you could have cut the tension with a knife- Even Hymie kept schtum.

"I haven't read any of your books. My producer has kept me informed of-"

I cut him off before he could finish his pre rehearsed sentence. I made him look a fool in front of his celebrity guests. I told him he should read a book before he criticises it. Max struck me off his Christmas card list. Aww Dang.... So....

Here we are....

Face to face.....

About to do an interview with the whole of America watching. I am the first guest- The stooge; the fodder.... Filler until the big boys come on. The guests who are important. The guests who the audience know and love.

Fellow Americans.....

I didn't want to even do this interview; it was Hymie's idea. Hymie has spent the entire day arguing with Len. Needless to say, I doubt I'll be asked back as a guest. Ever.

They probably wouldn't even have me and Hymie in the audience. I wouldn't say we've burned our bridges- Just bombed the bridges, burned the American flag with paraffin and urinated on the ashes in front of Ma, Pa..... And the American way.....

..... Fuck 'em!

Len says:

"Okay guys, we'll be going live in two minutes! Just keep it light. The ten minutes will whizz by Antonio. Over before you know it...."

Len calls me Antonio. He's heard Hymie call me Tony; even the dead fish sat next to me calls me Tony..... It's written on the front of my novels:

TONY M RICHARDS.

..... The novels Fish Face hates. The novels he told fish face to hate.

Hymie gives me the thumbs up. He looks a right prat: A bleached blonde French crop; Elvis Presley Aviator, thick, gold rimmed sunglasses; an Acapulco shirt under a petrol blue, sharkskin suit; large, garish jewellery that would make Liberace blush. He has a six o'clock shadow.....

Why do I associate with such a prat? I

dunno.....

In Hymie's head: He looks like the Rolling Stone Journalist and sub-celebrity he is. The reality: Hymie looks like a low level pimp from Las Vegas..... Hymie doesn't need a stylist...

He doesn't need a psychiatrist....

He doesn't even need reality....

Nobody can tell Hymie anything. He refers to himself as "Superman's Worst Nightmare".... You can come to your own conclusion on that alone.....

Hymie is a mate. Well..... I call him a mate. We have a strong bond. He's one of these guys who-

"OKAY GUYS!! WHO'S READY TO HAVE SOME FUN?!!" Len shouts through a microphone at the troglodytes in the audience. I have never seen so many ugly, overweight people in my life.

This could be Portishead in 1978.

"WHO'S READY TO BE ENTERTAINED?!!"

The crowd say:

"YEEEEAAH!!"

Gullible twats. Truth-Justice-And the American way.....

"WHO'S RRRRREEEADY FOR THE MAX O'BRIEN SHOOOWE?!!"

The crowd say:

"YEEEEEEAAAHHHH!!"

This is the reason books don't sell in America..... The Yanks have a bad grasp of the English language; they have a small range of words.... Small brains..... An eagle is national emblem of America. Eagles have small heads- Thus, the term 'Bird Brain'.....

Fish Face turns on his crocodile smile again. He bangs his cards on the desk again....

These lights are so hot. The black suit I've worn is now like a wet towel....

..... Boil in the bag chicken....

My neck is chaffing against my collar. This is fucking-

The house band starts up. The grossly overweight drummer pounds the skins; he's sweating after twenty seconds- Anybody for McDonalds? The sound is deafening.

Len is souping the crowd up again:

"AAAAARE YOU REEEADY FOR THE MAX O'BRIEN HOUSE BAND?!!!!!"

"YEEEEAAH!"

"AAAARE YOU READY TO CHEER?!"

"YEEEAH!!!"

YEEEE-HAWWWW..... HEY MA! GRAB THE SHOTGUN! WE GON' HAVE OURSELVES A HANGIN' TONIGHT.....

The Hammond organ starts up; the chap playing it is as thin as a pencil and has a porn star's moustache....

AHHHHHHHHH! MY HEAD IS POUNDING!

The drums, the lights..... This is too much..... Right now.... My nerves are shredded.

Len counts:

"WE'RE ABOUT TO GO LIVE IN.....

FIVE!

FOUR!

THREE!

TWO....."

An anonymous voice shouts from an anonymous room, through an anonymous microphone over the anonymous studio sound system, into a million anonymous television sets:

"WELCOME TO SATURDAY NIGHT!!

WELCOME TO LOS ANGELES!

WELCOME TO THE ONLY SHOW WORTH YOUR TIME.

DON'T YOU GO FLIPPIN'.....

THE BEST, WORST KEPT SECRET IN AMERICAAAAHH!!

WITHOUT FURTHER ADO.....

WELCOME TO THE MAX O'BRIEN SHOOOOOW!!!!!"

The cheesy house band hit their stride.

This is deafening!

Saxophones squeal, the Hammond organ is like a nightmarish, hypnotic swirling ice cream van choogle. The drums and bass thud away, shaking the ground beneath me..... It feels like my head is splitting open..... This is.....
.....Horrible.

THE LIGHTS! THE FUCKING LIGHTS! I CAN TASTE SMOKE IN MY MOUTH!
THE LIGHTS! THE FUCKING LIGHTS! THE FUCKING LIGHTS!
THE SMOKE IS CHOKING ME!! THE SMOKE FROM THE FIRE! THE FIRE FROM THE
LIGHTHOUSE! THE LIGHTS! THE FUCKING LIGHTS ARE BLINDING ME FROM THE
LIGHTHOUSE..

Whoa! Tony, c'mon now.... Take it easy son. Get a grip. You can do this.... Ten minutes mate.... Then Fish Face can fuck right off....

Fish Face addresses his audience:

"WELCOME! WELCOME! WELCOME..... TO ANOTHER ACTION PACKED SHOW! What we have in store for you tonight is something worth telling the neighbours about, let me tell you...."

These idiots cheer, Max shows his big, pearly whites. I can see a thick bead of sweat roll down his chargrilled tanned skin.

"We have a fabulous array of guests for you tonight, quite a treat I can assure you..." Yeah right...

"Later on the show, Chuck Winters..."

The crowd say:

"WHOOOOOOOOO."

"We also have William Perry, better known as the 'Refrigerator'."

The crowd say:

"WHOOOOOOOOO."

"Not to mention comedian, Fiona Striessel..."

This, is a freak show... Audience, your turn:

"WHOOOOOOO"

"As if that wasn't enough, we have performances from Andrew Dice Clay and Bobby Caldwell.."

The freaks clap. How much did they pay for the ticket? I'll fucking kill Hymie....

Nobody appreciates a freak show like Americans.... This is considered... 'Light entertainment'.....

A nation of freaks and the brain dead ... Cheeseburger eating, emotional retards! Bird brains!

The greatest country in the world. The land of the free....

Max is in his element. He has the world at his feet. He dreamed of this day. All of his life, he dreamed of this day. Sitting in front of the cameras; smiling at the whole of America.....

Interviewing people he couldn't give a fuck about and knows nothing of. I'm Max! I have the world at my feet. I have a big house, on the big side of town. I have a study full of books, books I'll never understand because my brain is small and my ego is the size of a small continent. America loves me, but I'm dumb. It doesn't matter! My AUDIENCE is dumb!

YEEEEEE-HAAAWWWW! HEY MA! GRAB THE SHOTGUN!!

My nasty side is emerging. It's emerging because I'm scared..... Because I'm having a

flashback.....

A flashback I cannot stop. Even if I wanted to.

I'M BLIND! THE LIGHTS! LIGHT FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE! SMOKE! I'M CHOKING!!

My neck is red raw, my clothes are soaked in sweat... The show goes on... Max continues....

He turns to face the camera for another angle. An angle on his good side, Len will ensure...

"Now, my first guest is a rather controversial figure to say the least..."

I CAN TASTE SMOKE!! MY MOUTH IS DRY! I NEED WATER!

"He is a man who has been in the spotlight recently due to his controversial new novel..."

THESE LIGHTS! THESE FU-CK-ING LIGHTS! MY SKIN IS BURNING! I CAN SEE THE LIGHTS! I CAN TASTE THE SMOKE!

My throat burns....

".....The Cannibal's Cookbook, which has divided opinion. To say it's divided opinion is an understatement. My next guest has polarised the media and his own fans like no other....."

I'M BLINDED! I'M BLINDED BY THE FUCKING LIGHTS!

"Please welcome... Tony M Richards..."

I don't walk on to the stage, I have a prosthetic foot- It isn't 'cinematically pleasing' for me to limp on using a stick..... Max merely pushes his hand out with an open palm.

I CAN'T FUCKING BREATHE! I'M DYING! I'M BLIND FROM THE LIGHTS! THIS IS-

I pick up the glass of water in front of me. The water is the only real thing in the building at this moment.

I'M BLINDED!!

"Welcome Tony, I understand you've just arrived in the United States..."

I can't talk, my throat is blocked with smoke! I can taste burnt wood! I'm blinded by the lights.....

I pull the glass up to my lips. The glass I can't see, but can feel in my hand. I pull the glass to my lips.

Max says:

"Tony? You okay pal?"

I'M NOT YOUR FUCKING PAL!

My hand is slippery from the sweat. I drop the glass. It all happens in slow motion.....

SMASH!

The glass is now fragmented, broken into a million pieces. The soothing water is soaked into my trousers and socks; the rest rolls down the polished studio floor.

Len shouts:

"CUT TO COMMERCIAL."

"WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS LEN? JESUS?! REALLY?! WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS?!" Shouts Fish Face.

"SHUT IT YOU FUCKING ARSEHOLE!!" I respond, angered by Fish Faces knee jerk reaction.....

The cunt just stares at me, mouth wide open. The crowd gasp.

I threaten the bastard, my Bristolian accent returning with vengeance after years of suppression:

"YOU WANT ME SMASH YER FUCKING FALSH TEETH OUT!"

Max shouts:

"SECURITY! LEN! SECURITY PLEASE!"

I'm up and walking away; hobbling off the set. Right now I need to be alone. Anywhere but here..... Alone.....

Leave me alone. The fucking lot a yers!!

My stick is the only thing holding me up right now, any second I'm gonna collapse into a heap and melt into the ground.

I go past the confused looking security guards and past the crew. I'm down the hallway backstage. The neon toilet sign is my saviour right at this moment- Its high up and calling me to safety, like a lighthouse beam shot into the deep sea in the dead of night.... Guiding me safety. The walls are holding me up as I stumble into the toilets; the lights are brighter in here than they are in the studio.

I stumble to the sink and run the tap, splashing the cold water over my face and neck, my heading is spinning and swirling- I'm lost completely, disorientated..... I look up at my reflection and there he is. In the background. Tobey! It's Tobey.....

He still looks like he did in 1982, except he has no eyes- Just black holes.

"Fuck me Tobey, I'm so sorry....."

He says nothing but stares into the mirror.

I turn to face him, but he's gone. Disappeared.

Tobey.....

I'm starting to choke again. The lights are blinding..... I stumble into a cubicle.... Lock the door.

Once inside the cubicle I scream at the top of my lungs, coughing out the smoke that isn't there. I scream until I can't scream anymore... Then I scream again. I can hear my voice bounce of the cold, tiled walls. My voice bounces of the walls.....

..... Bounces off the wall like it did when I was trapped underneath the lighthouse.

02. MEMORIES OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

By Tony M Richards

Portishead: Friday July 18th 1980

The weather feels really nice today. I'm lying back on the grass, letting the sun wash over me. "Don't bum suck it! Dickhead...." Terry says to Kevin, tellin' him off an' that. I hate it when he makes the spliff wet; you can't get a good draw off it or nothin'... You have to tear the flipping back end off! Too much hassle! Especially on a day like today.....

"I ain't bum sucked it Terry! Stop picking on us," Kevin says to him. I know he done it, an' Terry knows he done it aswell!

I'm just lying back, soaking up the sun rays an' that... I've been waiting for this moment for bloody years. I hated school and the teachers flippin' hated me! I ain't got a brain for school. Teachers were always tellin' me I was thick an' that. Telling me I was gonna end up moppin' floors or flippin' burgers in a van in a field somewhere..... Fuckin' bastards!

But see, now none of it matters 'cause I'm sixteen and school is over. Schools out ya' bastards! I got myself a job at the local hospital as a porter! I start next week. Can't wait! As soon as I get some money, I'm gonna get myself some new clobber! New loafers; new Harrington; new Brutus shirt with some Sta Press trousers..... I'm gonna get me some tattoos too! Terry's got two already and he's only sixteen! Imagine that! Don't worry! I'll soon catch him up!

Terry's older brother is a proper hooligan, real savage lad. Shane runs with the local football firm.

He's a proper skinhead an' all! He's got 'SLICE HERE' tattooed on his neck! What a nutter!

Terry's got a Bristol Rovers tattoo on his chest and he's got 'CRACKING SKULLS IN PORTISHEAD' on the on his arm. That's our motto:

CRACKING SKULLS IN PORTISHEAD.

Nobody fucks with us! We're skinheads and people are scared of us when they see us! They know we're trouble with a capital T!

"Pass me the cider dickhead!" Terry shouts at me. "Yer' bloody stoned ain'tcha?! What a mess! Can't take you twos nowhere! Pass the cider before I punch you!"

I pass him the cider. It don't bother me, the way he speaks an' that.... Terry always talks like that. It's his upbringing you see; Terry's old man has spent most of his life locked up!

Before me and Kevin used to hang out with Terry, we got picked on loads.... People thought we were soft an' that. When we started hanging out with Terry and we became skinheads, we started gettin' a rep for being tough! People round here think twice before they fuck with us! You don't fuck around with Shane and Terry Barrett!

CRACKING SKULLS IN PORTISHEAD!! That's our motto!!

An' here we are....What could be better? We're here in the graveyard, smoking pot and drinking cider.... Free from school! Free from those arseholes..... The bastard teachers an' that. This is where life begins. I'm lying back on the grass, tokin' on a joint and soaking up the sun. Got my boots off and I can feel the soft grass beneath my socks. Terry and Kevin are arguing about The Specials and Madness; arguing about which one is better an' that.... None of that shit bothers me..... I'm

looking forward to the future.... Terry's working in his brothers garage and Kev is going to college 'cos he's proper brainy an' that! I've got my job in the hospital! This is it! This is the spice of life! This is what it's about! Even lookin' at all the tombstones and all the creepy statues, I can't feel down about anything! These lot are dead, we're still alive!

"Roll up another joint Terry," I tell him.

"Bollocks! Let's go and get a coke. My throat is dry," he says back, like he's got the hump or something.

"Finish the cider," Kevin says. "There's still a bit left."

"Fuck that! I wanna coke! Let's got to the lighthouse," Terry snaps at us, really annoyed like... "What are you talkin' about?! That tuck shops been closed for bleedin' years Terry! Are you off your rocker?!" Kev says to him.

That's a bad move. You shouldn't argue with Terry...

"How would you know?!" Terry says to him. I'm saying nothing. I'm staying out of this.

"Mrs Parsons has been dead for yonks! That tuck hasn't been open for ages! It's probably full of rats and rotten gear.... Or there's chairs in there an' stuff... Maybe it's empty. Who knows? Who cares anyway?! C'mon Terry! Let's go to the shops, up the hill," Kev says.

I think Kev is right, but I don't dare say nothin'... S'not worth it. What is Kev doing?!

"SO YOU BEEN THERE THEN?! 'AVE YOU DICKHEAD?!" Terry's raging at him. Kevin, yer dickhead....

"No... But I mean, since they built those shops and closed the Lighthouse to tourists, I mean ... Stands to reason Terry! Don't it?" Kevin says, like a bird.

"RIGHT! SO IF YOU DONT KNOW, SHUT IT THEN!"

Terry's pissed off. It's 'cause he's thirsty probably. I put my boots on and we start walking down the pathway, out of the graveyard. Nobody's saying nothin'..... Just have to wait until Terry calms down. He usually sulks for about an hour, then he's fine.

Sods law! As soon as we start walking, the sun disappears behind some clouds! Now I just wanna leave the boneyard. All these statues are creepin' me out! Maybe it's the weed an' that....

This gear that Terry gets of Shane is mind blowin'.... Maybe I need a can of coke too!

We walking down the road in silence and soon we're getting near the lighthouse. Terry lights a fag and points:

"Now we'll see dickhead!"

Kev shakes his head.

The lighthouse was lovely when I was a kid. It's where everybody used to go and have fun:

Families; all the local kids; all the old pensioners; all the tourists visitin'..... Everybody.....

It was really great, especially in the summer an' that! It would be packed outside the lighthouse!

All the adults sat around at the tables; the kids played in this little playground they had next to the tuck shop. I use to play there with my older brother an' that. Great times it was.....

Something doesn't feel right. Not now.... The lighthouse doesn't look the same. The big, black gate that was always open has been removed completely..... The grass is all fucked up, dead lookin' an' yellow an' that..... There's a few chairs upside down by the wall; all the rest of the chairs and tables are now gone completely!

"Bollocks Terry, there's no tuck shop here," I says to him.

"We ain't looked yet dickhead! 'Ave we?!" he snaps at us, flickin' his fag end at Kev.... The building looks dark....

Not like I remember it.....

"Fliplin' creepy!" Kev says. He's right an' all.....

The windows along the bottom used to have this shiny, light blue paint on 'em.

The paint on the windows is cracked and broken now. The paints turned this horrible, yellowey green!

The building looks empty as we walk around, looking for the old school tuck shop.

Haven't been here in a long time.....

This place used to be the pride of Portishead! Not anymore mind!

Now it looks like a dump. The concrete on the ground is all cracked and broken; I just twisted my ankle as some of the concrete broke under me bleedin' foot!

We walk to the back of the building; the old outside toilet is still there. The sky looks muggy and grey. I haven't been here in a good while.... Looks like it's gone to the dogs... Shame ...

I just wanna get out of here and smoke another spliff.

"Fuck the Coke Terry! There's nothing here!" Kev says.... This time he's right. There's nothing here.

Terry's being a right prat.

"We ain't got around the back, 'ave we? Dickhead!" He says again.

Old Mrs Parsons used to sit in that tuck shop. You could get what you needed in there: Bottles of Coke; ice lollies; bags a crisps; Joe Cola ice creams..... She would always ask if you'd been good; otherwise she'd tell you there was no treats. She always remembered your name an' that. I loved going to the lighthouse when I was a kid, running around, getting treats from Mrs Parsons....

Just before we hit the old tuck shop, Kev spots the old toilet. The toilet was a flushable one with a chain an' that... No sink mind..... It was the size of shoebox! All the kids used to hate taking a wee in there because the light never worked and there was spiders. It was proper creepy... I'd rather go behind a tree and take stick off the other kids! Nobody wanted to do a piss in there ...

Kev tries to pull the door open.

"Maybe Mrs Parsons is taking a huge shit in 'ere Terry! You can ask her for a coke!" Kev says. I start laughing, I can't help it!

"Fuck off the both of yers!" Terry says and pulls hard on the door. He really has to yank the door hard. It's stuck or it's locked. Don't matter either way, if a doors locked, we just break it! Fuck it! Give it the boot!

Terry blasts the handle with his boot.

BANG!

The handle flies off the door! WHAT A NUTTER!! Terry don't know his own bloody strength!! He took the fuckin' handle off the door!!

"Thats how ya' do it! Yer' couple of poofs!" Terry says....

Now the door is wide open and we can take a look inside.... Its disgusting an' that! The bloody toilet seat is missing and the toilet bowl is full to the brim with dirty water! Nobody could take a piss in that even if they wanted to! Me an' Terry grab Kev and make him think we're gonna shove his head into the dirty water! He's really scared an' he's really putting up a fight! I can't stop laughing! This is too much! Too much!

"GO ON KEV! DRINK OL' MRS PARSONS SHIT WATER! DRINK FROM THE DIRTY BOWL!"

Terry shouts. I'm dying with laughter! We've nearly got his head in the bowl! His forehead is an inch away from the shitty bog water!

"STOOOOOP!! STOOOP!!" Kev is shouting, really scared. His forehead is now nearly touchin' the shitty water!!

I let go of him, but Terry's still pushing his head down.

"WHATTA YA' DOING YER DICKHEAD!" Terry shouts. "WHY'D YER LET GO YER FUCKING POOF?!"

Terry can go too far an' that.... To be honest he scares me a little bit sometimes. A jokes a joke! If Kevin was to drink that, he'd be really ill an' that. Terry see's the look in my eyes and let's go of Kev.

"I was joking yer couple of fags! Kev, get up! Yer dickhead!" Says Terry.

Kev gets up. We close the door best we can, 'cause the hinges are proper fucked We walk around and there it is. The tuck shop.

The tuck shop was a hole in the wall. Two wooden doors that would open an' that.... Mrs Parsons would sit inside and sell the goodies.

Sometimes, Mrs Parsons would go a bit mad in the summer.... When it got really hot an' that.... It was like she would change and go a bit doolally. My mum always said it was when she hadn't taken her medication.

"Silly woman!" My mum would say. "Why doesn't she take her bloody pills!"

My mum said she was a lovely lady and that she had experienced some bad things in her life. She had to take medication to keep her calm.

When she went a bit funny, she could be a bit scary!

"Beware of the perverts lads!! There is evil beneath the lighthouse. Dirty people!! With all their bits hanging out!! Dirty bastards! Having sex! Lots of people having sex! Penises! Vaginas! All hanging out! The boy underneath the building, he's done nothing! He's done nothing! All those perverts!"

We'd all laugh. She'd be talking about sex and the devil. Evil spirits and dicks! Us lads still have laugh about it now, when we're getting stoned:

"THERE'S DICKS AND VAGINAS! EVIL LADS, EVIL PEOPLE! DIRTY FUCKERS! 'ORRIBLE FUCKERS!! SONS OF THE DAMNED! SONS OF THE DAMNED!"

Kev can do her voice perfectly. He can even copy how she used to spit when she talked 'cause she had teeth missing.... I can remember the spit drippin' off her chin. I remember my mum leading me away one day when she was havin' a right episode in front of all the kids! My mum kept saying:

"Poor woman, poor woman! Poor, bloody woman!!"

The wooden doors are closed but not locked. The light blue paint is now green, all the paint is cracked.

"See, it's closed," Kev says. "Can we go now?"

"Wait," Terry says. He pulls open the doors. And there it is. Nothing. Nowt!

Just a cold, damp room.

Bare, dirty brick walls an' that....

Seeing the old shop makes me feel sad. There's nothing there.

Looking at the ceiling inside, I can see the wood is all damp and starting to break. I'm even wondering what happened to Mrs Parsons.....

"Can I help you gentlemen with something?"

I turn around and see some trampy looking bloke staring at us. He's got on an old blue boiler suit. His eyes are evil looking. I don't like the look of this bloke.

"We're trying to get a can of Coke," says Terry, looking at him like he wants to deck him!

"There's been no tuck shop here for year's lads," this fella says, crossing his arms. "Told'ya!"

Kev says.

"Right," says Terry, "We'll be on our way. We was only lookin"

"Back the way you came," this fella says. "Back around the way you came." "Or what?" Terry says.

Kev's looking frightened; I'm looking frightened too. Terry looks like he wants a square go with him. This guy looks mental! I don't like the look of him. His teeth are all rotten. Dirty brown stumps. Looks like he ain't seen a dentist in years.

"Back the way you came," he says again. "Back around, the way you came in."

We're walking off; Terry is walking backwards; proper staring at him!

"FUCKING CREEPS!" Terry shouts at him. "I'LL BE BACK WITH SHANE BARRETT!"

CRACKING-SKULLS-IN-PORTISHEAD!"

The creepy fella doesn't take his eyes off Terry.... Not for one moment!

We get onto the path and head back to the graveyard.

03. STUDIO LIGHTS

Los Angeles: Thursday 24th May 1990.

I have my head shoved into the toilet bowl; my nose is touching the water beneath..... Not through choice....

..... I'm trying to block out the light from the outside world..... This is all.....

..... I need..... To.....

..... Block out the monsters..... There in the studio.....

Birdbrains..... Savages.....

..... Block out the monsters in my mind- The demons that haunt me constantly..... Bastard tormentors....

Pegasus.....

Oh Jesus....

..... Pegasus.....

I'm pretty sure that Toby is a figment of my imagination..... Some sort of paranoid delusion which my mind presents to speed up my downward spiral into self-destruction; the very thing every angst ridden writer claims drives them to write and be great.

With my head jammed into the toilet bowl, I have the peace I need right now. I can still taste the smoke, it's still choking me....

I briefly catch my reflection in the toilet water as my head tilts and let's a small beam of light hit the surface. I see my eyes and the shadow from the bridge of my nose. It could be anyone.....

I plunge my head deeper into the bowl, now there's nothing.....

..... Nothing at all.....

... For what feels like a brief moment in time, I'm at peace....

I close my eyes tightly and then open them, a beam of light hits the water and I'm back.....

Back in Portishead.....

Outside the lighthouse, Rufus is holding me. I can see the lighthouse beam blast out into the night sky. A long beam of light to guide the ships home. My skin is burnt, my skin is burning....

..... I'm choking again.

The black smoke is trapped in my throat, my eyes are watering. I can-

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Somebody is knocking on the cubicle door. Who the fuck is this? I'm choking. The smoke is-
"HEY ASSHOLE! WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED BACK THERE?! THAT WAS PRIME TIME TELEVISION!"

Hymie.....

"Hymie, give me a minute..."

I pull my head out of the bowl, back to reality. I can still the taste the smoke, charred wood from centuries ago.....

"You okay pal?"

Under the cubicle door I can see Hymies loafers- A big gold buckle, alligator skin.....

"Hymie, mate.... Please... Just a minute...."

The loafers don't move. I pick my stick up off the floor. I'm still on my knees.

"I'm gonna kick the shit outta that asshole Len! That motherfucker has been-"

"HYMIE! GIVE-ME-A-FUCKING-MINUTE!" Please

Hymie.... Just a minute.... Give me some peace.....

Tobey is a daylight hallucination... Or god, paying his respects.....

"Okay Tony. I'm gonna shoot the shit with Max," Hymie says. I hear his footsteps echo off the walls as he makes his exit- Loudly. The toilet door slowly closes behind him. I slide the lock and step out.

Past the mirror and out into the corridor.

This feels like a dream..... Some sort of twisted nightmare.... My whole life has felt like..... A nightmare.....

Night time in Los Angeles feels eerie. As I step out of the car park, I realise the taste of smoke has now gone.

For how long?

..... I need a drink.

I haven't had a drink in a few months. My doctor said it was it's a downer- Not good for people in my position.....

Fuck him! Fuck the doctor!

Sometimes you have to trust your body and give into your cravings. Why else would you crave for something if you didn't need it?

I haven't had a drink for ages....

.....Inside the liquor store, my eyes take a moment to adjust to the light. The television above the counter is playing the Max O'Brien Show. Leather face is laughing at his own jokes; our encounter is far from his memory.

A pretty face speaks to me:

"Good evening Sir! Can I be of any assistance?"

The girl behind the counter looks young and rather innocent..... Too delicate to be working in a liquor store..... Especially in a city like Los Angeles... A city populated by creeps, bullies and criminals.... People who should be in a cage..... Fucking animals who should be locked away from the rest of the world.

I adjust my eyes to the light and respond:

"Rum.... I need a small bottle of rum...."

"Which brand would you like?" She asks, before continuing: "We have Maygrove Park.... The Sailors Captain.... The Port Of Saint Louis....."

"That'll do fine. Bag it please."

"Erm, which one?"

"The last one, the last one you said..."

Customer service at a time when it's not needed. Good ol' America....

... Home of the brave.....

"The Port Of Saint Louis? Are you sure? I mean-"

"Please just bag it my dear, thank you all the same," I mumble, beginning to let my thin veil slip away and reveal the wreckage beneath.

..... Right now.... I just need.....

A fucking drink.....

She bags it and I head out, my stick clanking along the polished floor. Then it hits me. The door.....

The glass door.....

Tobey.....

The bastard is there again.... Dancing and warping in the glass reflection in front of me....

Tobey.....

Yet, as I get closer, I see it's my own reflection..... Tobey faded as I got close. He's disappeared down the rabbit hole again.

..... Tobey.

Why won't you be my friend?

..... Outside, the lights from the passing cars are blinding and the smoke is beginning to choke me again. The small alleyway next to the liquor store is my own rabbit hole to scuttle down.

Around the back of the store is a load of bins and waste materials, all in one small square yard.

This will do fine..... This whole city is a dump.....

I crouch down next to a wall between some bins and crack the cap open. No time to savour the aroma- I take a giant swing to blow the smoke away: The smoke from rancid, sea air damaged rotten wood; wood from the bleak fifteenth century; smoke that burns my throat and chokes me....

I can still see the car lights.... As the cars pass, the light hits the walls of the pathway and illuminates the square I'm perched in. I'm choking down the rum, feeling a different kind of burning in my throat- Sweet, acidic.....

Painkillers.....

They all taste the same.... Chemical...

For how many centuries has this worked? Worked for man?

Alcohol: The cure for all pain..... Millions of victims, dying slowly because of alcoholism.... Dying because they couldn't take the pressures of life or the gloomy past that haunts them..... People like me- Damaged goods.....

..... CUNTS.

I close my eyes tightly. I'm trying not to think about Tobey, or the dead kid in the cage, trapped at the bottom of the lighthouse. I'm trying to forget the fire that burnt me. I'm trying to forget-

The lights from the cars illuminate the whole rubbish area. For the snapshot moment, darkness turns to light and back to darkness again. Like lightning striking in slow motion.

I stare down at the bottle as the light hits the walls and gives me a blast. I look down at the bottle in my hand. Then I see it:

PORTISHEAD.

It takes me a minute. Did I just....

See what I thought I-

PORTISHEAD.

Again. Is this some sort of sick joke? Another daylight hallucination?

I pull the bottle closer to my face; I need to see the damn label! Am I dreaming? Did the bottle say what I thought it said? There is no light! This fucking city is choking on its own smog from too many fucking cars, and when you need one to drive by? Nothing.....

CUNTS! SHOWEEEE ME YOUR FUCKING HEADLIGHTS!!

..... I hold the bottle close to my face. Two inches.....

FLASH!

A car finally passes.

Illumination. Light.

PORT OF SAINT LOUIS.

It was in my head..... My mind playing tricks again.

I was imagining it. I'm dreaming..... My mind is playing tricks on me..... More light...

PORT OF SAINT LOUIS.

There's some black cunt laughing at me; the cunt on the front of the bottle...

..... The logo is a bug eyed black fella laughing- His big, white teeth and tongue poking out from underneath a low-slung sailor's hat.....

You can't fault the Americans, they'll never let the blacks have dignity... Even on a rum bottle!

Fucking bastards.....

Hold on..... What am I talking about?....

The label on a bottle of booze means fuck all.... It's about what's inside the bottle... Just another pain killer, regardless of the flavour.....

Stop thinking so much Antonio... That's what Eleanor says.....

I unscrew the cap and take huge swigs, my mind thinking about the Tobey and the dead kid at the bottom of the lighthouse. The kid trapped in the cage... The dead kid.....

Before I know it, I've marinated in my own paranoid sorrow and drained the entire fucking bottle.

I should just walk past the liquor store and head back to the hotel. Fuck

him! Fuck the doctor.....

..... I ask the girl behind the counter:

"Same again please."

She grabs The Port Of Saint Louis and stops in her tracks. She has a quizzical expression on her face....

She goes to say something and then stops. I smile, so she continues:

"Excuse me for asking... Weren't you the guy that was just on the Max O'Brien Show?"

Such a pretty young girl, so beautiful..... For a moment I'm lost staring into her beautiful brown

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