

Table of content:

Plan A:

Chapter 1 – 25

Plan B:

Chapter 26 – 64

Plan C:

Chapter 64 – 80

Prologue:

I have perpetually harbored an unsettling intuition, as if an ominous event is on the horizon. This feeling has plagued me since my early years, and I remained ignorant of its true origin. It could be attributed to some past trauma or perhaps a mere manifestation of my own perceived insanity. Regardless, I have grown accustomed to its presence.

Life has an inclination to confront us with a plethora of extraordinary circumstances, both favorable and unfavorable. Regrettably, we have limited agency in altering these circumstances; that much is certain.

Chapter 1: the genesis:

Under the cloak of night, I strolled along the streets donning a black hoodie, long trousers, and a compact backpack. Let us refer to the path I traversed as “Wankers 12.” This particular street was notorious for various criminal activities that transpired within its confines.

Hence, I carried a small knife discreetly tucked away in my pocket, should an untoward incident unfold. Furthermore, it was not unheard of for divine beings to grace this very street. Yes, you heard me correctly—gods.

You see, the world I inhabit comprises both gods and demigods, coexisting with humans in an astonishing state of harmony. Astonishing, for these deities possess immense power, yet they wield it benevolently.

This symbiotic relationship serves humanity well, as these gods could effortlessly obliterate us with a mere flick of their fingers, which instills a profound sense of dread within me. Nevertheless, I persist, for I am still among the living.

But I digress. At this moment, what truly matters is my progression along this street, wherein I appeared to be the sole pedestrian. Yet, from the periphery of my vision, I espied a distressed figure crawling on the ground.

The person exclaimed, "Help! Please, assist me!"

The desperate cries pierced my consciousness.

I responded urgently, "Wait! I am coming!"

I sprinted towards the individual, cautiously surveying the vicinity for any signs of additional presence.

As I neared the man, I stooped down to inspect him for any injuries.

I inquired, "What has transpired?"

My focus remained fixed on him, rendering me oblivious to my surroundings.

To my astonishment, I noticed a peculiar gash on his leg while thoroughly examining his condition.

I muttered, "Goodness gracious..."

Abruptly, a peculiar sound reached my ears, resembling that of a vehicle engine. I glimpsed an unfamiliar car hurtling towards me.

In an instant, I mustered all my strength and instinctively hurled the man aside, ensuring his safety from the impending collision.

And then, a thunderous impact!

The car collided with me, inflicting severe damage upon my legs. The pain exceeded the realm of words, propelling me several feet backward from the sheer force of the collision.

I stood there, speechless and immobilized by the excruciating agony. Unconsciousness loomed near, but before succumbing, I discerned approaching footsteps. And there he stood—my eyes fixated on the man who had previously lain on the ground.

I succumbed to darkness.

Some time elapsed.

Gradually, I regained consciousness in an unfamiliar alley. My legs throbbed relentlessly, yet they had not shattered, inexplicably defying the expected outcome.

Why did that car strike me? How did the man rise to his feet? Was this a calculated scheme? I remained utterly confounded.

Summoning all my strength, I endeavored to stand upright—no easy feat. Nevertheless, I managed to achieve this arduous task.

Grimacing, I surveyed my surroundings within the alley.

Pondering aloud, I muttered, “Where am I? Did that man purposefully deposit me in this forsaken place, intending for me to suffer and perish? How despicable.”

With a determined resolve, I commenced my journey, following the alley that led in a favorable direction. Glancing to my right, I observed an absence of any discernible presence. However, an alternate alleyway veered to the left.

Perplexed by my current predicament, I retrieved my phone from my pocket. Astonishingly, it remained intact, unscathed by the collision.

A notification caught my attention: a message from my mother. I opened it, eagerly devouring her words.

My mother's message read, "Dear Liran, it is quite late. I implore you to return promptly and bring me my medication. Please expedite your return."

I sighed, acknowledging that, at the very least, I now had a purpose to guide me.

Allow me to acquaint you with my mother—a complex individual. Ever since my father's untimely demise when I was merely four years old, she underwent profound changes. Copious pills became her refuge, intertwined with a myriad of other misguided coping mechanisms.

Lamentably, I possessed no siblings, leaving my mother as the sole person with whom I maintained a close bond. Regrettably, even our relationship was marred by strain and dissatisfaction.

She incessantly blamed me for misdeeds I had not committed, insisting that my existence bore responsibility for my father's demise. The weight of her accusations and manipulative guilt-trips caused me immeasurable pain. It hurt profoundly, considering she was the only individual to whom I felt connected.

However, let us set aside these disheartening memories momentarily. My current aim was to escape this wretched place and return to my mother's side.

Setting forth, I treaded the path leading to the left, passing a series of doors on either side.

Pondering my course, I muttered, "How might I find my way back to my mother's abode? The distance between us is considerable."

Continuing my march, I unexpectedly caught sight of a shadowy figure observing me fleetingly before vanishing into thin air.

I called out, "Hey!"

I hastened toward the enigmatic presence, but to no avail. The figure had vanished without a trace. My gaze shifted to the right, revealing yet another alleyway.

Pressing onward, I noticed an exit door ahead, yet adjacent to it, on the right, a door tainted with a trail of blood beckoned me.

Compelled by curiosity, I approached the door.

Upon closer examination, it became evident that the door exhibited signs of age and deterioration—a mere push could grant me passage.

Contemplating the situation, I murmured, "This does not bode well. What of the exit door?"

Determined to explore all possibilities, I ventured toward the exit door, attempting to open it. Alas, it remained firmly shut, defying my efforts. I persisted, repeatedly attempting to force it open, yet it steadfastly resisted.

Frustration welled within me as I uttered in exasperation, "Well, damn it! It appears I must venture through that door."

Resigned to my fate, I redirected my focus toward the broken door. Exerting a modest amount of force, it yielded easily, granting me passage into its mysterious realm.

And so, I stepped forward, traversing the threshold into the unknown.

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Chapter 2: the broken door:

After crossing the threshold, prepared for whatever lay ahead, I beheld the lower level.

My thoughts murmured, 'Curious, this occurrence strikes an unsettling chord within me.'

There it was, the ominous premonition that had always preceded an impending event. I instinctively positioned my right hand near my pocket, where a small blade resided.

Descending the staircase, my senses sharpened, ensuring no surprise assailants would startle my corpulent frame.

Reaching the bottom, I encountered a corridor branching off into two directions. The initial path revealed a securely locked door, while the second route extended to the left, preceding the aforementioned entrance.

Pondering for a moment, I resolved, 'Indeed, I shall venture leftward.'

Thus, commencing my stride towards the door, just before reaching it, I abruptly veered to the left, where a stairway came into view.

Progressing towards the ascent, I ascended the steps until eventually, an open doorway granting access to the outside materialized before me.

Stepping into the open air, I perused my surroundings, casting my gaze to the right, where an enigmatic door beckoned my attention.

Perplexed, I muttered, 'What in the world...'

Observing the slightly ajar door, an uncanny sensation stirred within me, as if an unseen presence lurked behind its threshold.

Compelled to investigate further, I advanced toward the door, only for it to abruptly slam shut with an audacious force.

Startled, I exclaimed!

In that moment, a notification chimed from my mobile device. Retrieving the device, I beheld a message from an unknown sender.

Tapping the message, I unraveled its contents.

Unknown: Divert your gaze to the right.

Message concluded.

Complying with the cryptic directive, I shifted my attention and discovered the second door wide open.

Frustrated, I muttered, 'Aside from this entrance, it seems there is no alternative. It appears I have no choice.'

Turning towards the right, I approached the door, brandishing my knife and proceeding cautiously.

Passing through the portal, I found myself traversing a hallway leading leftward. Continuing my path, I weaved through various directions until an additional door to the left and another path to the right came into view.

A crimson hue caught my attention, and upon closer inspection, I discovered a macabre sight—bloodstains splayed across the ground.

Taken aback, I exclaimed, 'Good heavens... this defies all comprehension.'

And then, suddenly...

BOOM!

The door behind me flung open with great force. Swiftly pivoting, I stood aghast, beholding a humanoid figure—a grotesque, zombie-like being.

To my dismay, the creature clutched a knife.

Surprised, I stammered, 'What on earth?!'

The creature lunged at me, launching a frenzied assault. Yet, regaining my composure, I swiftly evaded its blows, retaliating with a swift slash across its chest.

Momentarily, the creature recoiled.

Seizing the opportunity, I commanded, 'Now!'

Summoning all my strength, I propelled myself toward the creature, thrusting my knife into its skull, vanquishing it. The creature slumped lifelessly to the ground.

Taking a moment to recover, I examined the grotesque being before me.

Uttering in disbelief, 'What in the name of all that is holy... What were those abominations?! Should I seek assistance?'

Raising my phone with my left hand, I dialed the authorities, yet my efforts yielded no response.

Frustrated, I muttered, 'Damn it! It seems I must find my own way out.'

Averting my gaze from the lifeless creature, I surveyed my surroundings, fixating on the source from which it had emerged. My eyes caught sight of a ladder, leading downward into what appeared to be a sewer.

With a mix of exasperation and determination, I approached the ladder, peering down into the murky depths below. The pungent odor of filth assaulted my senses, but I braced myself for what lay ahead.

Descending the rungs, I found myself within the confines of a labyrinthine sewer system. Navigating through its convoluted passageways, I followed various directions until a ladder emerged into view.

Ascending the ladder, I found myself facing a door. Summoning a glimmer of hope, I cautiously reached for the handle, and to my relief, it yielded.

Sighing with gratitude, I stepped through the door, finding myself in yet another corridor with diverging paths—one to the left and one to the right. A familiar sense of unease washed over me, prompting me to grasp my knife once more, prepared for any potential danger.

Moving forward with measured steps, I strained to discern any peculiar sounds. Suddenly, a strange noise pierced the silence, causing me to take a step back in alarm. It was then that I noticed a knife hurtling through the air, narrowly missing me. Its origin was the left side of the corridor.

Reacting swiftly, I lunged toward the left, clutching my knife tightly. And there, before my eyes, stood another deformed figure—this time wielding a sledgehammer with both hands.

Caught between fear and resolve, I hurled my knife with all my might, its trajectory finding its mark in the creature's skull. It collapsed, life extinguished.

Uttering a bewildered cry, I pondered, 'What in the world are these abominations? What unfathomable phenomenon engulfs me? Is this all some twisted jest?'

Drawing nearer to the fallen creature's corpse, I peered down at it, reclaiming my knife from its skull.

Determined to escape this nightmarish realm, I turned my back on the grotesque scene and proceeded along the alternate path, maneuvering through the labyrinth of passageways until, at long last, a door materialized before me.

With trepidation, I gingerly turned the knob, and to my relief, the door swung open.

Exclaiming with a mix of relief and mild amusement, I murmured, 'Thank the heavens... the thought of it being locked—how laughable.'

Passing through the threshold, I found myself once again in a corridor, offering two diverging routes—one leading to the left, the other to the right. An unsettling sensation resurfaced, tugging at my senses, causing me to clutch my knife tighter.

Proceeding with caution, I embarked on a deliberate exploration of these two paths. Suddenly, an eerie sound reached my ears, causing me to take a step back, and there, in front of me, a knife embedded itself into the wall.

It had been hurled from the left side.

Without a moment's hesitation, I lunged toward the left, knife in hand, only to confront yet another deformed humanoid figure—this time armed with a sledgehammer grasped firmly in its hands.

Surprised and alarmed, I swiftly launched my knife toward the creature's skull, using every ounce of strength within me. It struck its mark with deadly precision, and the creature collapsed, vanquished.

Perplexed and overcome with a maelstrom of emotions, I approached the lifeless form, retrieving my knife from its resting place.

Realizing the urgency of my escape, I turned away from the fallen creature and pressed forward, navigating through the winding passages, making a series of calculated turns. Finally, a glimmer of hope emerged—a ladder came into view.

Climbing up the ladder, I reached the top, where a door awaited me. With a mix of anticipation and apprehension, I grasped the doorknob and turned it. To my relief, it opened without resistance.

Uttering a grateful expression, I entered the room, finding myself in a familiar hallway adorned with multiple doors on either side, reminiscent of the layout etched within my memory.

Reflecting upon my surroundings, I murmured, “Ah, yes... this place I know all too well. From here, I can find my way out.”

Keeping a firm grip on my knife, I embarked upon the corridor, exploring each room as I moved along. Memories of my grandmother’s former residence flooded my mind, evoking both nostalgia and a longing for her presence—may she rest in peace, wherever she may be in the realm beyond.

While gazing at the building before me, I noticed a ladder ascending to the third floor, adjacent to a balcony. Motivated by a glimmer of hope, I climbed the ladder, steadily making my way towards the third-floor balcony, eventually reaching it.

Surveying the scene, I discovered grand windows that beckoned to be opened. Acting upon the impulse, I pushed them open, granting passage into the apartment.

Stepping inside, I found myself in a familiar hallway leading to a grand door at the end, accompanied by several smaller doors on either side—just as I had remembered.

Reflecting on my journey thus far, I contemplated, “Ah, yes... I know this place intimately. From here, I can chart my path to freedom.”

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Chapter 3: the apartment:

I paused for a moment, recollecting the architectural features of the building. It comprised four floors, with each floor boasting a corridor leading to a sizable door. Upon entering through said door, one would find staircases and an elevator facilitating access to different levels.

My objective within this particular edifice was to descend to the first floor and make my exit, hoping to ascertain my next course of action.

Presently positioned on the third floor, I gazed toward the corridor culminating in the prominent door at its end. To my right, a pathway led to an elevator.

Myself: Let's explore...

I approached the elevator, endeavoring to ascertain its functionality. After several attempts, it became apparent that it was non-operational.

Returning to the corridor, I began inspecting each door, searching for any that might be unlocked. Eventually, I discovered one.

Myself: Hm?

Stepping into the room, I found myself in a well-appointed kitchen, accompanied by several smaller bedrooms and a living room replete with a television.

Proceeding to the kitchen, my eyes fell upon a key bearing the inscription "at the end of the hallway." In that moment, I surmised that this key likely granted access through the prominent door.

Before departing, I conducted a thorough search of the small apartment, hoping to uncover additional items of interest and, perhaps, some means of defense. Having encountered the peculiar zombie-like creatures, I harbored a premonition that I may confront them again.

It was a certainty.

While scouring the third floor, I fortuitously stumbled upon a pistol, accompanied by seven magazines.

Myself: Remarkable... This could prove useful.

Slipping the firearm into my right pocket, ensuring it remained within easy reach of my right hand, I readied myself for any potential encounters within the apartment.

Approaching the imposing door, I inserted the key I had found, and true to my recollection, a flight of stairs awaited me, offering both ascension and descent, alongside the presence of an elevator.

Descending to the second floor, a sense of unease gripped me once more, and suddenly...

AAAAAAGH!!!

Swiftly turning to my left, I beheld a grotesque creature that emitted a bloodcurdling roar before lunging at me.

Myself: Blast it!

Leaping away from the creature's oncoming attack, I tumbled to the ground, swiftly retrieving my pistol and unloading several rounds into the creature until it ceased its assault.

I pondered the origin and existence of these aberrations. It seemed as if reality itself was warping or, perhaps, the elderly man I had encountered earlier... was he somehow involved?...

Was this a meticulously orchestrated scheme?... I simply couldn't fathom. Nevertheless, an instinctual certainty compelled me to believe that further encounters with these creatures lay ahead.

Regaining my footing, I proceeded downstairs to the first floor, where I laid eyes upon a main door leading to the outside.

Myself: Thank goodness...

Approaching the door, I tested its resistance, but despite several attempts, it remained steadfast.

Myself: Damn it... How shall I escape this predicament?! Perhaps a key is required? Or perchance I need to find a way to forcefully breach it?... Damn it all.

Glancing behind me, I espied the towering door leading to the corridor of interconnected rooms. Making my way toward it, I discovered, to my relief, that it stood ajar.

As I explored the first floor, my senses heightened, scanning for any open doors that might reveal something of value. Suddenly, my attention was drawn to a door, its surface marred by the presence of blood.

At that moment, my phone chimed with a notification. Retrieving the device, I read a message from an unknown sender:

Unknown: Enter.

The conclusion of the message left me with a sickening sensation, as if nausea threatened to overtake me. Gripping my pistol tightly, I entered a state of utmost vigilance.

Pushing open the bloodstained door, I cautiously stepped inside. What I witnessed within the confined space of the small dwelling was enough to make me retch. Every inch of the house was drenched in blood—an inexplicable sight that defied rational explanation. The kitchen, the walls, the ceiling, and even the rooms were all tainted by the repulsive crimson fluid.

Moving through the gruesome spectacle, I maintained a firm grip on my weapon, my senses on high alert. I spotted a closed door that likely led to a bedroom and, without hesitation, I forcefully kicked it open. As anticipated, the room revealed itself to be a small bedroom, its surfaces soaked in blood.

Upon the bed, a piece of paper caught my attention. It bore four numbers inscribed upon it:

“4, 8, 2, 1”

A realization dawned upon me—I understood the purpose of these numbers. They were likely the code to operate the elevator located near the staircase.

Folding the paper, I secured it within my pocket. Just then, a crash echoed through the air, accompanied by a piercing scream.

Myself: !!!

Swiftly pivoting, I exited the blood-drenched bedroom, scanning my surroundings with a sense of urgency. Left and right, nothing greeted my eyes.

Without delay, I hastened my departure from the macabre abode, an eerie sensation clinging to my very being. As I stepped out into the open, I glanced to my left, only to encounter the sight of two of those abhorrent creatures charging towards me.

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