

Disciples of Oblivion

by

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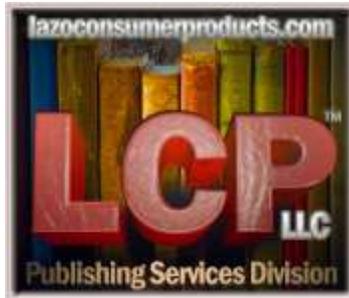
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DISCIPLES OF OBLIVION

I left work a little after ten. The night was warm, and a gentle breeze caressed the streets. I felt good. Everything was coming out just fine for me this year: I had proposed to my longtime girlfriend, and she had said yes; finally, I had managed to buy my first brand new car, and I had gotten a raise at work. Life really is about the moments, those beautiful sweet moments in time where everything just clicks. I think it is these moments that make the rest of life bearable; we hold on to them in dark times; they are our true comfort. Since I was feeling very happy, I decided to walk home and stop by Tommy's Bar and have a beer. It was a safe neighborhood, and the night air felt good.

Tommy's Bar was a fairly clean, middle class establishment. It was a friendly place, and it felt mostly safe. I also liked some of the regulars. I sat down on one of the front stools and ordered a beer—just one—and nursed it for about fifteen minutes, talked to some of the regulars about nothing of great importance, paid my tab, and then left.

Halfway down Vernon St., between the Pharmacy and the Supermarket, I saw a tear in the air, a rip in the fabric of existence, if you will. My first thought was that somebody had spiked my beer; however, since I was feeling very clearheaded, I did not believe this to be the case. My beer had not been spiked. This, unfortunately, only left the possibility that I had gone insane.

While I stood there, contemplating the potential deterioration of my mind, I heard a startled gasp. Across the street from me was a young couple. The young man had light brown hair and was wearing a red shirt and jeans; the young woman was also wearing jeans and a pretty flowery white blouse. She had long blonde hair. Both of them were staring at the rip in space.

This, I am ashamed of admitting, was a great relief for me. I know that I should have much greater faith in my own reasoning ability, but at that moment I felt a magnificent sense of relief that other people were seeing what I was seeing.

"Hey," I shouted across the street, "are you guys seeing this?"

"Yeah," said the blonde girl, "what is it?"

I was about to answer her when the rip began to expand. What at first seemed like a slash in reality became a hole in the air—again, I'm tempted to say *a tear in the very fabric of existence*.

The hole resembled a giant amoeba. It was about four feet in length and three feet in width. Inside the amoeba was darkness so deep it seemed an absence. Out of this darkness something slowly emerged.

In a grotesque parody of birth, a bald head popped out of the darkness. Following the head, came a shoulder, then the body, until, finally, a full grown creature, resembling a man, stood in the middle of the street. He was dressed like a medieval monk.

The creature's face caught my attention. It was a grey face with bluish tones, and its skin seemed like dried leather. The creature looked my way, and I got to see his eyes and teeth.

His eyes were vast, deep pits that contained the fullness of misery and despair. His smile was an insatiable emptiness that sought to drain all. His teeth were those of a vampire. His entire face was a nearly incomprehensible series of angles that left my mind reeling, struggling to understand the incomprehensible.

The vampire, for that is how I now thought of him, moved towards me. He did not walk but glided over the ground. I think that I would have died that night if not for a sharp scream that drew the vampire's attention away from me. Whether the scream came from the young man or woman, I will never know. It had the effect, however, of turning the vampire's attention away from me. He headed towards them.

What I then witnessed was a horror so profound that it seared itself into the very essence of my soul. The vampire fell upon the young man first, tearing his head off and gorging himself on the spurting blood coming out of the ragged, torn stump.

The woman tried to run away, but her legs betrayed her, buckling as she attempted to move.

I, also, tried to run, but my legs, too, refused to obey me. I stood glued to the sidewalk, witnessing a scene of horror beyond even my most perverted nightmares.

The vampire took hold of the woman, turned her towards me—I saw the fear in her eyes—and bit deep into her neck. I watched the life slowly fade away her.

When he had finished draining the woman and her body, like a wet towel, had collapsed, I knew my time had come; I was next and couldn't move. The vampire glided towards me, its mouth covered in dripping blood, half coagulated, mixed with saliva, and pieces of torn flesh.

He placed his right hand on my shoulder. "You," he said, "whose life I now grant, will come to me when I call."

He did not wait for my response but took the two corpses—even the severed head—and vanished into the amoeba.

When I regained the use of my legs, I walked home. My sanity was in danger, and I struggled to retain it neither because of the horror I had witnessed nor because of trauma but because the very existence of the vampire destroyed my belief system.

Madness is a form of truth—perhaps it is even the 'truth.' We go through life wearing blinders, and we get to thinking that we know and understand reality, so that when reality comes along and shatters our treasured illusions, we, out of necessity, go mad. We really do not have a choice in the matter.

When I got home, I was in a daze. I do not even remember unlocking the door and opening it. Reaching the couch, I sat down and began practicing the great art that has distinguished my generation from all others: denial and self-deception. We are all, nowadays, disciples of oblivion.

After a couple of days, I managed to convince my mind that all I had witnessed had been some sort of dream or a mental fever. I laughed at myself and at my overactive imagination. I knew vampires weren't real—and I told myself that over and over again. Besides, I had not seen anything about people disappearing in the news.

I functioned very well for a few weeks, going to work every day, going out on dates with my fiancé, talking with my friends, and being generally cheerful. But I knew, deep inside, that something was wrong. No matter how hard I tried to deny it, the images in my head would not let me be. I could not sleep, the night frightened me, and I resorted to taking sleeping pills. Even then my sleep brought me little rest, only deep and disturbing nightmares of fangs and blood.

I quit my job, bought myself a crucifix, fished out my old bible, took out all of my savings from the bank, and prepared to join the clergy of whatever church would take me.

The people who cared about me became worried and sought to stage some sort of intervention, imagining, perhaps, that I was getting cold feet about my upcoming wedding. Even though the reason why they thought I was having a breakdown was laughable, I was touched that they cared. It's really nice when people actually care about you. I decided to gamble and trust them. I asked them to meet me on Saturday morning—it was Thursday. I promised to tell them everything that was going on in my life and what my plans for the future were. I dreaded confronting Lucy, my fiancée, but I knew that I owed her an explanation, though I did fear that she would not understand and feel deeply hurt by my actions.

I never got the chance to meet with my family and friends; the vampire's call summoned me on Friday night, before the clock hit ten. Although I did try, I was powerless to resist the vampire's call. I climbed out of bed, got dressed, had the presence of mind to grab my bible and crucifix, and left my home and my life forever.

Walking down Hedge St., I took a right on Ridge St. and then a left on 3rd St.; there, between the liquor store and the Laundromat, was the Amoeba. Scraping my shoes on the ground and resisting with all of my strength, I stepped through the Amoeba.

The other side of the Amoeba was a dead Metropolis enshrouded in perpetual night. It was a strange night—the moon was full and it seemed kind of low, and through its illumination I could see fairly well.

I was clearly in the downtown section of wherever I was. I don't think I saw a single building whose windows were not all broken. But I did see buildings designed in such a way as to appear completely alien. There were four buildings shaped like pretzels, and six others that towered at over a thousand feet shaped like big toes, and one enormous building that looked like a dancing flame, which dwarfed the others by a significant margin. Whatever force impelled me guided me to the flame building.

Inside, the flame building's lobby gave evidence of a monumental struggle—bullet holes riddled the walls, blood stained the front desk, the walls and the floor.

In design the lobby was triangular. There were elevators to my right—three of them. The lights—the ones that weren't broken—were still on. Although I did not know for how long this city had been dead, I

was surprised to see that this building still had power. This meant that it had either been well designed or that the vampire had somehow maintained it, which seemed unlikely given the condition of the lobby and of everything else I had seen so far.

I walked up to one of the elevators, and even though I did not understand the language of this strange place, I pressed a button to call it. In a few seconds the elevator doors opened. A smell like metallic vomit assaulted my nose. I felt bile rising up my throat, and I tried to pull away, but the force that held me pressed me forward into the elevator and its suffocating confines. I pushed the top button, and the elevator began its slow ascent.

When the doors opened, I stepped into a mess I could not understand. The entire floor appeared as if a tornado had passed through it—the carpet had large patches ripped out, furniture was scattered everywhere, the walls had been savagely brought down, and pieces of the ceiling were missing. I walked over to a broken window and looked outside. I was so high up that I could not see the streets below.

For a long time, I stared out the window, feeling alone and lost, as dead as the world beneath me. Then I felt a presence behind me. I turned around. The girl from the terrible night of madness stood before me. She was still wearing jeans and a pretty white blouse, now stained badly with blood. The girl now looked deformed, her face strangely stretched to one side and her mouth filled with more teeth than was natural. Her eyes were black pupils in a red sclera; her face was completely white, drained, and showing the signs of an odd decomposition—it looked pulled, dehydrated, and almost mummified; but also as if insects and bacteria refused to feed upon it. Her teeth were all sharp—I got the impression that she could not fully close her mouth. She did not speak, but beckoned me to follow her. I did not want to. I did anyway.

She led me to the other side of the building, stepping over rubble and broken glass. There we found the grotesque vampire with the incomprehensible face. He was standing on a balcony that did not seem to be an original part of the building but something that had been forcefully added. For all that, and for how grotesque it appeared, it was an impressive oval shaped structure with railing that was made from thin bones wrapped in viscera. The stench coming from the balcony was overpowering, like sour milk mixed with rotting blood.

“My name is Abridgorine,” said the vampire, approaching me. “I am the bringer of woe, the descent of madness, the creator of beautiful suffering. You are my vassal and will assist me in creating a bridge between this world and yours.”

“No,” I said, stunned, “I will do no such thing.”

“As you resisted my summoning, you will resist my will,” Abridgorine smiled at me. His eyes were malevolent pits, threatening to drain the world of all that is good and kind.

Although a terrible fear constricted my chest, making it hard to breathe, I spoke what was in my heart.

“You’re evil!” I said, my voice betraying both my horror and disgust.

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