

The night was clear and the sky was littered with stars. A summer wind blew softly through the trees and the moon hung full above, casting an iridescent glow across the grass. Crickets chirped incessantly and the air was filled with the sounds of the night.

Jack was standing in the shadow of a huge oak tree. Its trunk was twice the size of the trash barrel next to it. The branches above swayed and creaked as the leaves swung haplessly back and forth.

In the distance an outdoor theater loomed, empty and dark. A cobble stone walk way wound through the trees and past the amphitheater, disappearing over the horizon. The moonlight draped monstrous blankets of black shadows beneath the trees and beyond.

Jack breathed deeply through his nose. The air was sweet and warm. He looked up at the sky and admired the stars, flickering through the summer heat. He was in some kind of park. But why?

Jack had a funny feeling of anticipation that he just couldn't explain. Not a bad feeling, actually it was kind of a good one. Like the feeling you get before your Birthday or Christmas. A sort of tingling in the bottom of your stomach. Jack took another deep breath, looked around and felt himself smile.

"I have no idea where I am, but this is wonderful."

He was content with the way things were. Jack felt like this was a good night and a good place. That this feeling of calm was better than . . . than something else. And maybe that's all he would allow himself to think about right now.

In the distance, he could hear the faint crunch of gravel under someone's feet. The

sound was getting louder. It was no longer just a crunch. It was a mashing, grinding sound and he could hear how the weight was shifted from the back of the foot to the front with each step. The sense of anticipation was welling inside.

The wind blustered through the trees and they swayed together in a graceful, genuflect before coming to rest again in silence. Jack stepped back into the shadows behind the oak tree and listened as the sound of the footsteps surrounded him. That sound swelled and whirled around his ears like a swarm of bees on a warm October afternoon.

His breath came faster and he could feel his heart beating against the inside of his rib cage. The footsteps came closer and closer - and then a young women appeared on the cobble stone path.

Jack's heart was racing, but he couldn't figure out why. He wasn't afraid, he was excited. Why was he so excited? Why did he feel safer in the shadows, as if they would protect him.

The wind's cadence through the tree tops was hypnotic. Whooshing and then quiet and then whooshing again. Jack was intoxicated with delight.

The girl stepped into the moonlight dead in front of him and stopped. Jack was peaking around the edge of the tree to watch her. She stood motionless for a moment, looked anxiously around and then continued walking briskly down the trail.

In that brief moment, Jack could see her perfectly. She was beautiful. Long sandy blonde hair falling over her shoulders. The wisps around her face floating on the wind. Her silhouette was thin and shapely. When she walked, she moved with the grace of a

dancer.

He couldn't understand why, but he felt compelled to follow her. Jack stepped quietly from behind the tree and pursued her cautiously, making sure to keep his distance.

Careful not to get too close. Careful to walk only on the grass so as not to alarm the pretty girl.

"Why am I doing this?" Jack wondered to himself. But the feeling of sheer exhilaration was becoming overpowering. It was clouding his thoughts. All he could think about was the girl. The pretty girl.

His heart continued to pound in his chest and he struggled to keep his erratic breathing under control. If the girl heard him, she'd run away. He'd lose her. He'd lose the pretty girl.

"What an odd thought . . .," Jack caught himself, ". . . lose the pretty girl?"

He stopped for a moment at the edge of the park and watched as the girl crossed the street. She never hesitated as she stepped onto the pavement. The street was deserted and only a few people milled about on the sidewalks under the street lights. Jack watched from the shadows at the edge of the park as the girl turned down a side street and headed up the block.

"What the hell am I doing?" Jack mumbled to himself. But as the words fell from his lips, his feet carried him into the street and down the trail toward the girl. His feet did not hear the question he had whispered, they were just following.

The night air was still warm but now it was tainted and heavy with that stale smell of

humanity. Odors like refuse and diesel fumes lingered in the once sweet moist night air. This new atmosphere smelled tense and dry. It burned a little when Jack breathed it in. And it made him long for the park. But the pretty girl was no longer in the park.

Jack watched the girl turn the corner ahead of him and a twinge of panic gripped at his stomach. It twisted his insides in a knot and he trotted forward, leaning into the night.

He peaked cautiously around the corner. He could see no one. Where had she gone? She was just here. She couldn't have gotten far. Find her. Find the pretty girl. Jack was dazed with a heady sort of fear. He was afraid that the girl had gotten away. And he was also afraid that she hadn't.

There she was - walking toward an apartment house. Jack was relieved. He could smell the lingering scent of her perfume. Breathing deeply, he closed his eyes and . . . yes, he was sure of it, he could smell the pretty girl. He paused just long enough to see her turn and cross the street to the left. Jack walked down his side of the street and stopped at the spot where she had crossed.

From this vantage point, he watched her enter the small apartment building. Jack stood there for a minute or so, not knowing what to do. He looked back and forth from street sign to stop sign. His fingers tingled as if they had gone to sleep and he shook them and curled them in and out of a loose fist. A light came on in one of the lower story windows and he could see the girl inside.

Jack glanced nervously up and down the street again. It was late and the few people he had passed on the street were now gone. He was alone with the pretty girl.

Again his heart began to race and again his feet started to walk without his request. All he could see now was the window. All the other lights in the building were out. All the other tenants asleep. Just the pretty, pretty girl was awake.

“Only me . . . and the pretty girl,” Jack whispered to himself as he stepped from the sidewalk onto the grass in front of the girl’s window.

He slipped into the shadows along the side of the building, out of direct view from the street. For the first time, Jack realized that he had a hard on. This anxious feeling of anticipation was some how sexual in nature. And instead of being repulsed by this idea, like he should have been, it just made him more excited being aware of it.

Jack reached down and rubbed himself through his jeans as he inched closer toward the open window. White linen curtains billowed gently through the opening as the summer breeze blew across Jack’s face.

He closed his eye’s and inhaled. He could smell her. He could smell her from where he was and it was wonderful. Young and innocent. So vital and alive. Jack edged toward the open window, almost panting now. Rubbing himself, harder, with the heel of his hand.

Through the open window he could see her. She turned on the television and then pulled off her blouse. He could feel his heart beat as he pressed his hand, harder and harder against his jeans. As he moved to get a better view he continued rubbing.

Jack was scaring himself now. His forehead dripped with sweat. This overwhelming, maddening urge to fuck something made him delirious and afraid.

The girl went into the bathroom and closed the door only halfway.

“Oh, God help me!” Jack thought as he grabbed the outside of the window sill and pulled himself up.

He slipped through the window on his belly, putting his hands down on the floor in front of him. Swinging his knees around to one side he landed, quietly kneeling in front of the open window. Careful not to make any sudden moves, he turned his head to scan the street. It was deserted. He stood and carefully slid the window shut, closed the curtains and turned back toward the room. Rolling laughter erupted from the television and Jack was thankful for the noise.

A small one bedroom apartment lay in front of him. The double bed protruded from the wall and the brown, molded pipe foot-board wasn't more than two feet from him. The TV sat on top of a thrift shop dresser directly across from the end of the bed. In the corner was a small sink, microwave and a toaster oven. Jack could hear the water running and someone humming to themselves from behind the half closed door.

Blood pounded in his temples and the sweat had begun to drip into his eyes. Jack slid between the bed and the dresser, carefully watching the bathroom door. The water stopped and was replaced with the sound of sloshing.

“She's in the bathtub!” Jack's mind was racing. The thought of the girl sliding into a steaming pool of water made the blood surge in his appendage. Jack rubbed at it feverishly, almost clawing himself.

He shook his head, blinked the sweat out of his eyes and walked directly to the kitchen

area. Pulled open one of the three drawers and leaned forward on the counter. Silverware - not quite right.

He could still hear her singing from the bathroom. Jack kept watch on the door as he pulled open the second drawer and there, found what he was looking for; a serrated carving knife. Must've been a foot long. He pulled it slowly from the drawer, careful not to rattle the other utensils.

The pounding between his legs had given him a headache. He couldn't remember ever being this horny in his entire life. His mind was swimming.

It sounded like the TV was getting louder, making it hard to think. As if he could make sense of anything anyway, even with a clear head.

Jack looked down at his hand and saw the knife. His knuckles were white and the end of the handle was buried in his groin. To his horror, he watched as his feet began moving again. His goddamn feet were walking - and the bathroom door was getting closer.

"I've got to get the fuck out of here right now!" Jack told himself as he began rubbing his erection with the handle of the knife. But he was still walking. Getting closer. He was almost to the door now. Jack's ears were ringing. The TV was roaring with an unintelligible pattern of sound. Sweat stung his eyes and he continued to rub his crotch. As he passed the TV, Jack laid the knife on top of it. The blade pointing at the wall between the rabbit ear antennas.

The air was getting thicker and hotter and harder to pull into his lungs. He closed his eyes and then his mouth, slowly filled his lungs and held it. As he opened his eyes he

could feel the muscles in his cheeks pushing the corners of his mouth down, toward his chin. He felt determined and desperate and indescribably sexual. This feeling was beyond horny. The high he was on was hormonal at its core but it was more than the pull of the tide. This feeling was primal beyond description and Jack felt himself trying to climb out of his own skin. He wanted to run from this feeling and he wanted to wallow in it.

What was he doing here. This entire scene was bizarre and frightening. It absolutely could not be happening. He was not a predator. He could never harm another human. He abhorred the thoughts that were running through his head. He wanted to get away. He wanted it to stop. And he knew what he had to do.

Jack's body moved with such force that it startled him. The bathroom door swung open and bounced off of the sink. The girl was naked, drying her hair with a towel. She had been looking down at the floor when she saw Jack's feet, and in a panic she flung her head up letting her hair slap against her back. It stuck there on her shoulders, forcing her head to remain in that position. She was now staring into the face of the intruder and in her eyes Jack could see fear and innocence and disbelief in its purest form.

Before the scream could leave her mouth, Jack slapped her hard with an open backhand. She fell to the hard tiled floor with a thud and Jack stood there looking down at her. The girl raised her head, blood running from the corner of her mouth and whimpered. She tried desperately to crawl away from him. Jack took one big step forward and kicked her in the ribs, like a soccer ball. She lifted off the floor and then dropped back onto the tile gasping and wheezing uncontrollably.



Jack turned and walked quietly into the other room, leaving the half conscious pretty girl lying in a heap of hair and water and blood. Standing perfectly still for almost a minute, he assessed the room in front of him. He spun on his heels and turned to face the bathroom door again.

“So far so good,” Jack thought to himself and then immediately wondered why.

Then he turned back toward the TV and reached over and turned the volume up. It wasn't bothersome now like it had been before. As a matter of fact, it was nice to hear people laughing. Jack smiled and laughed out loud as he pulled open the top dresser drawer and started rummaging around impatiently. Underwear, socks, jewelry. He pulled the drawer completely out and dropped it to the floor. Then the next. It wasn't here.

Then Jack saw it on top of the dresser, right next to the TV. A small plastic pouch. He opened the zipper at the top and dumped the contents onto the dresser. Spreading the objects across the wood surface he smiled when he found what he'd been looking for.

Holding the bright red tube of lipstick up in front of his face he cooed contentedly. Slowly he cranked it up and watched the tip of it sparkle in the light. He loved the way it glistened and shined.

A wave of contentment spread over him as he closed his eyes and shuddered ever so slightly. Jack clung tightly to the little cylinder and began rubbing his pelvis against the front of the dresser. Lightly at first then harder. Jack's breathing had escalated to panting and he suddenly turned and walked briskly back into the bathroom.

There she was, the pretty girl, still lying in a heap on the floor, trying to catch her

breath. She had spit out a piece of broken tooth in a pool of bloody saliva. She was making little headway in her struggle toward consciousness so Jack knew that he had some time left.

For several intoxicating seconds, he stood and admired her. Admired the way her hair fell across the side of her creamy white face. Again he closed his eyes and shuddered as the clean soapy smell from her skin mixed with the lingering steam in the air. Jack could hardly get enough air into his lungs with the short little gasps he was taking and he was getting dizzy.

Slowly, he opened his eyes and forced himself to breathe deeply several times. Jack had never in his life felt so primal, so out of control and so alive and invigorated. He was hot all over and sweat from his forehead poured over his eyebrows and stung his eyes. His heart was slamming methodically against the inside of his chest and he felt like his throbbing cock was about to tear through the front of his jeans on its own.

Still clasping the lipstick in his hand, Jack turned and smeared it intently on the steam covered mirror. Then he carefully twisted it back into its protective case and dropped it into the sink. He turned toward the pretty girl, leaned over and grabbed her by the hair. He pulled her through the door and into the bedroom. Dragging her over to the bed seemed to help bring her to. She was now holding tightly to the top of her head and she'd begun squirming and kicking. He picked her up and threw her onto the creaking mattress.

It felt good to be in control. To feel how helpless and frail she was in his powerful grasp. Like a rag doll. Jack knew he had to work quickly now.

As he dropped her, she reached out in desperation and scratched his cheek. Again, Jack slapped her hard with a full back swing. Fresh blood spattered across the white wall behind the headboard. She lay there, dazed, her eyes glazed over, still unable to catch a full breath. Jack turned and reached for the knife from on top of the TV.

He liked the way the handle fit his hand. He liked the way it shined in the blue light of the Television. He liked . . . nothing, nothing. Nothing about this entire nightmare. This wasn't happening. He had to get out. He would suffocate if he couldn't get out.

Jack tried desperately to drop the knife but his hand would not cooperate. He leaned forward and blew air sharply out of his mouth in quick staccato bursts. He felt like he was going to throw up now. His mind was swimming and Jack began to cry.

"Please, somebody help me!" he begged with that voice in the back of his head. He felt faint for just a moment longer and then his mind cleared and he was back in the real world.

Jack's expression changed from desperate despair to eerie calm as he stood by the bed and brought the hand with the knife up to his cheek. He felt the open scratch with the back of his fingers. He rubbed the fresh blood across his cheek and into his mouth where he licked it off the back of his fingers and smiled. Jack liked the taste of fresh blood. So warm and smooth.

He knew that she was still too dazed to call out but he had to act quickly or that would all change. And that would not be acceptable so he walked over to the dresser and pulled a pair of pantyhose from the pile of clothes on the floor. Climbing onto the bed, he

straddled the girl to hold her down. She started to shake and pound on his chest so he flipped her over like a rag doll, face down, onto the bed.

Jack smiled as he did it, again feeling that overwhelming sense of power and control. She was so weak that it made him crazy with delight.

Working quickly, he grabbed her by the hair and lifted her head back off the pillow. Then he wrapped the pantyhose, several times, around her head to gag her. Once secured tightly behind her head, with clumps of bloody hair pinched in the knot, Jack flipped her back over and proceeded to tie her wrists to the headboard with another piece of lingerie. His weight, now fully across her chest, was nearly suffocating her.

Through out the ordeal, the girl kicked and squirmed violently. She was a petite, little thing and Jack had well over a hundred pounds on her. In short order, she had exhausted herself to the point that she could do little more than whimper and cry through the wad of nylon.

Oh, there was the occasional spastic jerk as Jack grabbed her ankles and tied them to the end of the bed. Now and again the girl pulled back as hard as she could and screamed - if you could call it a scream - through the blood soaked hunk of pantyhose. She'd shake her head wildly back and forth, kicking at Jack's head or chest or whatever she could connect with. But any attempt she made was quickly rendered absolutely futile.

Jack felt like he had no control over his own body. He couldn't stop what he was doing no more than he could consciously stop his heart from beating. But he didn't want to either. And the funny thing was that he could remember wanting to. He remembered

wanting to stop just a few minutes ago.

“What a ridiculous notion,” Jack thought out loud.

As he stood at the end of the bed admiring the girl, he had no doubt that this was happening. And there was no doubt how it would end either. With a ripped up corpse and running and blacking out and then it happening all over again. Like a damn rat on a treadmill.

“Damn it!” Jack clutched the knife tightly in his hand and paced nervously back and forth at the foot of the bed. Again Jack tried to drop the knife and again his hand rejected his simple request.

He stopped and stared at the girl. Studied the fear in her huge eyes. He could taste her helplessness. Smell her fear. He wanted so badly to cut her . . . just a little. To watch her face as she became aware of the outcome. Aware of how awful death could be. How utterly, utterly painful it could be.

“Aaaaaaah!!” Jack squinted hard and pounded the handle of the knife into his forehead.

He returned to pacing. Short quick steps then a turn. Back and forth like a caged lion. All the time pounding his head with the wooden handle. Mumbling to himself. Groaning. Every once in a while he would turn his head straight up to the ceiling and growl ferociously.

Then he stopped. The girl lay petrified, tears pouring from her puffy red eyes. Jack turned to face her and smiled. His eyes had turned to a deep empty color – almost black.

His face was nearly expressionless as the tiniest bit of a smile crept into the corner of his mouth. He took a step forward and leaned into the end of the bed, right between her legs.

“You sure are pretty,” the words rolled out with a slight twang at the end.

The girl’s eyes widened and she started to shake her head back and forth slowly as if she didn’t understand. That excited Jack and drove him to continue. Yet, every fiber of his being knew that this was wrong.

“WRONG?” Jack asked out loud. “This is unthinkable!” he said looking straight into the girls eyes as he crawled up onto the bed and began to slide the blade of the knife gently up the inside of her pale thigh. First one side then the other. Being careful not to cut her. At least not just yet.

Muffled bursts of sound tried to escape from behind the soggy gag, but there was not enough force to propel them over the applause and laughter coming from the television.

Jack crawled forward onto the girl and positioned his face directly over hers. Now tears had sprung into his eyes. They dripped rhythmically onto her cheeks, and slid down the side of her face. He was close enough to feel the breath from her nostrils on his cheeks. He could feel the heat from her body rising around him. Jack pressed his hips down against hers and kept looking directly into her eyes.

“I don’t know how to stop this . . .” Jack’s lower lip trembled as he arched his back to push his pelvis repeatedly down against the girl.

Then Jack hopped to his feet and went back into the kitchen area. He held his eyes clamped as tightly together as he could. He walked back and forth in short little steps

with his arms wrapped around his chest.

He knew that he could stop this. He knew that he was the only one that could. Knew that he had to stop this. If he could just focus. Just concentrate.

“Ahhhh,” Jack stopped, curled forward and blew air out through his nose.

Jack’s heart was pounding so fast that he thought it was going to explode. He had stopped crying, but now was trembling badly. His face was now completely covered in a viscous layer of clammy sweat. His sexual need was dizzying and confusing. He needed so badly. Like a heroin addict in the dark clutches of withdrawal. It clawed at the inside of his being and screamed to be let free.

Jack stood straight up and walked over to the bed. He tapped his chin with the knife as he examined the pretty girl. The helpless, sweet smelling, pretty girl.

Then he flung his leg up and over, once again straddling her across the chest. Jack looked directly into her eyes. She was so afraid and so fragile. What a prize.

“Are you okay?” he asked her, not expecting an answer.

“Are you all right?” a tinny metallic sounding voice emanated from inside his head.

Jack looked around the room as if searching for a fly in the air.

“There seems to be an echo in here,” Jack smiled and chuckled speaking directly at the petrified young woman.

Then he nestled down a little tighter across her midsection and began running his thumb along the serrations in the knife. Right up in front of her. It was more for theatrics than to actually test for sharpness. And Jack could tell that it was a good show because

the girl's head drew back hard into the pillow and her eyes widened to the point of nearly breaking.

"Can you hear me?" It sounded like the TV . . . or an AM radio.

Again, Jack scanned the room, thoroughly confused. But the voice wasn't coming from inside the room, it was coming from inside of his skull. Like his conscious was trying to have a conversation with him.

"I'm going to get some help, but I need you to listen to me," the elusive voice continued.

Now, Jack was getting irritated. He was to the point of resolve with the situation and he knew exactly what he had to do with the girl. He just wanted to get on with it.

"It's Randy . . . please snap out of it, Jack." The scrawny little voice seemed to be pleading with him. Which of course just pissed him off to no end.

If the voice was inside of his head – and obviously that was the case – then he'd just make it go away. That's all. Jack shook his head back and forth a couple of times and clamped his eyes together tightly. He focused on what he had to do and how he was going to do it.

Still sitting squarely across her mid section, Jack opened his eyes slowly and smiled at the girl. A huge ominous smile that sent the girl back into a kicking screaming fit.

"Shhhhhh," Jack reassured gently then touched the side of her face with his finger tips. "Let me help you." The words were so soft and creamy leaving his mouth that Jack didn't recognize himself talking.



He admired her firm young breasts. Her tight skin and flat stomach. He immersed himself in thoughts of the girl, completely forgetting the silly voice.

“I’m here to help you,” the voice returned abruptly. “I’m going to try to get you out . . .”

“You ever hear voices inside your head?” Jack asked the girl.

Her eyes were locked onto Jack in sheer horror. She could no longer fight. She was exhausted to the point of passing out. But she clung to the last tiny wisps of consciousness as if they were the most precious thing on earth.

Jack brought the point of the knife up to her cheek, and nicked her a little right below her left eye. She pulled her head back into the pillow as a small bubble of blood formed on her face. Her strength was now completely gone and she lay helpless at the hands of her captor.

“Snap out of it,” the voice insisted. “This isn’t you.”

Jack dropped his head and sighed heavily. Then he took a deep breath and snapped his head upward toward the ceiling.

“I know it’s not me, you fuck!” Jack snarled at the light fixture over his head. “What the hell do you think I’m going to do about it?”

He shrugged his shoulders and curled his face up into a look of complete exasperation. He was not interested in having a conversation right now. Jack returned his attention to the woman between his legs and quickly nicked her under the other eye.

“It’s Randy, Jack . . . Randy Akerman . . .”

This time, the voice startled Jack. It was no longer thin and metallic. It was full and resonant and was coming from the outside of his head. From somewhere inside the room.

“ . . . I’m trying to get some help.”

Jack snapped his head to the side and saw a figure standing in the bathroom doorway. Light streaming in from behind, the man’s face obscured in the shadows.

“You’ve got to come with me. I’m here to bring you out.”

Jack clutched tighter on the handle of the serrated knife and held it up to the side of the girl’s throat in defiance. He could feel his erection rubbing against her. She smelled good. He wanted to be alone with the pretty girl. More than anything else in the whole world, he wanted the pretty girl. He’d prefer to do it slowly and savor the moment, but if this pesky voice kept bothering him, then he’d just end it – quickly.

“Don’t do it, Jack.” The figure walked forward into the room. “You need to put the knife down and come with me.”

Still holding the knife firm to the girl’s throat, Jack watched the dark figure walk toward him. Watched as he moved into the light so Jack could see his face.

“The simulation has taken on a life of its own.” The figure was standing in the middle of the, now, intensely lit room. “We’ve turned it off and you’re free-wheeling now, Jack. Ad-libbing.”

Jack recognized the face. He knew this person. But from where? What was this face? Jack pressed the knife tighter against her throat. A thin trickle of blood was forming where the blade connected with her skin. He had to do her. He wanted to do her right

now. He had waited so long. Jack's hand was trembling and tears had begun to well in his eyes.

"Put the knife down," Jack thought to himself. This time it wasn't the voice, but his own conscious taking hold. "You don't want to do this . . ."

"GET OUT OF HERE!" Jack screamed, partly at himself and partly at the stranger standing beside him. "I'M REALLY, REALLY BUSY!"

"You're at VTech, Jack . . . in the lab, running a simulation." The stranger held out his hand to Jack. "Don't you remember?"

Jack's head was pounding like someone was beating on the back of his eyeballs. His palms were so sweaty he thought he was going to drop the knife. The trembling in his hands had crept up the sides of his arms and nestled into his chest. He couldn't get enough air into his lungs and the room was now spinning slowly.

The stranger was saying something, but Jack couldn't understand it over the ringing in his ears. Sweat sprang from his forehead and ran into his eyes, mixing with the pooled up tears. His vision blurred and the girl seemed to be slipping away.

In one final surge of rage and defiance, Jack thrust the knife downward with all his strength. There was a brief vision of warm, red liquid oozing from the wound. Of the body twitching and gurgling underneath him as its life ran out onto his hands. But it was only a fleeting image and it faded quickly as Jack fell forward into the darkness.