



Down the Road -- Part 17: Down Below

Schisms...

Alice ran from the hotel room. She collided with Penelope who grabbed a hold of her and just held her. "I was just going to talk to them about it," said Alice.

"What did they tell you?" asked Penelope.

"They didn't tell me anything. They ... ," said Alice.

"Do you want to go back in?" asked Penelope.

"You're not trying to stop me?" asked Alice.

"Do you want me to stop you?"

"Don't you care..."

"More than you possibly understand, you stupid ... ," Penelope trailed off and tried to hold on to Alice. She was squirming underneath Penelope's arms. The tears started running down both their cheeks.

"But what is the right thing to do?" asked Alice.

"Fuck if I know."

Homecoming...

The walkers carried Angela's body into the game room. They laid it on the pool table. The wings were covered in dirt and grime. Her dilated eye stared at the ceiling. From the dark shadow the one perfect white hand reached out and stroked her hair. "My most precious toy. Let me dance with you one more time," said the Dark Master. The walkers reached over and began pulling at her clothes, ripping them at their seams. The shadow of the Dark Master crawled up the pool table like black silk pulled by a thread. It blotted out the light from the land overhead. The yellow glowing eyes danced in the darkness as he thrust upon her lifeless body. The six walkers huddled close and took off their overalls. The pool table creaked with the weight of the Dark Master. As he slid off her, one by one the emaciated dirty bodies of the walkers took their turns.

Angela's head rolled to one side. The vacant dead eye stared fixedly at the wall. The Dark Master, with his one smooth white hand, stroked her face. The Dark Master didn't even glance at the walker's joyless and mechanical fucking. As the 90-pound man pressed on her abdomen air expelled from her mouth in a raspy belching sound. "Thank you," her dead body

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said. A single tear crossed the bridge of her nose and wetted the green velvet. Angela's hand reached up in the table and caressed the hand of the Dark Master. It moved with a jerking motion like a dead chicken attached to a marionette string.

"Oh boy. We're just starting to have fun aren't we?" said the Dark Master.

Across the room, Brian sat at the bar. He looked up at the mirror behind the bottles. He tried to read the labels instead of watching the disgusting carnal act. "Absolute, absinthe, ambrosia, Jack Daniels, tequila ...," he reached into his pocket and pulled out a few banknotes. He absently looked at them for a few minutes. "Hm... this week's after-world money comes to us via Turkey," said Brian out loud. Brian realized he really needed to find a different bar to hang out at. His thoughts were broken by the sound of a wheezing cowboy climaxing and the gasping death rattle of Angela climaxing with rigor mortise.

Reunion...

Bob held the jeweled key in his hand and said the word "Alex." He stood in a nondescript fire door in the alley behind the bar. As he turned the key, he felt it melt in his hand. The door unlatched and the key snapped. He heard a strange sound in the distance. "Kitschy," he said to himself sarcastically. The door slowly swung open. He looked at the key he held in his hand. He could see the gold had peeled up only slightly. "I thought it was made of chocolate," said Bob in a mock Homer Simpson voice. He looked at the key more closely. It was chocolate covered in a gold foil. The jewels were now rock candy. The key had served its purpose whatever that was. Bob peeled off the rest of the gold foil and ate it as he walked through the door. On the other side was a blood red sky. A field of yellow grass with one bone white, dead tree planted in the middle. Propped up next to it was Alex. His straw cowboy hat was propped over one eye like Clint Eastwood in some low-budget western. Those films always seemed so much better than the John Wayne movies. Bob momentarily glanced behind him to look at the doorway he stepped through. Of course it was gone. The bit of gold foil blew out of his hand. He walked towards Alex and saw the right side of a shirt covered in blood.

"Jesus was stabbed in the side by the spear of destiny before he died," said Alex. Blood was running out of the side of his mouth. The glow of the avatar inside him seemed faint. The light pulsed rather than glowed.

"You're not Jesus, son," said Bob.

"No shit," said Alex, starting to laugh before grimacing with pain as more blood came up.

"What happened?" asked Bob.

"I got into a fight with a girl and I think I lost."

Bob crouched down and looked at Alex. "You look different."

"Is it the bleeding, the butterfly wings, or just me glowing out of each hole of my body?" said Alex facetiously.

Bob almost fell backwards as he took in all of the changes in Alex's body. "Who did that to you?"

"The injuries were done by a dark avatar. Body work was done by something else," said Alex.

"God."

"I guess to some people that's God. I think it's more competing interests. I shouldn't speak ill of him. After all, I'm the one who lost the fight."

"What do these things want with us? Always constantly poking and prodding us. And then the voices outside. What does all this mean?" asked Bob.

"You're questioning this stuff now?" asked Alex.

"I found my brother and I got my forgiveness. The questions are all that's left," said Bob.

"You narrow minded asshole," said Alex. He began to cough and it brought some color back into his pale face. It wasn't a good color.

"Didn't you ever care about Phyllo's mission? The dark one will still want you. It still wants all of us. We crossed from our world into his. It's working its butt off trying to tear down this world and rip a hole into the next," said Alex. The light radiating from the hole in his side flared. His chest began to swell.

"What is happening to you?" asked Bob. This time he fell on his butt watching Alex rise off the ground as if the string was pulling him by his sternum. His wings and limbs hung loosely from his body. He started to rotate.

"I'm either dying or being born," he said. The pain was gone from his voice as the cold knife dropped from his loose hand. The bone white dead tree behind Alex suddenly grew dark spots on the bark. New fresh green leaves grew from the branches. The grass around him turned from golden brown to lush green. The blood red sky turned blue as if someone had dropped dye into it. The light coming from Alex's body dimmed. He faded with the light. His body vanished.

Bob looked around the verdant ground. The place had changed from the last tree in hell to a lovely spot for a Sunday picnic. He looked at the cold knife stuck in the ground. It was creating a small spot of frost killing the grass around where it had stuck into the ground. "All the evil the world can't be destroyed. There's always some little bit that remains," said Bob.

Going nowhere fast...

Alice was laying in the back seat. Penelope was, of course, driving. The four door dragon bounced along the road. Try as Penelope might she couldn't avoid potholes.

"I'm sorry," said Alice.

"For what?" asked Penelope.

"For passing judgment on you. Giving up that thing wasn't easy. I see that now. I shouldn't have..."

Penelope had a hard time covering up the frog in her throat, "I don't know which requires more bravery. Giving up on something or following through with it," said said Penelope. A few minutes passed. "Hey, how about some music?"

Penelope reached over and flicked the radio on. "How can we be lovers if we can't be friends? How can we start over if the fighting never ends?" sang the radio. Penelope reached over to change the channel.

"Don't, I will listen to this."

Afterglow...

Angela's body lay used on the pool table. The smell of sex and rotten meat still hung in the air. The Dark Master whispered his commands to the walkers still putting on their clothes. They nodded in agreement and left. Angela's body sat bolt upright. She looked at the Dark Master without looking at him. Her eyes unable to focus. Her wings fluttered and she moved as if gliding on marionette strings. The tips of her toes touched the ground as tiny droplets of semen fell onto the beer soaked carpet. She cocked her head to one side and she followed the Dark Master on tiptoes.

The Dark Master glanced at his game board. The pieces now represented children's dioramas built in shoe boxes. The Dark Master's hand opened the first box, inside was a Bob the Builder miniature standing on a piece of AstroTurf. In the center sat a plastic tree for a play mobile set. The inside walls of the box were painted sky blue with a child's drawing of an angel in overalls floating upwards. On the inside of the lid was written Fiddler's Green. The Dark Master put the lid of the box back in place. He moved on to the next box. Inside he saw the two flesh crafters represented by Lego Imperial Guards from a Star Wars set. Inside that box was written Hotel California and crayon drawing of the Hidden Node Hotel along the back wall. The third box was marked the Sands of Time, inside was a representation of Phyllo digging for Mr. Gardner in the pit of sand. The fourth box was the silver airstream diner. It was made with painstaking detail to perfect scale. Everything a child would ever want to touch that no collector would ever let them. "Inside there's my champion, my hungry little chef ready to devour the world," said the Dark Master.

Inside the fifth and final box was a matchbox replica of a 1950s Ford. Two pieces of string, one tied to the front and another tied to the back, held it in place on a small battery-powered treadmill. The track of the treadmill was painted to resemble a dirt road. The back wall was painted with cactuses, tumbleweeds, and rocks. "Oh my, I think somebody got a little bit of help from their parents when they made this one," said the Dark Master to no one in particular. Angela moved over towards him and whispered something into where his ear should be. "Later, my little pet. God, you're insatiable," he reached out his one hand and touched her. Her body quivered underneath his fingers. Her face had an expression of fear and love, like a dog unsure if it would be hit or petted from one moment the next.

"So, my little voices, in which one of these five boxes shall I play with next?" asked the Dark Master calling upon the voices of the road guides.

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