

*Enter the labyrinth of destruction
a mind-controlling adolescent
creates.*

Vexed to Nightmare

by Robert Fredericks

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NIGHTMARES MIGHT NEVER END

Robert Fredericks

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Prologue

“Hello.”

That’s right, I’m talking to you, the one reading this. I have some well-intentioned advice for you. Put down this book now. Better yet throw this book away. Best yet, destroy it. This book is dangerous and might lead you down a path of unwelcome knowledge; the knowledge that you have no free will, have never had free will, and will never possess free will in your short life. What happened to your vaunted free will you querulously demand if you haven’t wisely already discarded this book? ME.

Who is ME? ME is Phillip Todd. What do I have to do with your free will? Just this, I am a god. Lest you think that’s blasphemy I don’t claim to be Jehovah or an equivalent, creator of the universe and progenitor of man. I had nothing to do with that nor would want the responsibility for all of the cock-ups. So how am I a god? Simple, for as long as I exist, and I don’t know how long that will be, I can control all sentient beings in my reach, and my reach is expanding exponentially. This means you are probably already under my control.

You will know what I say is true every time you do something perverse, dissolute, and downright depraved, and you don’t understand how you could have acted in such a reprehensible manner. If you deny you’ve ever been reprehensible then you’re a hypocrite, which is really the worst depravity of them all.

But here’s the good news, I suppose. I don’t exist. How could I? I am not possible. Therefore, you have free will up the wazoo. But the catch is your depravity originates from your own free will.

Who is writing this book if I don’t exist? You’ve got me, but anyway this story begins in 1961 as I return with my family – consisting of me, your narrator, age 18; my brother Frankie Todd, would be magician, age 19; mother, Mercy Todd, housewife and neurotic extraordinaire; father, Captain Francis Todd, stalwart defender of white America - to the U. S. of A. from a tour in Germany.

I have accepted and developed my powers of control, doing some rather naughty things along the way, and am eager to finish high school and develop my nascent powers to an even greater extent.

What would be greater than already possessing god like powers? Being the lead in a long running beloved sit-com or a rock star? But those are simply childish, unattainable dreams.

Chapter 1

Upon arriving in the U.S. after living in the claustrophobic bubble in Germany propagated by the military we were blown away by the sheer magnitude of everything. Life there had been ordered, regulated and dismissive of the chaos around the fringes. America was the fringes, populated not by hordes of Godless commies but hordes of God-filled secret secessionists. Everybody was aggrieved by everybody else and the only palliative was getting more of nothing. I loved it.

Mediocrity and celebrity were universally feted, and Dr. Fear could thrive. He might become an evangelist, serial killer, television host, faceless nonentity, and in every guise remain invisible, inauthentic, and preternaturally potent. And in what better God filled acreage in the United States of God loving America could we be planted than Texas, the endless wasteland of empty hokum and grandiloquence? Dr. Fear and I were home.

“Wait a minute. Who is Dr. Fear?” I hear you sensibly ask. I have a confession. I’ve written a previous book in which I created a comic book protagonist named Dr. Fear. He has my power but, unlike me, is really cool, and has assistant named Dulcinea, a totally luscious babe who walks around naked most of the time. At times I feel I am Dr. Fear, living my life without any moral imperatives or compunctions, a Rousseau savage civilized by the Marquis de Sade. Through the imaginary Dr. Fear I plan on revealing my power while remaining totally anonymous. I will include some excerpts from his chronicles from time to time to hopefully entertain you or at the least inform you of your worst fears.

“Wait another minute. How can this be a second book when I have said I don’t exist and have not written any books?”

Well, my dear importunate and observant reader, you’re absolutely correct. I don’t exist and haven’t written anything, yet this

book and an earlier book exist. How does that work? Again, you've got me.

We didn't land just anywhere in Texas but in the far west desolation of El Paso with its conjoined twin, Juarez. El Paso is the next to the last stop before hell. That would make Juarez hell, and it is. Juarez is what America leaves behind after it's had a bad bout of the runs. El Paso teeters on the edge of a precipice and its inhabitants look east until, like Lot's wife, they look back and turn into Texans.

Located in the sullied suburban desolation of El Paso is Fort Bliss. I always thought that picking the name of Bliss from all of the military names available was an ultimate irony on someone's part. Bliss is not the descriptive word that comes to mind when describing the ambience of desert despondency, and it certainly would not have been my mother's choice. Her early pleasantries directed towards my father included tidbits such as:

"Why don't you bury me alive? It would be an improvement over Fort Bliss."

"I hope you're happy because I'm the unhappiest woman alive."

"I hate you." Succinctly put, I thought.

My older brother Frankie and I, after the verdant overkill of Germany, found the desert intriguing and deliciously ominous. I think Frankie found the deception of the desert, the myriad hints of life only available to the initiated, similar to his concept of magic. By now Frankie, who took up magic in his early adolescence, was determined to become a magician's magician. He had no plans to become a professional magician, a lounge performer, because his early attempts at performing had revealed the extent of his performance capabilities, and it didn't extend far enough to warrant an audience. So he decided to seek the approval of other magicians by developing tricks to be published in journals known only to the cognoscenti. Like the hidden scorpions in the desert Frankie lay in wait to surprise the unwary.

I saw my own hidden, uh, talent lurking like a coyote crouched in a hollow behind a segurro cactus, waiting to pounce upon rodents, lizards, abandoned infants, or other insignificant creatures.

Now don't let me mislead you. El Paso lies in the desert, but it is not part of the desert. It is like a massive adobe trailer park oasis, a patchwork sprawl in which anything new is built to look temporary. It contains a college of sorts, Texas Western, a large city park containing for no particular reason a lethargic alligator, innumerable cookie cutter housing projects, and Fort Bliss, a vast army base housing thousands of known soldiers and more than a few super-secret specialists completely off the books. The base, which spreads slyly to White Sands, New Mexico, deals with missile defense, desert warfare, and unnamed programs. These I later learned were, in modern parlance, black ops preparation. I will return to them later.

El Paso is bordered by two slag heap mountain ranges, the Franklin range to the east and the Juarez range to the south. The Rio Grande forms the border between El Paso and its sluttish sister, Juarez. For most of the year the Rio Grande is the Rio Minusculo, a nearly dry river bed that can be crossed with a single mincing step. The rest of the landscape is desert, broken only by cacti, scrub, bleached bones, broken Dos Equis bottles, and corrugated electrified fences erected by various private and governmental agencies.

Fort Bliss's boundaries extend so far into the desert no one has ever seen the end nor knows what exists in the vast expanses. Legends abound that strange, mutant creatures roam the barren wastes and are hunted down by secret army ranger groups preparing for commiegeddon. As it is, oil is reputed to be in the corporate and governmental tracts and, even more significantly, uranium and plutonium. Of course the uranium and plutonium are considered to be the cause of the mutants and oil pays for the necessary information blackout.

In truth, the only significant discoveries of the last fifty years in the wastelands surrounding El Paso concern a here-to-fore undiscovered lizard species. But this doesn't stop speculation from thriving, for in a sense El Paso is a ship in a mysterious sea in which only the surface is seen and underneath are monsters. I thought it might be fun to bring some monsters to life.

Frankie and I were enrolled at Erwin High School, home of the red, white, and blue Erwin Cruise Missiles, represented by a mascot

in a rather phallic rocket costume which erupted in bursts of streamers when touchdowns were scored. Erwin, or as in time we would call it Er, was El Paso's newest high school built for the growing northeast suburbs inhabited almost exclusively by army personnel, civilian contractors, and their enervated dependents.

Frankie looked forward to school, as it would contain scads of victims to suffer his magician's arts. Frankie never lacked for confidence in his legerdemain skills and its interest to others. He also thought it would attract girls. As far as I could tell it just encouraged girls to look at him as an oddity and therefore not of interest. However, I had abetted his undue confidence and on one occasion steered a girl to him. He is my brother, after all, and it keeps his curiosity about me at bay.

I, in turn, was looking forward to school, but not for the same reasons as Frankie. A new school represented fertile ground for practicing and expanding my abilities. I also wanted to take art classes to gain some real expertise in drawing. I knew it was only high school, but I decided I desired life drawing lessons. I needed work in anatomy, specifically observation of the naked human form with special attention to the female of the species. I could arrange the life drawing classes as an after school special study with no shortage of willing models. Perhaps even a female teacher or two might assist in my study.

There were several weeks before school started, and we explored El Paso and found it woefully lacking in any kind of cultural enjoyment. There was no symphony, but the Chamber of Commerce had designated an official mariachi band. The downtown area contained two movie theaters and one department store. There were, however, ample tourist shops selling sombreros, ponchos, and the like. Bars were plentiful especially as one approached Fort Bliss in the western suburbs. However, since Juarez contained an unlimited quantity of dens of iniquity –whore houses for the uninitiated - El Paso was relatively free of such immoral haunts.

El Paso lacked the focus of long established cities or gopher dens. It was an overgrown army base town and watering hole in the midst of nothingness and an incestuous offspring to a Mexican hell

mouth that swallowed humanity and regurgitated despair. It was a perfect place for experimentation, for the bizarre and base were merely the usual, not to be remarked upon except in election years. I could easily remain invisible.

Now, you may tediously ask again, why should I want to remain invisible? If I'm a god, what's the point of invisibility? Well, think of the Christian god. No one can look directly upon him – he's male, of course – because their brains will fry, their teeth fall out, and their bones turn into silly putty. How about Jesus, his only begotten – on whom I wonder – son? Can he see dad? He sits at his right hand – assuming god has a right hand – but does he actually see God or does the big guy create some representative form, such as a burning bush or Charlton Heston, to sit at the heavenly throne?

Anyway, it must be lonely so who does God pal around with? I assume it must be Satan. He must get a kick out of all the ingenious ways Satan has of tormenting man or whatever other creatures exist in the universe. – I doubt that an omniscient god would stop at only whiny humankind - I mean Satan had been around long before Jesus and all of the dreary saints and televangelists, and he must have insight into the one and only omniscient creator. He could probably empathize with God and, most importantly, view him without turning into road kill.

I could see them after something amusing occurred, such as the Plague or Hundred Years War, getting together over a beer or two and chuckling about the antics of those crazy, suffering mortals.

“Did you see the look on that one soldier's face when he had just finished raping that country girl and he realized she had the plague? I mean I didn't think a human face was capable of such contortions. He looked like a rotting pumpkin. I nearly laughed myself into another century. Oh, of course you saw it, you see everything, but you know, its things like that look that make eternity bearable, don't you think?”

“Ah Satan, you rogue, what would I do without you. You ready for another one?”

So who do I pal around with; my own creation, just like Satan for Yahweh, namely Dr. Fear, my alter ego and future comic book anti-hero? Maybe. I don't necessarily need someone because, unlike

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God, I don't have an inquisition on my conscience yet. However I've done some naughty things including eradicating my girlfriend and her parents, all part of, dare I say, a godlike higher plan. Anyway, if needed I can share things with Dr. Fear and perhaps in the future we may even best buds.

Chapter 2

After settling in from the move, my parents decided a family outing to Juarez was in order. We would buy some authentic curios with the exciting proviso that bartering for the junk was not only expected but prized. Mexicans apparently esteemed wealthy gringos who displayed skills in cheapness.

The first merchants encountered after crossing the bridge over the Rio Grande into Mexico were very short in stature, in large part due to being children. They were hawking their near and extended family for conjugal intimacy with the added incentive that their mothers, sisters, aunts, and even grandmothers were virgins. My parents gritted their teeth and pretended not to hear the warbled entreaties while Frankie and I fantasized about the sisters. We were prodded by Mom and Dad into gaily decorated tiendas, each promising authentic sombreros, ponchos, serapes, capas, and the like.

I asked one shopkeeper for a capon, and he, a Pancho Villa look alike, sniggered and pulled out a knife from a rack entitled cuchillos and indicated by swiping in his groin area that I could make myself a chico capon with it. My father took offense at his witticism and told us to leave the establishment, but on the way out I ordered the leering bastard to make himself an adulto capon after we left, not totally aware of what that meant but figuring it was something unpleasant. As we reentered the street an agonized eerie howl erupted from the departed shop.

Other merchants disdained our pitiful attempts to seek a cheaper price for their baubles and generally rebuffed our negotiations with muttered imprecations. Mother was highly offended, so I made sure she got some ostensible bargains for the junk she desired from suddenly smiling and compliant shopkeepers.

We also went to the local bullfighting arena, the Plaza del Toros, located in the center of Juarez, to taste the national obsession of bullfighting. I say taste because the sodden, crumbling arena smelled of rotting human, bovine, and avian waste overlaid with smoldering

grease, monumental body odor, and burnt cinnamon. The entire time we made our way to ‘Yanqui’ section we all were smacking our lips with distaste. We were joined by hundreds of locals streaming in for the day’s festivities until we veered into the section reserved for visiting gringos. It actually had individual chairs rather than rows of concrete slabs in which to perch while watching the slaughter. Perhaps a hundred fellow Americanos filled our section while the rest of the stands filled quickly with thousands of boisterous, frothing at the mouth, locals.

Shortly before the bullfights began the crowd rose to their feet and cheered when a small group of people entered a poshly decorated box. One of them, a handle-barred mustachioed uniformed dignitary with a gaudy hat and a riband across his chest, gave a short speech, withdrew his hat, and waved it at the crowd. Everybody cheered and farted before sitting down.

After this initial pomp gaily dressed men on foot and horseback came into the arena. Some of the men wore black caps and some were bareheaded, but all walked with a stiff, dignified grace. The men on horseback rode around the perimeter of the ring in a canter and the entire sight was impressive. This was, as I was to find out later, the paseo, a parade of participants prior to the fights, a beauty pageant of animal abusers without the obligatory swim suit competition.

They all departed into the bowels of the stadium and a strident blare of brassy trumpets announced the first bull to enter the ring. I thought I’d have some fun with the festivities, and thus the terrible majesty of the beast’s entrance was dampened when the bull proved spavined and tottered around the dirt, bewildered and frightened. This enraged the onlookers and choruses of derisive catcalls and profanity erupted. People were expecting a young, aggressive bull and this seemingly decrepit creature was seen as an insult to them, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, and the Virgin Mary.

Three ornately costumed men came out and took turns in waving red and yellow capes in front of the forlorn creature which made a few half-hearted lunges then ignored these frustrated inciters. The fans were outraged by the beast’s passivity and hurled oaths and

anything they could put their hands on including some small dogs into the ring.

Finally after attendants brushed away the trash the matador strode into the arena, a regal figure, tall, lithe and carrying a red cape. The crowd hushed, awed by the matador's dignity. He would certainly get the bull aroused and give them the show for which they had forked over good pesos. He marched straight up to the bull, which stared dumbly back at him, and clouted the bull on its snout and darted aside, fully expecting the bull to charge forward. The bull remained stationary, merely swinging his head back and forth. The matador again stood in front of the bull and addressed it in rapid Spanish that drew forth laughter and cheers from the crowd. The bull again remained still, then turned around and started to amble towards the outer perimeter, apparently looking for an exit. The incensed matador ran parallel to the bull, waving his cape but the bull remained impervious to the silly human and continued towards the point from which he had entered the bull-ring. The now less than regal matador waved his cape frantically and even held the bull's tail, which unfortunately for him must have released some pent up gas, resulting in the proud conquistador suddenly turning green and hurriedly leaving the arena.

After his departure, amid the howls and boos from the spectators, two horsemen came out, each carrying a colorful spear in one arm. They rode in close in to the bull and attempted to jab it with the spear behind its neck. This proved futile as they always missed and hit nothing but air. The crowd, near apoplexy by now, quieted when the matador returned with a sword. He was intending to dispatch the creature, which was bellowing plaintively at the fence, hoping a gate would open so he could find a grazing field. Every time the frazzled matador approached the beast it would turn its head away leaving no opening for the coup de grace. In an attempt to rouse the bull, the matador jabbed at it with the sword but never seemed to connect with the bull. The bull remained placidly bellowing while the matador let out some rapid Spanish phrases, which we could not understand but caused some people in the crowd to cross themselves.

He stalked out of the bullring amid shouts of derision and shortly a gate opened and the bull left the arena.

Since I had something to do with the passivity of the bull and the inability of the picadors and matador to strike home, I was smiling broadly. However, my father, noting the restiveness of the crowd, suggested we leave, which we promptly did. Many other tourists left with us and cries of rage were directed at our backs. Apparently the natives associated the gringo turistas with the dispirited first showing. As one, they arose, lowered their pants or raised their skirts, and presented their bare bottoms to us departing gringos.

A general flatulent miasma arose also which led to some fainting and even one elderly suffocation. My mother was most alarmed however by seeing Frankie and me staring longingly at some of the younger female's bare buttocks. We were not only hustled out of the Plaza del Toro's, but Juarez as well, to never return as a family. My father later made the egregious mistake of laughing at the incident and mother wouldn't talk to him for several days.

Chapter 3

We settled quickly into our new life in El Paso. There were numerous cookie cutter housing developments surrounding the so called metropolitan area of El Paso, and the army helped us find a newly planted vast conglomeration of ranch style homes in the capacious northwest suburbs which actually had some scrub vegetation and the odd tree. These were of course destroyed to erect the huge geometric mazes of streets, one-story homes, and shopping areas that at once were sand blasted into meaningless memorials of urban planning.

We found a three bedroom rancher – there were I believe no other style of homes existent in the suburban sprawl – that amazingly enough had two mature peach trees in the back yard. Mom and Dad bought the house for the exalted sum of twelve thousand dollars, intending it to be an investment. They lived in hope that Dad would remain at Fort Bliss until he retired and Frankie and I were in college. The house could sell in their estimation for a healthy profit and they could move to a more pleasing climate, like the dark side of the moon.

Frankie and I were ecstatic that we would each have our own bedroom, I especially so because I wouldn't have to listen to Frankie 'pleasuring' himself every night under his sheets. There was also an attached garage which could be used for ping pong, a sport Frankie and I took seriously to the point of mania and resulting mayhem. Frankie could generally win, but he was such a boorish and gloating victor I often had to intervene so he would suddenly go all spastic and lose miserably. I, unlike my churlish brother, would assert my superior ability with a becoming modesty, which only seemed to provoke him to a childish rage. Any way, we could now set up a table and play as often as we liked to our parent's dismay.

The only drawback to the garage was that it was infested with huge western cousins to roaches known locally as water bugs. These hard shelled behemoths had to be eradicated every time we went out to play, otherwise we'd end up stepping on the bugs while playing

and hearing the dismayingly loud crack of their exoskeleton exploding under our feet. I tried mentally moving them to our neighbors, but they apparently did not have enough brain power to come under my control. This, of course, was another proof that I was a limited God because I'm sure the sky god Jehovah could have instantly vaporized every water bug in a ten mile radius. I am no Jehovah nor was meant to be.

If Dad was around we'd ask him to clear the garage, and he would oblige, cracking the scurrying bugs with such rapidity it sounded like an automatic rifle fire. I think for him the black bugs were reincarnated Huns and their elimination was a holy duty. However, killing them was as far as he went and Frankie and I were left to sweep up and dispose of their carcasses.

Unsurprisingly to me, Frankie usually offered to do this task. This aggravated him though he never questioned why he volunteered for this odious task, and he was always put off his game after performing Charon's duty. I always managed to take advantage of his sulk in no small part due to a vicious backhand I developed that combined speed and tricky English. Frankie would pay me back by insisting I watch his latest attempts at sleight of hand. That wouldn't work for him either because he would invariably hyper ventilate while slyly performing some digital dexterity and I would gleefully catch him in mid attempt. More than once he'd fling the cards in my direction and curse me which was followed by a prompt reprimand from which ever parent was in earshot. I suppose Frankie's frustration in living with a superior younger brother must have been galling, but it would have been infinitely more bearable than my frustration in living on a planet of inferior beings.

Tangents aside, our house was a pleasant change from the cramped apartment the army provided in Germany. Here, I could find the isolation I increasingly needed to maintain some degree of equanimity. Having my own bedroom made it easy for me to place an imprimatur that only allowed my mother to enter on specified days and times to clean. Otherwise my room was as strictly forbidden to visitants as the Pope's toilet. What's the big deal of such privacy you might ask? Did my room contain implements of heroin addiction,

pornography, coded instructions from my Soviet overlords, women's soiled undergarments, a large inventory of art reproductions of naked men, small animal skeletons, baskets of toenail clippings, prom gowns, piles of used Kotex pads, passionate lettre's d'amour to Mamie Eisenhower, buckets of teeth, rat dropping sculptures, or anything else that would be considered suspect? No. None of these, not even porn. It did, however, contain my growing collection of story lines and crude drawings for 'Dr. Fear. These were for me and me alone. When my mother cleaned they were stored in a suitcase sized cardboard box labeled 'DO NOT TOUCH IF YOU VALUE YOUR SANITY.' She well knew not to bother this box and if asked about it would not even remember such an article existed. Someday I would reveal Dr. Fear to the world but not until I was ready and that could be years down the road.

Beyond my privacy and secrecy issues I just needed time away from people in general, including my family. I was oppressed and depressed by the unceasing need of humans to communicate constantly in order to validate their own existence through indulgent displays of idiocy and envy.

I am a nasty prig, aren't I? If this was 'Tom Brown's School Days' I would be Harry Flashman without the comeuppance. 'Harry who' you say. Quit reading this drivel and get an education.

So what did I do in my self-imposed isolation? No my nasty minded reader I did not masturbate, at least not literally but maybe literately. (God, what a terrible pun) What I'm trying to say in my own elliptical way is that I continued writing scenarios for my future comic book protagonist, Dr. Fear. To give you an idea of my jejune efforts here is one story line entitled:

Doctor Fear and the Vox Populi

I stay in the shadows, as always, hunted by my enemies and haunted by the vagaries of the populace. These particular shadows lay in an alleyway between the National Theater and an after hours

restaurant, cum bar. With my black duster and broad brimmed hat I was just another empty space save for the glint of my slit-eyes. I had been standing here for an hour, patient as only a predator can be waiting for his prey. I was being hunted by the infernal forces of Uncle Billy, or at least that is what they thought. In truth I was hunting them and knew every one of his minions, especially the Gorilla, and I mean that literally, who was following the trail I left for him and his companion, Wheezer, a whippet of a man who had an uncanny ability to find anybody, anywhere. This pair was sloppy, typical of the arrogance of Uncle Billy, who thought nothing could withstand his assaults. He, the publicly cheerful, avuncular leader of Billy Industries, the media empire that circled the globe, sought my destruction a thousand times over for the disruptions I caused in his bid to control every living human. This was his supposedly top assassins, a massive brute more simian than human and a dogsbody only bright enough to follow a trail.

It was ten thirty and the doors were about to erupt with the emerging crowd. I saw two figures appear from a side street, one massive and the other slight; the Gorilla and Wheezer right on time. They were watching the exit doors wearing identical titanium lined flapper caps, ridiculous accoutrements meant to stymie my mind control. Uncle Billy thought his development whiz kids could concoct a means of limiting my powers and this was one pathetic attempt that would merely result in excessive sweat and dandruff for the wearer. I stepped out of the shadows and called to them.

“Hey boys, or should I say bipeds.” They didn’t respond being intent on watching for me. “I’m talking to you Gorilla and your little moke, Wheezer.”

They turned at this and spied me. Wheezer let out a high pitched, ‘Fear,’ and Gorilla just a rumbling growl. As one they reached in their jackets for their implements of death, which might or might not be guns, but I was faster. Within a gnat wing’s beat they

began tearing off their clothes and in a gasp's time they were naked. Wheeze with his narrow waist, sunken chest, and spindly limbs, made one aware of the relevance of clothes. He did, however, have an extremely elongated penis, so narrow it appeared to be a cord hanging between his thighs. Gorilla, as befitting his name, was covered in thick hair, like a pelt, but had no visible penis as his groin hair must have covered the little critter.

Wanting them both to be as outrageous as possible I ordered them to get an erection, and they both did. Wheeze's penis, uncircumcised, stood straight out like an unsharpened pencil, but didn't seem to grow in length or breadth. Gorilla's emerged from his nest of hair, but only perhaps a couple of inches. It was shockingly pink against his brown body hair. Just then the crowds erupted from the theater and seeing the naked pair began shrieking and tearing away. Soon I heard sirens and in a trice the gendarmerie was pulling up to take these two mad men in for probable psychiatric examination prior to being charged with indecent exposure. I had both reach into their littered clothes and pull out whatever they planned to use on me. In Wheezer's case it was a smallish pistol, but gorilla had some sort of automatic weapon, perhaps one of those Israeli Uzis. I ordered them to point them at the cops, but not shoot. They did so and after several fruitless calls to put down their weapons the police opened fire and after a minute long fusillade of bullets slammed into both, they collapsed into individual pools of blood. I, of course, was back in the shadows and already composing their valedictory for Uncle Billy's benefit.

Amid the sirens and screams, the myrmidons of death gathered as always and I slipped away, but not before one keen eyed adherent noticed my trailing duster and called out shrilly.

"It's Dr. Fear. He did this."

I glanced back and felt a sea of eyes, red and fearful, washing over me. No one advanced, not even the cops. I tipped my hat and

growled a laugh then turned back into the shadows. Dulcinea awaited.

Notice the emphasis on penises. Despite being a god I was still an adolescent and, as such, penis appearance was of utmost importance, not only length but breadth. My two temporary villains had penises at odds with their felonious images. Wheezer's was long, the sine qua non for a male's fantasy, but without volume and solidity thus making it into some kind of prehensile vestigial limb rather than a powerful assault weapon. Gorilla's, even when erect, was miniscule and pink, a seasonal rutting appendage rather than a threatening regenerative force. They, I imagined, like all mindless followers required images of their leader to launch impotent emissions.

Enough about penises. The reader awake enough to notice may have the impression that either I'm a crazed megalomaniac who thinks he's God or a spiritual scofflaw. Even worse, perhaps I'm a total non-believer, a doctrinaire atheist. To forestall idle speculation, I am not an atheist. I do believe in an eternal, unchanging creative force that is dual in nature. I do not however believe in a paternal sky god, such as Jehovah or Allah, who has a neurotic, symbiotic link with humanity, providing punishment and reward with a shocking lack of regard for fairness or decency. My 'God' is a cyclical, non-corporeal vagina and penis combined in one vast sex organ, ever expanding and giving birth like some fruit fly on steroids. When it finally runs out it begins collapsing on itself, itself being a penis, until the tightness and friction of the collapsing primal material against the penis, and if size matters then this one's a beaut, ejaculates into this 'vagina' which expands until it collapses again. You get the idea and I believe I'm backed up by the big bang theorists and the Chinese yin-yang philosophy. I would call mine the hot sex theory, however. I find it a consolation that sex would be the essence of being and nothingness, and nothingness is nothing more than a big limp dick. What about string theory? Separate strands of dripping sperm, each a separate universe, something to think about? Nah, just puerile imaginings of yours truly.

Chapter 4

The day before school started Dad took the entire family to Fort Bliss. He was ebullient but secretive about our excursion. Even Mother didn't know what was going on, but she picked up on Dad's mood and was surprisingly buoyant. I had an idea of what might occur, but I played dumb.

After going through the main gatehouse, we drove a mile through seemingly endless indistinguishable khaki colored barracks until we reached a large, brick building which was the administrative headquarters for the entire base. The building was large enough to house a small town, and I couldn't help but wonder what went on at this West Texas military outpost to warrant such a massive administration. We entered the front past saluting guards and went through a maze of hallways, finally stopping at a door with the designation, Post Commander, and below that in larger letters, Lieutenant General Lemont. Three stars, now that is some clout. Why here, at Fort, the edge of civilization, Bliss? And here was my Dad, a mere Captain, going into the office of a man who wielded the power of an Eastern potentate.

As we entered the office an officious voice, emanating from a Major sitting behind a large, meticulously clean desk, stopped us.

"May I help you?" He actually didn't sound like he wanted to help us.

"I'm Captain Todd, scheduled to meet with General Lemont at ten thirty hours." Dad's voice sounded a little unsure. Had he gotten the summons correct after all?

The Major's voice changed immediately to a welcoming tone. "Ah, yes, Captain Todd," he looked at the rest of us, "and the family. How good. Let me inform the General you're here."

He pressed a button on an intercom and informed the General that Captain Todd and family were here. A booming voice came over the speaker. "Tell them to come on in." The Major arose and

beckoned us to an inner door leading to the General's sanctum. He opened it with a smile and told us to please go in. Dad snapped off a salute as he passed the Major, which the Major returned with élan.

The inner office could have held a small convention. A massive teak desk was in front of the far wall while various scale models of Bliss areas were on tables about the room. A huge map holder was on a sidewall with a relief map of the area pulled down. A kitchenette was in one corner of the office and two doors were located behind the desk, presumably for a bathroom and bedroom. A large television was mounted beside the map and, wondrously, was on and gloriously in color. The only color televisions I had seen before were in hotel lobbies, but none this size. The screen must have been at least twenty-one inches. The general was not as physically prepossessing as his office, being of a spare build with a slight receding chin. But when he spoke and looked into your eyes, a raw power enveloped you. The General came from behind his desk to greet us. Dad snapped off a salute, which was returned and then the General smiled while reaching out to shake Dad's hand.

"Captain Todd, I'm very pleased to meet you." He smiled at the rest of us hanging back. "And this must be your lovely wife and sons." He looked at us with a mock critical appraisal. "I think we may have some future generals here."

Mother and Dad beamed, But Frankie and I exchanged sardonic looks. Frankie wanted nothing to do with the military unless they offered a venue for magicians. If I desired an ambition it would be to rule the world, not wear some dress up stars. Being a mere general would be far beneath me. The General hit a button and the Major hustled in.

"Bring in the photographer." The Major started to leave, then hesitated and turned back.

"Would you like me to bring in Mabel first, Sir?" His voice was at once deferential and knowing. The General went over to an ornate mirror that could have graced Versailles and studied his less than inspiring visage. He then gazed at all of us critically.

“Yes, Tom, bring in Mabel. Must look presentable, mustn’t we.” Major Tom left and Mother and Frankie looked confused. Why did we need a photographer, and who was Mabel?

Mabel came in and she turned out to be a twenty something civilian with a stunning figure and starlet looks. She was carrying a large case, which she unceremoniously planted on a side table, and opened it noisily, revealing enough makeup for a month of Broadway shows.

“Ok, who’s first?” She smiled prettily, immediately melting every male heart in the room and stiffening our, uh, resolve. She evidently was going to touch us up prior to the photo shoot. I immediately shot forward.

“I’ll st.. st.. st.. start.” I blushed furiously at my stuttering. Mabel, sweetheart that she was, grinned warmly.

“Sure thing handsome. I won’t need to do much to you.” When I stood before her she touched my cheek and whispered. “I could just eat you up.”

Was I such a handsome young chap as that? Not really, but I had enhanced my blandly plain appearance with a vision of a young Errol Flynn. She applied a dab of rouge and some slight eye shadow, then some foundation powder.

She also had glanced down and noticed my now fully stiffened resolve and whispered. “Call me. I’ll leave my number with the Major.”

I found a seat and sat down with my legs crossed while Mabel proceeded with the rest of the family and then the General. She seemed to linger over long with him, but then again he was weak chinned. The General seemed delighted with the outcome and thanked Mabel profusely, and we all followed suit heartily, except for Mother who did not seem as taken with Mabel as the rest of us. After Mabel’s departure a photographer in uniform entered.

“This is Sergeant Willets. He’s a photographer for all of our special events and will take several photos during and after the ceremony.” The General laughed good naturedly at Mother and Frankie’s quizzical expressions. “I suppose we should let the cat out

of the bag. What do you think, Colonel?” He looked straight at my Dad and my mother shrieked.

“My husband’s been promoted, to Colonel?” She was stunned and looked close to tears.

“Yes, and he is to work directly on my staff, on....” He paused, as though searching for the right word, “logistical matters. He’s also receiving a commendation and medal.”

I tried to look surprised, like Mother and Frankie, but I had known something like this would happen. I had placed some heavy baggage on the brass before departing from Germany. I had also left instructions to contact me with phone numbers and names of the higher ups to which they reported. I then phoned these dignitaries and had them speed up the process for such an extraordinary promotion.

Dad had been promoted to a full bird colonel, a rise of three steps and virtually unheard of except for battlefield promotions, but contacting the right people, including for good measure the Secretary of Defense, had resulted in this wondrous day for Dad. Of course, no one remembered calls from some teenager, and they all thought they were merely rewarding a WWII war hero who had been unfairly passed over. As a result several of Dad’s commanding officers from past assignments had been demoted or rified. They shouldn’t have screwed my dad.

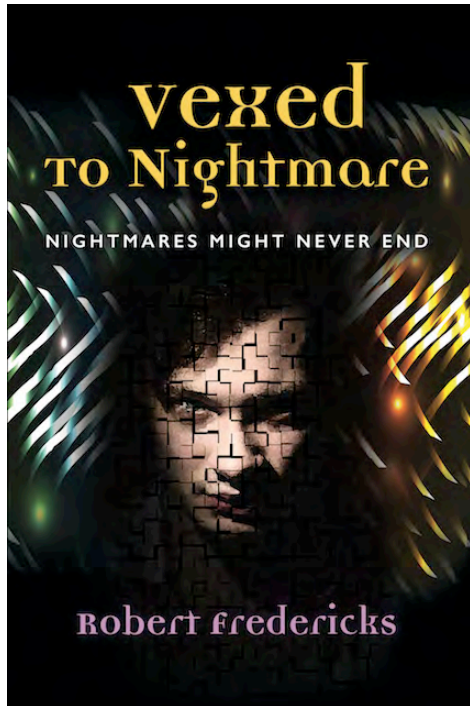
My father, who had heard of the promotion the day before, while not currently surprised, still had a stunned expression. He knew what had happened was impossible, but like the proverbial gift horse, he wasn’t about to question its authenticity. He knew he would face some serious backlash from majors and light colonels anticipating their chance to advance at the more normal glacial army speed, but with his rank and position on General Lemont’s staff, the envious ones would have to watch their step. He was charmed.

The General peered at me inquisitively, his eyes clouding with suspicion. “Young man, aren’t you surprised and happy?” He looked at my mother, who was still shedding tears of joy, and Frankie, whose eyes were still saucer like. Both were reacting normally, but I apparently was not displaying the expected responses. I tried to rectify my lapse.

“I sure am, General Lemont. Golly gee, this is the greatest news ever.” I hoped my face was alight with joy and gratitude, but the General was still eyeing me with a certain malignancy. He was a sharp one, and I had to nip this in the bud immediately. I had him forget any doubts he had about my reaction and just remember a properly stunned and happy response from an innocuous teenage boy.

He turned immediately from me and buzzed the major, telling him to come in with the rest. What followed was a regular circus. Two full bird colonels, several light colonels, a gaggle of majors, and an honor guard entered the huge office. Amid flashing camera bulbs the General and two full colonels made speeches praising my dad. Then the honor guard presented the colors and the General then personally removed the captain’s bars and replaced them with a full colonel’s eagle insignias. This brought about a fresh burst of tears from my mother as all the uniformed men saluted my father, now Colonel Todd and Frankie and I cheered. I stole a quick glance at the general, but he seemed oblivious to my presence. I cheered again and the men laughed at my boyish enthusiasm, but this cheer was for the successful exercise of my power.

I was also exultant at the thought of getting Mabel’s number. I had a premonition she could advance my knowledge base of arcane erotica. And most of all, I gloried that at the mere age of eighteen I had no limits. I was becoming Dr. Fear without any nemesis to stand in my way. I was God without Satan or perhaps, Satan without God. It didn’t matter to me. I was beyond petty human classification.



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