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# **Adventures in the Land of the Dead**

## **Brennon Brennan**

“I wish I never met you, you freak! I wish you were dead!” Anthony Davis felt his hands pushing his former childhood best friend away from him, pride and exhilaration rushing through his body as he did so. Emily stumbled backwards, coming to an unstable stop in the middle of the road; her face was a mask of shock and pained hurt. She looked like she was about to cry, which goaded Anthony into shouting at her even more; “Yes,” he hissed. “I’ve hated you since we first met, now do everyone a favor and get out of my life!”

Emily’s voice was cracking as she choked out “So that’s it, huh? After all we’ve been through? Be careful what you wish for Anthony, because you just very well might get it.”

Anthony snorted in contempt and deliberately turned his back on Emily, flipping her off and laughing as he did so. That was when he heard it; the shriek of rubber on asphalt as it accelerated towards him, then the horrible crunch of a huge metal object slamming head on with a body at full speed. He tensed his body and doubled over as though he were punched in the stomach, and his body began trembling uncontrollably as sweat rushed out of his pores. Slowly, he struggled to turn around to stare at the gory mess and the broken body that was all that remained of Emily Dale; his childhood friend, whom he had mentally and emotionally destroyed not two seconds before...who now lay dead at his feet in a pool of blood and broken bones. Her eyes were glazed and wide open; a look of terror and angry pain frozen forever on what was left of her contorted grimace of a face.

Anthony felt a sick feeling of heaviness hit his stomach and heart like a battering ram, and he felt weak in the knees. He let out a broken cry as his knees buckled and he fell to the blood-stained blacktop as tears drowned out his senses.

“Anthony!” a man’s voice called out amidst what sounded like a busy train station. “Can you hear me Anthony!”

Anthony opened his eyes to find himself laying on a platform of the station, staring at a creature with the head and hindquarters of a brown and white goat. It had the torso of a female human, black feathered wings and a black torch crown with a glowing pentagram on it. Something stirred in Anthony’s memory, he had seen this strange goat-man before. It was a Baphomet.

Anthony let out a scream and scrambled to his feet before running blindly in whatever direction his limbs would carry him. He did not have time to take in his surroundings before he heard an ear-splitting

DING, DING of a trolley bell. He turned to look into the blinding headlights and froze like a deer before hands grabbed his shoulders and hauled him backwards. Both Anthony and the Baphomet stumbled out of the way of the trolley just as the driver shouted at them. Anthony just barely caught a glimpse of the driver's face and felt his stomach twist in revulsion at the pale green skin of a rotting corpse.

“Watch where you're going!” the dead man yelled as the trolley rushed past them.

Anthony struggled to get loose from the Baphomet's embrace, flinching constantly as the trolley cables sparked in a four-by-four rhythm. “Let go of me, monster!” he shouted.

Immediately the Baphomet released him with an offended huff. “You're welcome, you ungrateful little snip!” it grumbled. Ruffling its feathered wings and straightening its magenta vest, it took on a mildly softer tone of voice. “Come on, Anthony. We need to get to the others.”

Anthony jumped at the sound of squealing brakes and the Baphomet hopped onto the waiting trolley, beckoning him to follow. The boy made his unstable feet move onto the trolley and sat on a wooden seat, trying not to stare at the passengers who, just like the previous trolley driver, were all corpses. The Baphomet sat down across from him, nodding in acknowledgment to the passengers, who were staring at the living Anthony in confusion. “What, never seen two guys board a train before?” the Baphomet asked them, forcing them to shrug and resume their afterlives.

Once the trolley began lurching into motion the Baphomet leaned back and proceeded to groom his wings with his hind hooves and scratching the top of them with his horns. As soon as it saw Anthony staring at him, the Baphomet stopped what he was doing and say “You're staring. Let me guess, you've got questions.”

“Oh, er, yes. Yes, I do,” Anthony shifted uncomfortably in his seat as he tried to think of what questions to ask. “Who are you? Where am I?? Why am I here?!”

The Baphomet held up his hands until Anthony shut his mouth. Once Anthony calmed down the Baphomet gave him a quizzical look. “You seriously don't recognize me?”

“No! Why would I recognize a demon being?” Anthony replied.

The Baphomet flinched at the harsh word before snapping “I am *not* a *demon*!!! You knew very well what my purpose is! And you know who I am, I can see it in your eyes. But for your convenience I'll show you.” With that being said, the Baphomet sat cross-legged, pointing one hand to the sky and the other to the ground. “Your friend used to keep me in her room as a symbol of protection, and she also requested that I protect you as well.”

Anthony was taken aback by the passion in the Baphomet's voice. He searched his memories long

hidden away from when he and Emily used to be friends. Yes, he remembered. He remembered that when they were two lonely friends against the world who had an interest in witchcraft and the occult; Emily had kept an idol of Baphomet in her room surrounded by candles and aromatic herbs. Now this same Baphomet was sitting in front of him, life sized and staring at him intently. “It really is you,” Anthony whispered.

“Call me Baphi,” Baphi resumed to sit in a normal position. “Now, as to your other questions. The answer as to where you are may be a bit scary, but you are in the Land of the Dead.”

Immediately Anthony let out a cry as a jolt of shock and fear coursed through his body, “Am I dead?!”

Baphi rolled his eyes and sighed “No, you’re not dead. Now take a few deep breaths before I continue.” He waited until Anthony calmed down. “As to why you are here in this place, consider it penance for what you said to Miss Emily and putting me out of a job.”

Anthony felt his fear dissipate and be replaced with irritation, “Wait, *I* put you out of a job?!”

“Yes,” The fur on the back of Baphi’s neck was beginning to bristle. “It was *my* job to keep both you and Miss Emily *safe*. But since *you* wished death upon her, you *got* that wish, and I was unable to keep her safe. I couldn’t keep her safe...not even from *you*...”

The Baphomet bowed his head and screwed up his long goat-face in pain as he was forced to relive his failure to protect the two charges. As Anthony watched Baphi’s slow decent into depression, he tried to change the subject in order to save the Baphomet’s mood. “So, is this place where the dead go when they die? It looks just as depressing as I imagined it,” he said as he looked around the dingy tunnels that the trolley was traveling through.

Baphi lifted his head and looked out at the dark dripping tunnel and replied “Yeah, this is where they go, don’t worry about the looks of these tunnels. This place is actually not bad on the eyes kid, just give this rust-bucket a second to exit the tunnel.”

Not long after he said that, there was a bright blinding light as the trolley exited the tunnel to reveal the vast city of the Land of the Dead. Anthony’s eyes widened at the sight, as it contrasted greatly with what he had initially imagined the Land of the Dead to look like. The lights ranged from blues, greens, pinks and golden yellows as the buildings were decorated with marigolds and old Edison-era lightbulbs. He couldn’t help but compare the architecture to the buildings back in the Land of Living, except much older in age. After a while, the trolley’s breaks shrieked, its bell rang, and the cables sparked as it came to a stop, making Anthony flinch and twitch uncontrollably in discomfort.

Once the trolley came to a complete stop, Baphi hopped out and beckoned Anthony to follow. The

two walked through the twists and turns of the city until coming to a stop at an old warehouse with a hotel in the front. “Welcome to the Wardencllyffe Laboratory and Hotel,” Baphi said, spreading his arms and wings to show off the expanse of the property. He pushed open the rod iron gates, brushing his wingtips against the two gatepost gargoyles. Anthony followed him up the hotel stairs as the Baphomet pushed open the two creaking wooden doors.

The hotel’s interior was a stark contrast to the outside; red carpets with golden arches and chandeliers, the very definition of a grand old hotel. Several of the residents waved at Baphi and called out greetings to him, to which the Baphomet smiled and returned their calls. “Hey, Charlie, how’s the skit going? Tennessee, how’s your play going, the actors doing a good job? What’s up Vincent, how is your new painting coming?”

As Anthony looked at the residents whom Baphi was talking to he realized to his immense surprise that they were famous people; Charlie Chaplain, Tennessee Williams and Vincent Van Gough. He stood staring at them until Baphi’s whistle brought him running to catch up as they made their way to the hotel bar. There were three dead men standing at the bar drinking spirits, one of them seemed more inebriated than the other two. Two of the men had zombified, decomposing birds—a white pigeon and a raven—perched on his shoulder. When Baphi shouted at them, they turned around to reveal their identities, and Anthony let out a gasp of surprised and suppressed excitement. The one with the pigeon was Nikola Tesla, the tall man in the middle was H. P. Lovecraft, and the man with the raven was none other than Edgar Allan Poe.

“Hello boys,” Baphi said as he put his arms and wings around the three men, who seemed to take the friendliness despite their discomfort—mainly from Tesla and Poe. “Guess who I brought with me.”

They turned to stare at Anthony, who felt himself flinch involuntarily at their hard, dead stares. Lovecraft was the first one to step forward, his tall, skinny frame towering over Anthony and said in his high-pitched New English accent “Should we bring him to the room?”

The other three nodded and made their way to the elevator with Anthony following in their wake, it seemed, against his better judgment. The elevator operator pushed the fourteenth-floor button, then pulled the lever that caused the cage door to shriek shut, making Anthony flinch and twitch, before the lift moved up the floors. The lift shrieked to a halt, making Anthony shudder and whimper while trying to cover his ears, though it felt that his arms were like lead weights. The hallway was lined with doors, each one lit by an old lightbulb, Tesla gave a look of distain and grumbled in his thick Serbian accent, “It’s quite sad when the lights and electricity being used here is from a no-good thief and talentless hack.”

“Just be thankful that the Land of the Living uses your alternating current and not—” Baphi tried to

begin until Tesla cut him off.

“Don’t mention that name!” Nikola growled.

“Is he talking about Thomas Edison?” Anthony blurted out without thinking about what he was saying.

Tesla covered his ears and let out a cry of anger, which sent his pigeon flapping about. “I told you not to say that name!”

The raven that was perched on Poe’s shoulder began cawing out “Nevermore!”, which made Poe shudder and pull out a flask from his coat pocket and take a swig. “I wish I had done what Van Gogh did and cut off my ears,” he moaned. “Perhaps then I wouldn’t hear this blasted bird!”

“Nonsense,” Lovecraft chimed in. “The voices are all in your head, just like Vincent’s.”

The group stopped at a door numbered 3326, but Tesla, Lovecraft, Poe and Baphi stood back for Anthony to open the door himself. He knocked on the door, which opened a crack, and immediately felt a sense of dread and didn’t want to go inside. He looked at the four standing behind him, but they wouldn’t budge, Baphi nodded his head in acknowledgement for Anthony to move forward. He pushed open the door a little further and went inside.

There were no electric lights in the room, but there was a faint blue glow in the farthest corner. As Anthony stepped further into the room, the glow revealed itself to be the ghost of a ball python...*his* ball python, whom he had named Clyde, who died two years before. Anthony gave a cry of joy at seeing his beloved dead pet and held out his arms as the snake wrapped itself around them. “Oh, Clyde I missed you,” he said as the snake’s ghostly blue tongue flicked in and out of its mouth, touching his cheek.

“Funny,” a female voice said from the darkness. “You’re excited to see your pet that died of natural causes, yet you don’t even acknowledge the one you yourself did in.”

‘*That voice,*’ Anthony thought with dread, ‘*it can’t be...*’ But it was.

Without warning, Clyde wrapped his ghostly skeleton around Anthony’s body, tightening it in a strangling merciless grip which squeezed all of the air out of him. The voice was closer to him now, and Anthony could see a dark shadow approaching him as he struggled to move. “Apologies for Clyde’s behavior, he only obeys me now.”

“Who are you?” Anthony managed to choke out. “What do you want, why are you doing this to me?!”

The voice let out a chuckle that was filled with dirt. “You seriously haven’t figured it out? You really have become stupid haven’t you. Allow me to shed some light on the subject of your idiotic questions.”

Suddenly a light flashed on revealing the ghost of Anthony’s past in all of its decayed glory; Anthony

felt a cold chill of shock and dread creep down his spine when he saw who was standing before him. It was Emily Dale, or, at least what was left of her. The right side of her face and body was like that of the other zombie's faces; pale acidic green, though much more decayed. The left side was that of a skeleton with a crack in the skull with grey matter showing, and her naked ribs were exposed through her torn purple shirt. Her eyes were black and soulless with pale yellow pupils and her mouth was a permanent grin, yet Anthony could see that despite the smile she was not cheerful. Her voice was much different then it was when she was alive; it was now hard and accusing, filled with bitter dirt and venom. "Hello, schmuck."

Anthony was riveted to the spot in horror at the obvious changes in Emily, both physical and personality. She was no longer the bright, shy girl who was by his side through thick and thin, but cold, cynical, accusing, and sadistic. He was so terrified that he was unable to respond save for the gurgling in the back of his throat. "What's the matter?" she asked with a wicked smile. Suddenly she shoved a bony hand into Anthony's mouth and pulled out his tongue, holding it between her dead calcium fingers so he could see it when he crossed his eyes. "Karma zombie got your tongue?" She let out an unearthly cackle as Anthony struggled in disgusted discomfort.

Anthony wailed in terror until Emily released his tongue and turned around wiping her hand on her moldy shirt. Anthony managed to choke out a sentence, as well as dirt and bone-dust. "Emily! What happened to you?! Why are you doing this?!"

Emily jerked her head in his direction with a snap of her neck. Her eyes were cruel dots filled with hatred and pain, her voice was like a cold hiss of steam. "What happened to me? What *happened* to me?! *YOU HAPPENED TO ME YOU MORON!!!* You were my one and only friend, until you started growing some I guess...then you started treating me like garbage. To top it all off, you wished me dead!"

"How was your death my fault?!" Anthony said, goaded by his indignation at the accusation.

Emily grabbed Clyde's throat and yanked the ghost snake hard, which tightened its hold on Anthony's body. Her voice was an unlovely shriek "*YOU SHOVED ME INTO THE STREET, RIGHT INTO THAT ONCOMING VEHICLE YOU PIECE OF JACK-TRASH!!!!*"

The timely intervention of Baphi, Tesla, Lovecraft, and Poe saved Anthony from becoming a permanent resident to the Land of the Dead. The ruckus from outside of the room forced the men to break down the door and rush in to break the potential revenge-murder up. "Emily," Baphi put his hands on Emily's tense, shaking shoulders in an attempt to soothe her. "Calm down, it won't help anything by killing him. That's not what you really want is it?"

Emily's teeth were grinding in fury as her trembling hands still sought to keep a tight grip on Clyde's head. As Poe and Lovecraft tried to disentangle the snake's body from Anthony's, Tesla looked at the white pigeon upon his shoulder and said in his thick accent "Three my love, would you help us out?"

The pigeon—Three—started to coo in a bell like voice, a tune which Anthony recognized as "La Llorona", or The Crying Woman. He remembered how Emily's grandparents—namely her grandmother—used to sing it to her when she was little. Then her grandmother died when she was ten, followed by her grandfather when she was twelve, which devastated her. That was when Anthony began to associate with the popular crowd and joyfully tormented Emily for her loss. The pigeon's rendition of the song seemed to work, for Emily's grip on Clyde's neck loosened until she finally let go.

Once free of his former pet's suffocating grip, Anthony was hoisted to his feet by the three dead men. Once he was standing, the cold dead grip of the men's hands made him flinch, and without warning, launched himself at Emily. He bowled her over and tried to choke her, feeling horrified when her neck vertebrae came apart and her head launched itself at him, burying its teeth in his arm. He was so shocked that he sat up trying to pry her jaws loose from his arm, allowing her headless body to push him over and start slamming his head into the floor multiple times.

"Come on you guys!" Baphi cried out in protest. "This isn't what we planned! It wasn't supposed to be like this!"

"Lay off goat," Poe said, his depressed attitude lightening up for the first time that night. "Let them speak their pieces first." The raven upon his shoulder crowed the word 'Nevermore!' again, leading Poe to shout at it "Shut up!"

Anthony and Emily rolled around on the floor, hands on each other's throats, shouting insults at each other.

"I hate you!" Anthony yelled.

"I hate you more!" Emily shrieked back.

Poe started to chuckle uncontrollably, leading the other three to stare at him in slight reproach. "Leave them," Poe hooted, "this is the best reunion I ever attended!"

"What is the point of doing this to me, you're dead it shouldn't matter anymore!" Anthony shouted.

"Dead or not you are a low-life piece of scum who treated me like garbage when I was alive, then aided in me getting killed!"

"What have I done that was so bad?!"

“You seriously don’t remember? You pushed me into a locker, mocked me by using my grandmother’s name, tried to throw basketballs at me while I was swinging, and tried to choke me with the swing chain!”

“I was a stupid kid then—”

“You’re a stupid kid now for what you’ve done to me when I died!”

As the two previous friends scuffled on the hotel room floor, Baphi let out a sigh of exacerbation and stepped over their bodies until he was standing next to their heads. Bending over he grabbed both Anthony and Emily by the scruffs of their shirts and shook them none too gently and chiding “Alright that’s enough you two, you both got to have a go at each other, now knock it off!”

The two crawled away from the Baphomet, massaging their necks and glaring in hatred at each other. “Now,” Baphi said in a deep authoritarian voice. “Emily, this isn’t what we planned. Our plan was to bring him here to stay and that’s *it!*”

“Why would you want to bring me here? What makes you think I would want to *live* here?!” Anthony shouted.

“Because this is your penance for treating Miss Emily like garbage along with wishing her dead, and you’re going to stay here where we can keep an eye on you,” Lovecraft said in a stern voice.

Anthony could see that he was not fully telling the truth, but before he could call him out on it, the ground started shaking. Anthony was terrified as the tremors got more and more pronounced and the entire room began to sway. The others; however, seemed to pay the earthquake no heed, merely swayed with the motion. When Tesla noticed Anthony’s look of confusion, he patted the living boy on the shoulder, making him flinch. “Don’t worry,” he said, “this happens all the time.”

The tense silence became heavy, and Baphi eventually stepped forward and said “I think that we should all at least turn in, hopefully tomorrow we can start over.”

Everyone nodded in assent and Anthony was hustled out of the room by Lovecraft, Poe, and Tesla, with Clyde wrapping his coils around his body in a restraining embrace. As Lovecraft and Poe left for their own apartments, Tesla beckoned Clyde to drag Anthony into his room. “You’re staying with me tonight young man,” he said in his thick Serbian accent. Tesla took out his key from his pocket and unlocked the door to his room numbered 3327. The room was small and cramped, made even more so by the giant pile of letters and inventions.

“My apologies for the mess,” Tesla said as he cleared a space on the bed. “You can sleep in my bed, I rarely use it.”

Clyde, with his ghostly coils still wrapped around Anthony's body, slithered over and laid the boy down on the bed like a mummy in a sarcophagus. Anthony was forced to look up at the awkward, smiling, zombified face of the Serbian inventor as he said in his thick accent "Good night Anthony, sleep well."

The night wore on slowly, and as Anthony sadly realized, was sleepless. Tesla only nodded off for two hours before his inventions and desire to tinker with them took control of him and he worked the rest of the night. The noise of the city activity combined with the screams of Poe and other residents also kept Anthony awake for most of the night. Clyde's tightly bound coils prevented him from getting comfortable, but it did succeed in muffling his cries.

The moon's light glowed brighter as the twelve hours of night gave way to the reflection of the daytime; Anthony opened his sore red-rimmed eyes to see Tesla slumped over his desk, feeding Three and stroking her white feathers. He tried to rise, but Clyde's ribs poked his body and the snake's coils tightened their grip. Finally, noticing that his former master was awake, Clyde loosened his hold on Anthony, permitting the boy to sit up. Tesla noticed the movement and perked up with an awkward smile "Good morning Anthony, sleep well?"

Anthony gave him a reproachful look but did not answer. Tesla did not seem to notice the look and continued to speak, "How's about a spot of breakfast?"

Clyde perked up and floated over to the door of the tiny room, dragging Anthony with him. He followed Tesla down the hallway to the lift, before they stepped inside Anthony dug his feet in and stumbled over his words, "Er, can't we take the stairs instead?"

Tesla gave him a look and opened the door to the lift, but said nothing, forcing Anthony to step inside the small cage. The door shut with the sound of nails on chalkboard, the noise forcing him to make an involuntary flinch as the lift jerked slowly down to the main lobby. Tesla led him through the giant lobby to the dining room where many of the hotel residents—famous and average Joes alike—were sitting eating what the kitchens had to offer. The people still cast shocked stares at Anthony, but he did not give them the satisfaction of reacting to their stares.

The trio joined the table where Lovecraft, Poe, Baphi and Emily sat taking breakfast, with two extra leaden plates for the new arrivals. As Anthony sat down Emily turned her head away from him, her broken neck vertebra cracking as she did so. Anthony didn't care, as he was still bitter about his reunion with her the night before, and decided to turn his attention to his breakfast. He had the much smaller bowl, filled with oatmeal that looked and smelled more like the result of food poisoning. He looked at the plates of everyone

else, and was slightly perturbed at the much more higher quality delicacies they contained. Anthony shuddered and managed to close his mouth over a spoonful of the foul mush, but was forced to spit it out in a choking fit at the smell and taste.

He gave a pleading look at the others, but none of them seemed to notice his situation. He didn't notice Baphi give Emily a small nudge with his black feathered wing, but a few seconds later, she had pushed her plate of food over to him. He looked at her in surprise, but she wouldn't meet his eyes; instead she rose to her feet and disappeared to go up to her room. Anthony turned his attention back to his new plate of food, and was nearly moved to tears at how good and refreshing it was for real sustenance to slide down his throat for the first time in what felt like months. When he and the others had finished their breakfast, he gave Baphi a look, asking for silent permission to take his leave. The Baphomet gave a slight nod, handing him a key. After putting the key in his pocket, Anthony took his leave with Clyde floating after him.

When he was gone, Lovecraft asked "You really think this is going to work?"

Baphi narrowed his eyes and gave a smile before replying "Oh yes, it's going to work."

Anthony turned the key in the hole and opened the door to the dark room, stepping in with renewed purpose in his gait. He found Emily on the balcony staring at the lights of the City of the Dead. She didn't even turn around to look at him, but said in her usual hard voice, "I never found them you know...my grandparents..."

Anthony didn't say anything as he went to stand beside her. She continued to lament as though he wasn't there. "My folks...I can never see them again, except maybe for a few hours on the second of November. If you ask me, that isn't enough time. To tell you the truth, I don't even know how my parents are doing now, and because of you I will never know."

Anthony felt a bitter sting of indignation rise up in him, but he forced himself to choke it down. Instead he managed to say "I should have been there for you when you needed me, but I wasn't...I'm sorry Emily. I don't ever expect you to forgive me—and frankly I can completely understand if you don't—but there wasn't one second after what I said to you that day that I don't regret, and I will always regret it to the end of my days. I'm so sorry..." As he said this, he genuinely felt saddened at the fact that he did so many terrible things to his friend, and he wanted to make the most of his apology now that he had the chance to do so.

Emily was silent, staring straight ahead of her, glaring her yellow-pupiled eyes in a hurt expression. Finally, she responded "I will never be able to forgive you for what you did and said to me...but the apology is appreciated."

Anthony felt himself droop at the opportunity of forgiveness being dashed, but then Emily let out an unsettling chuckle. She asked “Remember when we were kids, and we used to watch movies and fantasize what the Land of the Dead would look like?”

“Yeah, and you thought that it would be a cool and ironically lively place whereas I thought that it would be like the River Styx in Greek mythology...” Anthony couldn’t help but smile at the memory.

“I win the bet, sucker,” Emily chuckled in her unsettling dirt-filled laugh and gently punched Anthony’s arm with her bony hand, but he found great enjoyment in it.

“So...” Anthony began, “this is where you live now...not a shabby place.”

“Yeah, but it would be nicer if I could find my family members.”

“I know that you won’t forgive me for what happened,” Anthony said, “but I would like to help you find them.”

Emily stared at him, her permanently grinning mouth growing slightly wider as she said “Thanks, schmuck.” Suddenly she perked up, “Hey, let me show you around my new digs! Come on!” With that she grabbed Anthony’s wrist in a vice-like grip with her skeletal hand and dragged him down to the lobby where everyone stood waiting.

The day passed by like a blur for Anthony; Emily and the gang showed him all of their favorite places to visit, dine, and drink. They went to the theatre and watched Charlie Chaplain’s and other actors’ small skits and explored Tesla’s laboratory in Warden Cliffe, marveling at his Teslacoil. Anthony could not remember how long it had been since he had had that much fun, especially with people whom he idolized in his youth. As the day came to an end and the gang returned to the hotel, Baphi bought Anthony his own room, much to his delight. They all stood in the hallway talking about the day and which parts they enjoyed the most.

“I rather enjoyed my work,” Tesla said.

“You would,” Lovecraft grumbled, “I for one, enjoyed the theatre.”

“I liked the bars,” Poe lamented as he took a swig from his flask.

Eventually Poe took the moment of silence to head to his room, “Good night all,” he said. The raven perched on his shoulder crowed out “Nevermore!”, which led Poe to start sobbing in despair.

Lovecraft and Tesla left to their respective rooms next, then Baphi, leaving Emily and Anthony alone in the hallway. “That was rather fun,” Anthony broke the silence. “I greatly enjoyed today, heck I enjoy being here more than I thought I would.”

“Glad to hear it,” Emily said in a short voice. “Well I had better turn in, as should you. See you

tomorrow schmuck,” with that Emily disappeared into her room.

Anthony and Clyde went into their own room numbered 3325, slightly depressed at Emily’s sudden short demeanor. He let out a sigh and an involuntary shudder as the room started to sway again before laying down on the bed with Clyde wrapped around him. As he stared at the ceiling, he was lost in thought; he managed to come to terms with the fact that the Emily he had known in life was gone forever, being replaced by a more bitter alter ego. He hoped that he could be able to help Emily find her grandparents, earn her forgiveness, and perhaps return to the Land of the Living in the end. With Clyde’s coils wrapped around him in an uncomfortable, restraining embrace, Anthony managed to drift off to sleep despite the loud noises of the city and cries from the denizens.

Meanwhile in her own room, Emily stared at a mirror depicting what was going on in the Land of the Living, her dead brow furrowing as she stared into the glass. She looked at the door while running a bony hand through her moldy, matted hair, her fingers brushing against her exposed brain. “Yeah, you’d better enjoy it here, because it’s far better than up there.”

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“How is patient number 3325 doctor?” a nurse asked as she followed a tall man dressed in a white lab coat.

“He does not seem to be responding to any of the treatments, but these things take time after all,” the head doctor responded. “What have we got scheduled for him today?”

“Well, he is due for another session of electroshock therapy, and another dose of his medicine.”

“I heard that he wouldn’t take his medicine, not even when we put it in his oatmeal,” the doctor commented as he waved for two more assistants to help with moving the patient to the electro-therapy room.

“Well, we will have to inject him with it,” the nurse said as she stopped outside of the solitary confinement door where the patient simply dubbed Number 3325 sat.

“Very well,” the head doctor said. Peering through the single window into the tiny cushioned room, the doctor was able to see the young straight jacket-clad teenage patient sitting in the center staring ahead of him with a vacant, thousand-yard stare. Looking at the clipboard outside the door, he looked up the patient’s name and the required medicine. With a smile, the doctor said in a silky voice “Good morning Anthony Davis, it’s time for your therapy.”

*THE END?*