



'JUNK' -- BY SATAN165

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MUCH THANKS TO **KEVIN DONIHE** FOR HIS IMMENSE HELP IN THIS PRODUCTION.

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'Lunch'

I think about these things all day. The integrated circuit (ref. #U101) probably contains only 2 or 3 KB of actual storage capacity. But at only 17 cents when bought in bulk (orders of 101-200) I could run away with a great deal. Maybe my system would build up quicker if I started with such a small EEPROM size. Like a weightlifter hefting loads, I too could condition my physical being to influence my mental being. Fuck the spiritual.

I believe that falafel is the perfect food. Sure the food court is crowded, but I never have falafel made on a Monday. Even on Tuesdays, I sometimes get behind in preparing this Middle Eastern species of delicious grain. I must learn to conquer my laziness; the Pita Express is a real savior in this regard. Thank god I found a table so quickly. I can hardly wait to cram the fiber-enriched product down my gullet. Wait a minute. Maybe that was just an acid flashback, but I saw something in my peripheral that really concerns me. No, probably another flashback.

I would know better than to make that connection in parallel, wouldn't I? And I definitely have confidence that I can 'will' myself to subjugate a diode bridge. I'm sure of it. Sometimes its thoughts like these that really get me sweaty. I feel energized and the pain in my lower back and abdomen isn't so bad. It's starting. I can feel it happening right now. Today's Monday. No delivery until Wednesday. Looks like another late-night raid at Radio Shack. That garbage is akin to McDonalds' cheap product. Made with the cheapest ingredients. You are what you eat, right? But I'm not waiting until Wednesday.

I refuse to be distracted from my falafel. God, this lemonade is great! The acidity clears my taste buds; it thoroughly washes my palette. What a great combination of flavors. I never understood the chips though. It's fries all the way.

Ok, that wasn't a flashback. What the fuck is that guy eating? I can't let him see me watching him. He seems too out of it to notice, like he's having a conversation with himself. Fucking freak. He doesn't deserve the time he's stealing from my lunch. I hate this goddamned food court. I'll start eating in the stairwell if I have to. Oh my god, that sick bastard is going to bust his teeth cranking like that on those stale Macadamias or whatever they are. I need to get out of here.

The amplification should account for loss in the alert generator. I hate mailorder! I need to have my order teleported to me or something. When the technology arrives, I'm there. I can't depend on some schmuck making \$10 an hour being late in building something that could destroy his whole world. This project is bigger than him. It's bigger than these oblivious ants wandering around this shopping mall. But it's not bigger than me. I am exclusively the only thing – being or inanimate object – that is bigger than IT. Because I am saddled with the duty to carry out what I know to be as important as God's work. And in the execution of my plan to carry out this duty I know that where ever it leads me and whatever I find next to accomplish on my list of demands, if I die I must have reached my destination.

But if the CPU oscillator's timing crystal is brought more than .7 Hz off its resonant frequency by the natural metabolism of my body, having been ill adjusted by the overly warm environment (humidity especially) of this shithole, this MALL, the 1.5 microfarad fixed capacitors will not give me the stored voltage I'll need to power the CPU itself! I've got to get out of here.

I better slow down, save some fries. I'm starving but I need an excuse to sit here, to watch this lunatic. 'Receiver Electrical Parts List'? There are post-it-notes on the floor with 4 character codes on them: C113, U100, U101... What is all this shit? He must have found them in the garbage, maybe they were already on the table when he got here. Probably can't even read or write his own name. Why did he have to fuck up MY lunch? Go eat your goddamned resistors somewhere else! Maybe I should just call the cops; that would be the sensible thing to do. The humane thing.

Where is that theory/maintenance manual? I need to check the overall frequency stability of the unit. This could be major. How could I be so stupid! There is no room for events unplanned for! But wait -- I can feel it now; something's reacting. I can feel the blue magnetism burning in my guts. The huge, stored amperage is radiating from my brain down to the RAM halfway through my small intestine. The power and synchronization is building me up; it's enforcing me with a might that can only grow larger. Exponentially, my cells become ionized -- negative voltage accumulating near my feet, then flowing out into the earth. It feels good.

I know what it's like to FEEL capacitance. That's like trying to explain 'red' to a blind man. It's like describing the concept of reading to an autistic kid. Where do you begin? With the advent of the written word? Spoken word, even? YOU will never know the difference between fixed and variable capacitance, the latter adjusted by standing in a magnetic field produced by an open-coil transformer wound with hundreds of feet of 1 gauge solid core copper cable. The feeling of knowing -- UNDERSTANDING -- the exact value, down to the nano-henry, of your own electrical worth.

Shit, he's getting up. Ok, be cool, take your time. Let him get a lead and wait till it's safe to follow. There's nothing worse than the ignorant scums who won't return their trays or pick up their garbage. It reminds me of high school; I always wanted to clean up that cafeteria. Just leave me alone with some 409 and give me a couple of hours. I would take out all the trash and clean the muck that's accumulated in the grease of the folding hinges that work to conserve space. I despise myself for doing it, but I'll lose him if I have to walk across the aisle to the trash and recycling island and back again. Damn, he left half of that technical paperwork and he's hauling ass towards the steps. C'mon man, I really don't feel like running today!

U122? It must be C101. Or were those the generic Radio Shack LCD's? I knew I'd pay for this lack of organization. It's spoiling everything now. My mind's eye must have cataracts. I could have sworn that there were some extras lying on the workbench, maybe

in that little tray on my soldering iron's base. Why can't I remember? Think, dammit.... I still have time. Can't arouse suspicion by sprinting through here like a madman. Why is it that the insane always run? From what, really? Themselves probably. Poor bastards. But there's no time for frivolous garbage. No time for contemplating a mindset that I'll never comprehend. I need to learn to worry more about that which affects me directly. That which is meaningful. Not that which is not. What happened to the old regimen – wake up early, then push ups, sit ups, read the new tech documents, 5-7 U102's, 10-12 C113's....that's when progress was made. I've done half the work of those days in twice the time.

Oh, fuck it. I'm not sure if it's a bigger waste to stop now after getting all sweaty or if I had just stopped after seeing my lunch ruined. At least then I could have saved face and not expended this wasted energy. It's my own fault; what business of mine is it if some fellow wants to eat micro-electrical components? I make a big enough deal about getting my falafel. But that's different. Well, it's for a higher cause! Funny, I say that now just after downing falafel made by some fool who makes \$7 an hour. What does he know of God's Work? How much does he have to tell about bearing the load and having the responsibility of building a superior life form from a terribly inefficient human? That falafel might have been par-cooked the night before. And what do I do? Eat it anyway. This isn't what I was taught. When did I become so sloppy? I chastise my former high-school peers for leaving saliva-caked milk cartons on the floor. Then I go out and eat bad falafel, the likes of which could easily and severely stunt the progress of this plan. It's time to buckle down. No more garbage. No more waste. I shall make Monday's falafel Sunday afternoon. I shall salvage what I can from the freezer and ditch the rest. No more bad falafel – no more excuses either. This is too big – bigger than me. If I fail, someone shall surely take up the slack, correct? I can't dwell on these things any longer. If I get down to the grocer before they close at 7, I can prepare a fresh batch for tomorrow morning and eat some when it cools around 11. Now I will prove a bad choice wasn't made when I was appointed to carry out the exercise which will eventually change time. 'More falafel, less time'. That will be my new motto. My mantra, by which to ingrain the discipline I need to be alert, ready and constantly working to achieve my goal.

Because I am saddled with the duty to carry out what I know to be important as God's work. And in the execution of my plan to carry out this duty I know that where ever it leads me and whatever I find next to accomplish on my list of demands, if I die I must have reached my destination.

'The Thief'

"Open the register. Open the register. *Open it!*" demanded the thief. He was dressed in an insulated flannel shirt. His entire wardrobe reeked of Work-n-Gear. But despite his taste in clothing, he held the gun to the cashier's head and did so without mercy.

"Oh my God! Ohmuhgod ohmuhgod, don't kill me....", the cashier trailed off; all the steam seemed to have been exhausted from the engine that kept this little man running. He slinked to the floor slowly, ready to die.

"Get the fuck up, or I'll use this thing!" Menacingly, the man reached further across the counter; the barrel inching closer to the poor cashier's head. "Oh, you think I'm playin'? You're fucking dead!" And with that the man cocked back the hammer and sent the cashier to the next world. As the cashier slumped to the ground, the man half sat on the counter, twisting his body so that he could raid the register of all its goods. He stuffed the bills into his pockets, scattering a few across the floor. On the way out, he grabbed a 40-ounce bottle of malt liquor. Wrenching the lid from the container, he turned the bottle to his lips and flipped it upside down, allowing gravity to do its job in filling the man's stomach with cheap rotgut.

Thirty minutes later -- another convenient store. The flesh colored barrel of the thief's pistol was aimed squarely at another underpaid cashier's throat. The thief drew back his thumb with the fist of his other hand and loaded another round into the chamber. With that the cashier swallowed hard; his Adam's Apple jumped in a very dramatic and fitting way.

Just as the cashier raised his finger over the "CASH" button to open the drawer per the orders of this terrible thief, three more patrons arrived. They had not a care in the world as they laughed and joked over some topic which both eluded and mattered not to the pair engaged at the counter. Both of them turned toward the door to look at the trio, and all parties involved froze.

The man spoke first: "Lock the fucking door and get down on the goddamned floor, all of you!" Two of them hesitated not for a moment, as if they had rehearsed this ahead of time. One locked the door and moved to the left before lying on the filthy slab of old, torn carpeting that sat in front of the doorway. But the third just stood there, shocked at the scene being played out before him.

"It's just his fingers! What are you doing, get up! That's not a gun!" he said.

"Shut up and get DOWN!" one of his friends ordered. The last member of their group

whimpered softly, mumbling something, expecting to die in this half-assed five-and-dime store at the hands of the thief's hands.

"Don't you get it? Don't give him the money!" the man hollered at the cashier. "Why are you scared? He doesn't even have a real gun! He can't hurt you!"

"You think you've got it all figured out, huh? You don't think this gun will kill you dead as can be? It will!" The thief turned back toward the cashier: "Now! The money!" The cashier stood dumbfounded; he knew that the man at the door had a point, but was it worth taking a chance? What if this thief's hands really could shoot? It wasn't his money anyway. He decided to hand it over.

With a ring of the register the drawer opened. The cashier quickly pulled back the spring-loaded arms that kept the bills nice and neat and removed the money in denomination-ordered stacks. He hesitated for a moment, then held it out toward the thief.

"What are you doing? Don't give him the money! It's not a real gun...". But, before the man could finish, he found himself at the end of the barrel the cashier was recently faced with. The man's logic was washed away in a moment as he got a closer look at the weapon this scourge of the city had used to terrorize and rob so many. The man's fingernails were bitten down, not to the quick but actually trimmed nicely, albeit obviously with incisors and molars. The thief's cuticles were also chewed and ragged, each finger seemed to have more hangnails than the last. This gun-hand sported a watch, the cheaply made circa 1989 style with the built in calculator and impossibly small buttons.

Mockingly, the thief said in an exaggerated and high-pitched voice, "Why are you scared? It's not a real gun!" Then he added in his own wild voice, in an inflection reminiscent of his torn cuticles, "Well this gun is all I've got. You think I want to rob people? Hmmm? I don't. I don't want to hurt anyone! I'm just...just..."and then the thief also trailed off as the man had moments ago when his logic had washed away like car soap in a summer day's driveway. And down the sewer it flowed as the thief, with tears now streaming down his face, turned the gun toward himself and said, "It's all I've got...all I've got...". He put the gun into his mouth and pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened. The thief held his eyes closed for another moment, probably wondering what had occurred -- was he dead? Alive? The two men lying on the ground peered up at the thief and their confrontational friend. Those two were face to face, only a foot apart. Both were aghast, thoroughly confused. With red eyes and a face that registered the deepest pain and torment any of them had ever imagined, the thief again held up his hand at approximately waist level and examined it. He gingerly gripped his forefinger and toyed with it a bit, then more roughly pulled it back toward his thumb. The sound of metallic mechanisms gliding against one another was clearly audible. The relief that each of them felt for that fleeting moment when the man was unable to shoot himself with his own finger was gone. The thief almost laughed, more an expulsion of oxygen than a sigh of release and relief, or some combination thereof. He turned his head to look

back toward the cashier, gave a weak smile and returned his attention to the man before him.

"Jammed. Cheap Korean firearms." He paused and then moved the gun to beneath his chin, pointing toward the clouds above. "You don't know shit", he said to this man, then pulled the trigger and blew his whole face apart.

'Toner'

People say that the first step in conquering addiction is acknowledging it. Well that's a bunch of shit. Because I know I'm an addict, but I wouldn't dream of quitting. I'm not talking about heroin. I'm talking about printer toner.

The same people who speak of conquering addiction say something like, "Don't get high off your own supply". Funny, that's a bit hypocritical. I mean, how dare they! It just doesn't make good sense to try to get someone to break their drug habit and at the same time give them advice on running a successful drug dealing operation. What I'm getting at is that my 'supply' (and that of some close friends and associates) is probably what keeps me stuck in this rut. Toner is as much a part of my life as water. And wherever I turn, it always seems to be there.

I have found myself highly addicted to the stuff since the advent of the 'computer age'. Everyone has a computer, and with that usually comes a cheap printer. It's just part of the deal. Ever see that infomercial where you can buy this syringe and a bottle of toner to refill your cartridges rather than buy new ones? Granted, the quality of that ink is shit, but I won't lie. I keep 4 or 5 bottles in my dresser for when times get rough.

I don't know a damn thing about so called 'gateway' drugs. I've never sniffed coke or smoked a joint in my life. I was introduced to toner and that was that. Those other drugs must be a total waste of time. I just don't get it. Granted, some toner habits can cost you upwards of \$100 a day. Maybe I'd be safer smoking down a bag of reefer every afternoon instead. But for me, it's much too late. There's no turning back.

It started with my sister's boyfriend. One day when I was about 13, I heard them having sex. I crept up and peeked through the door. Even though it was my sister, I was fucking turned on. But I nearly screamed when I saw the black mark under Frank's left pectoral. I noticed his hands were black too. Not dirty black, like he had been digging in the mud. More like intentional black; he didn't have any other marks on his body, just the one under his left pectoral. I lost my erection, as well as my interest, at that point. I walked back downstairs, perplexed at the markings on the guy. If he was doing something dirty, wouldn't he clean up a bit before fucking my sister? If he was working with his shirt off, then wouldn't there be more dirt on him? And why was that dirt so black? It was black as the grim reaper's shadow. And it genuinely scared me. I had no idea what was in store. In just a few years, I would know all too well what those marking were. And I'd have some of my own, to boot.

I truly swept 180 degrees in just a few short months; between being shocked at the sight of the black hands and chest, to going full on myself and rubbing hardcore. That's what

we call it, rubbing. First, you take some low-grit sandpaper and rough up one of the areas I spoke about earlier. Once you crack the cartridge open, you dump the toner into any small container (real dead beats will mix in their own palms). You stir in a bit of ammonia -- just a few drops. Then you pour a little into your hand and rub it vigorously into either the small of your back or underneath either pectoral muscle. You can't shoot it or sniff it; you'd be poisoned and dead as a doornail in minutes. Some filthy junkies will go so far as to use their own piss instead of ammonia, since urine is mostly ammonia. I prefer to keep some semblance of class. That's not to say I've never used piss. And certainly not to say that I've never used that cheap, late night infomercial bottled toner. But a man's got to do what a man's got to do. Or should I say addict. Because that's what I am, an addict. But if you knew the effects that toner can have on the human nervous system, maybe you'd understand. People have been saying that same thing about heroin for a long, long time. But that's bullshit, because heroin only serves to make you forget. Toner....well toner makes you see BLUE.

Now I run a semi-profitable (albeit black market) toner business on the side. During the day, I work for the gas company. I've got contacts at HP, Lexmark, you name it. They're all on the take; they sell to me at cost out the back door. Most of them probably think I'm selling the stuff on eBay for legitimate reasons. Hey, authors and the like will pay top dollar for the stuff as long as I keep the price far enough below cost and sell in bulk. Of course I don't do that with my products, but the high price of toner (for people who waste the stuff in printers) provides a great cover. I know some of the assholes are probably just stealing the stuff, so they had ought to be selling it to me for a lot less. But what can I do? Doesn't matter anyway. After I mark the stuff up and move it on to the user level, I'm paid for my time and effort. If you think I've got an underground supply route working for me, you're right. But the number of people on that end of the operation is nothing compared to my customer base. Judges, traffic cops, school teachers....all rubbers. If you could take the shirts off of a crowd during any daytime downtown rush, you'd know. Then you'd believe me. But the best part of dealing is having the stuff around. Before I got involved in the business, I spent many nights, too many, struggling to stay afloat in a world of rushing water where nothing is blue.

Once you do your first rub of the day, your vision starts to blur. Then it goes all black for a few seconds before slowly being absorbed in the deepest azure anyone has ever known. At least as deep as a rubber has ever known, the rest of the world is in the dark. It's not like putting on blue-tinted sunglasses. This is a blue that's all expansive. You think blue. You speak blue. And it is the most beautiful thing you could ever imagine. Better than sex? You better believe it. Although fucking after rubbing is pretty good. Just ask Frank. Or my sister, she's a dirty rubber too. I've seen the two of them go through four or five cartridges in a night. Who am I kidding? I've rubbed with them myself many times.

I heard a story once about an electrician making adjustments on some live high-voltage equipment. He was working alone and got knocked off his ladder by a charge. He got up and walked back to where his co-workers were and all they did was stare at him with their eyes wide and mouths gaping. There was no blood because the spectacular heat had

cauterized the wound. The poor fella got shocked so hard that he had no idea. A rubber who's over indulged or gotten a hold of some bad shit often suffers the same fate. I don't mean losing an arm; I'm referring to the treatment they receive from fellow rubbers or whoever else happens to be around when they push it a little too far. Even the seasoned pro who's seen plenty of OD's is put into immediate shock by the impossible to miss warning signs. The subject first gets a mark that looks like they were rubbing on their face, left cheek and/or upper neck. Turns out some toner (or a dose of phony or 'cut' toner) contains iron filings or maybe some kind of magnesium. The toner is metabolized into these raw elements which then migrate to the top of the body, turning the user into some kind of antenna that transmits death for the unlucky or foolish. It's related to the natural magnetism and water content of the body but, in the end, those variables only control the amount of time until the rubbers' liver and gall bladder are liquefied and emitted from each bodily orifice. Within an hour or so of the mark's appearance on the face, the liver's gone and you bleed out. Like Ebola, death is fast, severe and by the same means. As the corpse lies on the ground, the burnt liver and gall bladder gas blows out the mouth and nose like a nightmare case of halitosis. It also blows out the asshole in an almost humorous post-mortem attack of farting. Best to stick with the HP products and leave the home brews in the basements and garages of the amateur chemist. And use good judgment as far as total daily consumption is concerned.

When you're down, painting the world so beautifully blue is the heaviest joy you could ever experience. Throw on a shirt (and a pair of gloves) and take a stroll down to the park. Watching the children play on the swings and such is a blue-tiful experience. The life of a rubber isn't so bad. Good thing traffic signals don't have a blue light or they'd be coming out of the woodwork. Your wife, your boss -- there are so many closet rubbers out there. Myself, I prefer a quiet night at home with a nice 40 year-old scotch and an HP cartridge or two. I don't need extraneous entertainment; watching the fire burn in my fireplace for hours is enough for me. I'll never quit. I'll die first; seeing a beautiful summer's blue sky through blue tinted eyes after a good rub is as close as we pathetic humans will ever get to the meaning of life.

'6-Pack'

"Hurry the fuck up and decide! It's already ten o'clock! Jesus!" Why did this have to happen every week? The same old shit, again and again. They could never decide. We were just trying to get drunk. We're not talking about brain surgery here.

Bill slouched in his chair, red and white caked around his mouth. The mess oozed onto his shirt. His sloppiness was disgusting, but his lack of self-awareness repulsed me more. I tried to bring honor to our weekend ritual. Yes, there was little honor in our regular arguing around the glass-doored refrigerator in the back of the Beverage Outlet. But, in my mind's eye, I tightened my pursed lips and held my head a little higher. I tried to block out the things that I didn't like about Bill and Ed, especially the way they held themselves while inebriated, and picture things as I would have liked them to be. Hell, they could be a little sloppy even if they hadn't been drinking. Take Bill's apartment for instance: garbage was everywhere. White and pea soup tinted containers littered the floor behind his favorite chair, the one in which he was currently sinking into like a man with his skeleton removed. It's almost humorous how he sometimes tried to clean up even as his innate filthiness shone through like the glimmer off the medical steel containers that 'Dave's' was sold in.

Bill always called dibs on the pus. I was never big on it; it wasn't part of my philosophy. You shouldn't waste time with bullshit during this short term on the astral plane. I always went for the blood: rich and satisfying, it seemed to quench a deeper, spiritual thirst. I never understood why 'Dave' -- or whoever was behind that corporate personality -- never sold the six-packs of bodily fluids in straight sixers. You had to get the variety pack. It was like those cereal snack packs I had read about, the ones sold in the 1980's. But once Bill stole those tall-boys of pus and left us with a couple 5-packs, there he sat -- shitfaced off the stuff, half asleep in his chair. Of course the stuff is mostly indigestible. Indigestion probably saves you from poisoning yourself, as the regurgitated fluid leaks out your mouth once you're sucked into that blissful unconscious state. The blood I drank was much easier on the gastrointestinal tract. I once read about the days when 'beer' was available; people used to mix different kinds together. That mixology inspired me to a great extent, the 'half-and-halves' and 'black and tans' of yesteryear. I liked to dilute the blood with just a hit of Ed's favorite, the urine. This yellow-green piss had been sterilized and filtered, nothing like the natural stuff. I would crack my can of plasma, and take a great swig. As the first drink of the night, it soothed me like white noise. With vacant space now in the container, I would pour in a few units of urine. It would mostly separate, as the blood was much thicker. You had to be careful not to drink too slowly or the blood would coagulate at the bottom and be wasted. I must admit that although I chastise Bill for stealing the pus, I almost regularly lift the blood containers from the six-packs, weekend after weekend.

Between my blood, Bill's pus and Ed's urine there were three remaining flavors. One I was OK with, the other two I was not. The one I despised (but Ed was slightly partial to, thankfully) was the ejaculate. One funny story that got told every Saturday night was how drinking sperm was considered 'gay' before the dawn of asexuality. I later learned that this was a reference to sexual orientation. It's quite humorous now, being that women were long ago eliminated from this astral plane. I had no problem with the taste of the stuff, but the consistency left much to be desired. Most often, when the ejaculate was all that was left, I would use the mucous (2nd of three remaining flavors) as a 'chaser': another antiquated reference to years long passed when drinkers would follow one drink with another. Either to kill the bad taste (but beneficial potency) or just as an excuse to drink more, faster. The mucous turned really gross when an open container was left out too long. It hardened and emitted an interesting yet extremely strong odor.

The final can in 'Dave's Six-Pack of Bodily Fluids' was saliva. Now this shit none of us could stomach. There were always a few cans rusting in Bill's fridge, leftovers from nights when we all either had our fill or weren't desperate enough to chug the vile stuff. Saliva was the drink of bums and dirtbags, transients and the penniless. 'Dave's' made the stuff in 62 unit jugs as well; it was the only flavor they sold separately. It had ought to be illegal, how they targeted the poor and addicted. It was, at the very least, unethical.

I always dreamt of a super team of drinkers. I was never any good at programming. For that, I got made fun of a lot. The only thing I was ever really excited about was kicking back a few talls of plasma or urine. Now if I could just find another friend who liked the saliva. Then we wouldn't have any wasted material! No leftovers to corrode in Bill's repulsive icebox. I would be the blood man -- I could handle it. I just know that if Bill had some reason to drink (other than the immense growth in his bladder and the pain pus relieved), we could clean him up a bit and get him to consume that pus competitively. Ed was all business from the get-go. He drank urine like it was his life force. Then we'd only need Mr. X -- a saliva chugging machine. And I don't mean some deadbeat saliva drinker who hides in the shadows of the alley behind the Beverage Outlet, begging for a few credits to get his daily 62'er of spit. I need someone like me, someone who tips back their fluids with honor. With dignity. Fine, I'll come clean. I've drank a can or two of blood before a stressful day at the silicon foundry. That's not drinking with dignity, but I'm no saliva-soaked scumbag. I'm past that stage in my existence. I'm beyond and above it. But one day I'll find Mr. X. And I'll complete the dream team. I just know we can do it.

'Burn'

The lighting is dim and the air is stagnant. Your workspace is clean and orderly. All your tools are laid out neatly, within arm's reach and organized by size and shape.

“Sculpt.”

You feel the hate rise. Stomach acid or some other burning ether boils within you and forces itself out. You relieve yourself on the floor. Your vision is blurred and you grasp the table for support and also as a reminder of the reality around you.

“Now.”

You power up the turntable and heater. Your body recites these tasks as if they were involuntary -- like breathing. If only breathing weren't such a task, such a forced and worthless reminder of the reality around you....

Hacking through bone and sinew, peeling back skin, you grip the flesh in your fist. It makes an almost comical sound when you squeeze it. Comedic in a world far from your own. You are here to work.

A moral discussion ensues. One side of you argues for the religious mantra you spewed for years, the other for terrible and horrific death in the name of art. All the while, gears whir inside your head and draw the limbs of your body through the reality around you. The limbs contort the stack of flesh on the turntable. As you shape it, you try to mold it into something besides what it is: a reminder of the reality around you.

“Burn yourself. Torch away the nothingness until something remains; until something is created.”

You stumble from your squatting position around the semi-sculpture and you stop yourself inches from the 'thing' -- the mass before you. The moral discussion is now moot.

The hatred drives you. You rip and tear, caress and mold the flesh into a statue. It takes the form of the acid that torments you. Then, as you fuss with its aesthetics, it takes on another form. It looks you deep inside. Its x-ray vision gives your soul a once over. The acid sees through the living sculpture and burns you as well as the dormant matter you sculpt.

“Create from the loss. Build from all that remains. Destroy the paradox that constrains you.”

Faster now...you struggle to keep up with the tape loop that plays again and again:

“Burn. Burn. Burn.”

You feel the acid working against you but for the first time, you feel something else: a new sentient being within that of another; within that which is not.

“Burn. Burn. Burn.”

You are sculpting with flesh. The dead flesh lives again through your distortion of what was once art. Hatred fuels the fire that burns your art and then burns yourself. You are burning alive even as you create. Your breathing is labored now and you are reminded of the forced, sickening reality that surrounds you.

You collapse. Your work is complete. You have fallen victim to spiritual exhaustion but wonder if, and almost hope that, something else has overtaken you. Forced to kill and kill again, the acid takes a leave of absence from its housing. “I want to burn” you say as the acid spills from the bubbling dead flesh that splatters and stains your naked body.

You will burn. You are burning.

As I step into your purgatory, I hack and cut deeply into your burnt, crispy flesh. I start the heater and the turntable and the tables are turned. You are gone.

“You are gone.”

Burnt.

SATAN 165



**I hate the essence of you
Your pain puts hurt in every bone in my body
Asleep each night
Awake each morning with eyes wide**

**Another day brings a new acquaintance
An everyday ritual
Rest for a moment beneath this tree
Take the time to get your bearings**

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