



A Night with Baby Woodrose:

"Remember what the dormouse said. Feed your head"

White Rabbit - Jefferson Airplane

Ah yes Grace, I do indeed remember what the dormouse said, how could any of us forget? This song is so intrinsically a part of our culture, as is *Alice in Wonderland* itself. Now, Grace wrote this song when she was supposedly high on LSD, and I suppose that much is clear. It's a playful song that reflects *Lewis Carrol's* infamous book like no other - A book that I admit is one of my favourites. It has a delightful quote that has stuck with me for most of my existence in this mortal coil that has supported in me in times of feeling rather lost; "If you don't know where you're going, then all paths can take you there". I've walked many paths and stumbled into all kinds of trouble, leading me to full out on a limb, but this quote has always gotten me right back on track.

I will state now for the record before I get into this long form piece of gibberish, that I am not a pro drugs man... never have been and I know many will be surprised by this notion considering the content of my work as well as my desire to cover such topics.

"Is S. P. Koutsoumanis Anti-Drugs?"

No, my dear... that isn't quite what I said. I stated that I am not *pro* drugs. That doesn't necessarily mean that I am diametrically in opposition to them. I am very much a simply say *why* to drugs. Similar I suppose to such writers/ scholars like Dr. Suzi Gage and her excellent book and podcast aptly titled: *Say Why to Drugs*. It's an excellent listen and or read, with insights into what the drugs are made up of on a

chemical and molecular level, how they work/ affect the body and as well as citing any such benefits and or risks - also why we bother to take them in the first place. The latter of these insights however, I plan to give you a window into here, whilst I sip on an ice filled glass, boasting the smooth and rich taste of *Jim Beam Black Cherry*, whilst I sit in this cabin deep in the heart of The New Forest. It is the day of our Lord, December the 2nd 2024 - The day after I saw in my 35th year, with my beautiful wife, and ever cute little pup Marceline The Vampire Queen - Marcie for short of course. A real terror of a Maltese really... She can have her moments of chasing and nipping at your ankles, but aside from the Ant like nibble she'll inflict, it's very much like being tripped up and set upon by a cumulus cloud that has descended far below its usual hanging place in the sky.

Right, that's enough of setting the scene of where I sit whilst I type this. Let's get into the meat and potatoes of this thing...

Why do we do drugs? There are many explanations, and I can confirm that if you read up on what Suzi Gage has to offer, she'll give you the real goods on this - better than what I can offer. This of course all comes from a qualified and scientific perspective of course, so lots of real egghead stuff, but let's keep it simple for the purpose of this small dive into one of my personal experiences on a hallucinogenic - it is essential further reading, however, so please do check it out.

The *National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)* describes the reasons people do drugs as follows:

'They want to feel good, stop feeling bad, or perform better in school or work, or they are curious because others are doing it, and they want to fit in.'

How does this sound to all of you? I can't argue with such an assessment, as these are of course put forth by the experts and I agree with all of it - we must remember though, that this assessment is a definition of qualified experts in the field of drug abuse, which in my opinion means we're looking at a particular demographic/ type of person taking drugs, who

have come to a certain point in their life, where they have had too much of potentially a good thing. They are however an institution that is set up and run by the United States Government and last I checked in this fine old year; they aren't looking so hot as of late. Not to mention that most government bodies are tied directly into the current administrations agendas, which are generally anti-drug. With the current administration, it's almost as though the Democrat's and more Liberal politicians have ushered in a world gone mad with wokeism. Not that I don't have a level of wokeness about me, as this upcoming tale will prove... but I am fearful we now have tipped the scale too far and we are reaching an enablement of insanity, be it temporary or permanent to validate how someone is feeling, rather than whether they should or should not get help for what it is they see in themselves. Indeed, there is a lot to unpack in that last statement, but we'll hit that another time, but I know for sure right now, that if most people in the US sat down and smoked a joint once in a while with a medium potency of THC, we may see a return to the times of the American Dream... not today I suppose... not whilst Mr. Cheese Puff glow is in power... anyway...

The *point* I have slightly derailed from, is I find that this statement from the *NIDA* is an oversimplification and they're forgetting one thing... one key important element that cannot be ignored or dismissed. Sometimes - or even most times - people's lives are just shit. So shit in fact, that they fall into drugs to escape away from what they're currently having to feel they are enduring. Those lost little souls who believe life is an everlasting experience of things that happen to you rather than *for* you. I must admit now that I was one of those people. Believing that I was some whisp of a star, trapped in the frail small husk of a helpless little boy, with life's transgression just steam rolling over him constantly. Taking beatdown after beatdown. Whether it was whilst I was savagely bullied at school (at least until I cracked one of their skulls in... ho ho! That took them by surprise, let me tell you... not proud of it though of course) or dealing with bullies on nights out who thought it appropriate to crack a bottle over my head following a minor disagreement - and it really was minor. The fact is life to me as a youth was something to escape. Suicide was thought of often, but then it was the drugs that found me instead of a sharp blade to the wrist and

I found these were much more of a safer place to explore, with an almost semi guaranteed outcome, rather than a definite one that comes from throwing yourself off a multi-story car park (this being the only real solution I could come up with, however I was far too chicken shit to jump and had a pang that I may just regret my decision mid plummet, which I felt would be a horrible last thought to have before I expired on the footway) - that and I suppose locating firearms in the UK is tough.

The drugs I would take provided an escape and sometimes something fantastical to tell for years to come. Shared experiences of the impossible and improbable with those who were also not afraid to express themselves in a new wave of counterculture, looking to escape into space for just a little while. My first experience with psychedelics was when I was only a sixteen-year-old, snot faced, long haired kid with a little tuft of hair on his chin, crafted into a squared goatee despite being clean shaven and smooth across the rest of my face - at this time it was rare I got ID'd and since the full beard came in, I haven't been ID'd since I was 18.

It was the night of our school prom just before we finished term and left for the last time, to qualify ourselves and begin our lives in the "real world". A friend of mine had confessed he'd started taking Magic Mushrooms and that his mum had regularly been selling them at Blackbush Market - One of the UK's largest and it was held on a small airfield in the town of the same name, just a few miles away from the town of my adolescence. Some people get shocked to know I've done Magic Mushrooms, or not... it depends on who you talk to. But you have to remember that back in 2006 the changes had only recently come into effect to ban and make these little fungi illegal in July of the prior year. This didn't stop anyone selling them for quite some time and it used to be an under the table discussion at the market stalls. You wouldn't display them, but when consumers would stop by and see the king size papers, glass and or plastic smoking pipes, bongs and the rainbow of grinders, they knew they were potentially dealing with a holder of these psilocybin holding little treats.

"Shit... I am not sure about these man..." I started, showing my concern to his opened-out palm holding the small, dried articles. "What if I lose my mind on this shit? I mean, I've

only really smoked weed up until this point... I am not sure I am ready to start fucking with trippy shit like this..."

Lewis looked at me, smiling a big grin, like that of the Cheshire cat... He paused for a moment, holding it there and I half expected at this point for him to say something witty, then disappear, leaving nothing else behind other than his shit eating grin, before that would fade too into nothingness...

"Dude don't worry about it... Remember, my mum has been selling these for years... you just don't take too many. Start slow and just have half of one... or maybe a whole one... but no more? Besides, I am here looking out for you man... We'll have a great time" Dr Suzi Gage always in her books talked about set and setting - be in a good mood and be in good company. Especially when it comes to psychedelics.

Lewis always had a way of convincing me all would be well, and I trusted him with my life... we'd seen some crazy shit already in school, so no reason to let that trust fade now...

"I don't know... My mum had some friends that were real psychedelic and acid freaks when she was younger... one of them didn't last too long on this kinda shit..." I warned.

"Why? What happened to them?"

"Fucker ate a whole sheet of acid, started tripping that he was *devolving* or something... becoming less human. Next thing he's screaming that his arms have disappeared. Says he felt them withdraw back into his body..."

"That doesn't sound that bad... especially if he ate a whole fucking sheet..." Lewis interrupted.

"Hang on, I haven't finished... next he started thrashing on the car park floor. You know, the multi-story over in Aldershot?" Lewis nodded...

"Well, he was screaming and doing this weird kind of slow outstretching of his arms crowing about how he was sprouting wings now in the place they used to be..."

Lewis laughed and pointed out the poetry of my use of the word 'crowing'. I smiled that he noticed my fun placement.

"So... what the fuck happened next man? Finish the story!" he exclaimed, as I swallowed down before delivering the final twist.

"He threw himself off the top of the car park, a full 5 stories up and plummeted to his death flapping his arms as he went, screeching 'I can fly, I can fly' gleefully..."

Silence now... but only for a moment before Lewis, perky and seeing the silver lining as always, concluded his assessment of the ordeal.

"Well... that sucks and all but come on man... that was a *whole* sheet of acid... no wonder he lost his mind like that. It probably made his brain bleed to the point that he had a fucking aneurism... I think with that in mind, it's nice he went out believing he was flying. He probably crossed over to the other side and when everyone asked him what happened... he probably just assumed he must've flown into a plane or a sheet of clean glass on a skyscraper or some shit... He went out doing something dumb, but had fun doing it... is that so bad? I mean... imagine if he got to the other side and still had the wings? That would be righteous..."

I scoffed at him.

"Dude... he fucking died! for absolutely fuck all! Infinite nothingness potentially and no place on this plane of existence because he thought he could fucking fly... even birds have the sense to start from the ground!" I was getting furious now. This peer pressure wasn't working, so he'd have to change tactic.

"Okay man, but that's not true... if he was a baby bird, they usually just have to drop from the nest... fall or fly baby, Darwinism at its finest... they either soar or they are no more... perhaps he was a baby bird and no longer fit enough to survive? Shit, it happens... it's sad and I get why this bothers you, but come on man - it's all about set and setting... let's get you in a positive mood, then hit this prom buzzing with all the people we like, hit some parties and let's have fun..."

He gestured with the mushroom again. I declined.

This refusal only lasted for so long, however. Just before we hit the prom after parties, we'd already smoked two joints - one of which with a teacher after he caught us and was so disgusted and the pitiful joint a friend of ours had attempted to roll, that he thought it right to reroll it, take his rollers rights and then tell us to stop smoking this stupid shit and focus on getting a life... - we also drunk plenty of

Jack Daniels from our hip flasks. I felt buzzed. On cloud nine. Life was happening. Times were changing and I felt for the better. We were all about to head into a prime state of existence... vibrating with ideas of grandeur, ambition and positivity. My set was right, now I just needed the right setting. The after party was amazing and all those that made school enjoyable were there. The parents had ordered in a ton of pizzas from a local fast-food chain to boot whilst being totally cool with us helping ourselves to beers. Lewis took out his small plastic baggy, removing a couple of mushrooms and delicately placed them on top of his pizza - a fixed and focused gaze on the pizza like a laser beam - before taking a big bite, being careful not to drop any of the toppings on the conservatory floor.

"Alright, fuck it," I began, staring intently at his pizza and the psychedelic little fungi's ... "give me a couple..."

The Cheshire smile returned as he continued to wolf down his pizza and handed me the baggy. I removed two of the smaller mushrooms I could find.

I lay the dried little suckers on the tip of my pepperoni pizza and bit down, chewing the earthy aroma into the cheese, tomato and spiced sausage. There was about a 20 minute delay, where I just felt nothing but the weed and beers. Dancing to the rhythms of music I would never normally care for, with people I cared everything for...

Suddenly, all the lights and those around me were defined in such striking detail. The trip was exemplary and possibly the best result you could ask of a first time on a psychedelic. I felt warm, fuzzy and lighter than usual. The music playing was the *Red Hot Chili Peppers - The Zephyr Song* and the lights were swirling around us now, enrapturing us in a time of our youths twilight. Lewis managed somehow to my amazement reached into the empty space in front of me and screamed out as he took a firm grip on something almost unseen, "Look, I caught it...". Looking closely at his cupped hand, it appeared that he was somehow holding a delicate and softly glowing green effervescent yet completely see through orb.

"How the fuck?!" I shouted across the music in amazement... I was astounded. One because he had somehow managed to harness the light, and two that I was able to witness it. I scanned the room, and no one around seemed to take any notice of us.

Those that did, were laughing joyously as they were just as fucked up as we were - quite possibly on the same mushrooms that Lewis had shared with me... Teenagers without a care in the world. Our lives at school were ending as were the rules that came with it. This was our time now. Tinder's ready to spark and light fires that would be seen in the future and the past - fires that were ready to burn down the establishments we felt shackled by. At this point in time, everything and anything felt possible.

"You should eat it!" I bellowed at him, making eye contact, witnessing only dark circles in the centre of his sclera. The pupil fully expanded. He smirked, bounced his eyebrows up and down before opening wide and taking a big old bite of the light, with it illuminating the inside of his maw as he did so. Disco mastication. I swear, I could see it glowing through his throat as he swallowed down, before beaming a childish grin.

"Apple! Like... apple sours! It's delicious man... you've gotta try it!" he leaned forwards, cupping the orb in both his hands delicately just below my chin, as if he were an ancient Egyptian, about to make an offering. Even his head was bowed. I bit down and he was right, it did taste like sour apple. The tastiest Granny Smith I would never really eat. We spent the next 2 hours, running around every space we could that had glowing lights, plucking the different flavours out of the air, chowing down and letting out hysterical giggles proving we were still very much school children - but having their first time being let free with open credit at a pick and mix in Woolworths. Red was cherry - to me at least as Lewis was convinced it was Strawberry... we still to this day disagree on this. Green remained apple, yellow was lemon and anything purple tasted like grape soda - the kind you get in the US but now can get in the UK and the best kind is indisputably made by *Fanta*.

As you can see, the night was glorious. An affirmation of all that was right and truly well in the world. There were no nasties, no big bads and no threats - such as those of your mothers ex-husband to steal your sister away in the dead of night, so you had to help her barricade all the doors before bed. Bar fights weren't a thing yet and the forever war that had kicked off in the middle east - for reasons related to the worst terrorist attack on US soil back in September 11th 2001 -

seemed to be so far away from anything that was happening to us. It was all happening simply over *there* and we were so far out from wherever *there* was. The drug had taken away the threat of the existential. In fact, the existential was so unthreatening, that we spent the last portion of the night vehemently debating topics that would otherwise make someone sober up quick and run for the hills, like abortion rights, depression - both the financial and chemical kind - among other topics, our dispositions no longer mattered. Nay merely didn't exist anymore. We were at one with the universe and had become demi-gods that had the capability of eating light, that washed through us, burning out any type of negativity. Purifying our souls from the taints they had already suffered from the ever closing in threats of adulthood.

As you can imagine, once you have an escape from reality as fun and bombastic as this, you can't help but want to go back for more... thus is the curse of the drug culture and its people. We want for very little in life, just to feel better about it all, to continue that good thing... but the sadness is, is that we play too hard and for too long, becoming burned out and hollow shells of our former selves, doomed to forever keep chasing that initial high. I've lost many friends this way of course over the years, but when you're young, you fall into naivety and believe it will never happen to you, even if you did read *A Scanner Darkly* about 6 times in college...

Final lines of Phillip K. Dicks Epilogue - A Scanner Darkly:

To Gaylene deceased

To Ray deceased

To Francy permanent psychosis

To Kathy permanent brain damage

To Jim deceased

To Val massive permanent brain damage

To Nancy permanent psychosis

To Joanne permanent brain damage

To Maren deceased

To Nick deceased

To Terry deceased

To Dennis deceased

to Phil permanent pancreatic damage

To Sue permanent vascular damage

To Jerri permanent psychosis and vascular damage

...and so forth

In Memoriam. These were comrades whom I had; there are no better. They remain in my mind, and the enemy will never be forgiven. The 'enemy' was their mistake in playing. Let them all play again, in some other way, and let them be happy.

You'd think reading something like this several times, despite the most exhilarating time I had with my first time getting into bed with Psilocybin, that I'd thank my lucky stars I didn't start flapping my wings and dive off of a multi-story... in fact, at one point I was so convinced that the light feeling I had obtained from the mushrooms, would potentially change my molecular and biological structure resulting in me becoming super human and impermeable to pain. At one point I even pondered if I could now walk in front of one of the moving trains that ran behind the back of house party - I just wanted to test if I truly now was as gaseous as I believed myself to be... As you can see, I managed to come to my senses before taking a permanent trip over to the other side. I was blissfully ignorant to any dangers, despite the lectures from my mum or any other authority figure that this way of life was dangerous... I knew what I was doing, and I wasn't going to quit.

A year later of regular mushroom dosing and feeling pretty well off because of it. That said I was also taking other drugs and starting to get into heavier and more frequent use of cocaine, whilst still regularly smoking weed. Blunts were introduced and the builds of these were getting larger, longer

and fuller of the most potent of high grades we could get our hands on - I do believe the excessive weed and coke use were starting to build a level of paranoia in me that wasn't going to end well, leading me to get gripped by the *fear*. Despite this, I continued on... finding my escapes wherever and whenever I could grasp then, but I hadn't quite fallen into a space of doing anything I couldn't afford or taking them just for the sake of it.

That first tale is an important one to contextualise and aid understanding of the particular positives that can come out of a drug experience, adding further support to my reason as to the *why* in the transaction is so important. Now, we can continue into the reasons that have made me less pro than before, leading me to protest caution to anyone that wishes to experiment as I did.

It was the summer of 2007, I'd dropped out of college, was working part time at a stationary store - which at the time with my mums support was enough for me to get by, however she and my stepfather were insistent I move to full time, which was the plan, however the stationary store had no hours available, so part time working remained, with my downtime devoted to getting drunk and stoned. I also focused my energy on of course playing guitar in my now failing band, so I was also spinning turntables at the time in the odd local club to make the odd buck. Life had started to hit hard since that hopeful night of prom, where anything felt possible, and the future was ours... I was in a rut... had a relationship that I was confident wouldn't last as the women I was with kept asking over and over if I was cheating, which I certainly wasn't. We all know how that story goes... Not long after her and I had parted ways, I started working at a pub, hated the place and quit giving them a mighty middle finger with the way they spoke to their employees, including me. Now I was single, unemployed and low...

It had been a while since I'd really hit a psychedelic and the mushrooms were hard to come by in that time of year, especially now that everyone was too averse to selling a class A drug that was hard to gather, a pain to dry and have almost zero appeal to the drug culture of that year. The UK at this time in the noughties was all about cannabis or cocaine - the latter of course being classified as a class A drug for years

by this point, but the appetite was there, so it was high risk for high reward, whereas shrooms are very much a high risk and low reward scenario in terms of capital gain... the only high reward goes to the person ingesting it. It had been too long I felt since my last trip and in lieu of it was heavy nights of cocaine snorting, with loud drum and bass playing through speakers to local bars and clubs, whilst then smoking a joint to bring my blood pressure down and stop myself acting scary for the locals. By this point I'd had at least 3 women I knew well, describe me as a 'lunatic' when I am in the depths of a binge. "Do you realise that when you're high, you're really scary?" - then the ketamine experiments started... I was spiralling but just about managed to pull myself out of the K hole and get back to just drinking and smoking.

It was a cool night on a Thursday in July, with the sun only a couple of hours away from setting. The resident dealer - or at least one of the local dealers - had come down to the skatepark. This guy was always a bit of a headcase. With slick back oiled medium length hair, exposing a large forehead, beady little eyes, a pointed and sharp tipped nose with sunken eye sockets, sitting framed by an arguably handsome and strong jaw line - he wasn't the worst looking of lads, but he was never going to attract a mate with his demeanour however - sporadic body language with arms always twirling up to the heavens as he stared out into nothingness with a vacant look. Most of us always described his candour like Johnny Depp in both *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* - He had on numerous occasions confessed to being a huge fan of both of these films, with the author of the former leaving a real impression on him when it came to using a cigarette holder - which at this point was hanging out of his mouth with a lit *Marlboro* red. He always looked well presented, despite the fact his fashion sense was, well... it's hard to describe but it was simply *off*. He would wear a bright coloured Hawaiian or other floral-patterned shirt, with the collar popped, under a dark navy blazer, with the sleeves rolled up. The shirt would be tucked into the brightest of blue *Levi* jeans, that were ripped at both knees, which were held up by a belt adorned with a large silver buckle, that had a *Super Mario Mushroom* at it's centre. To top it all off, he wore the dirtiest and almost falling apart *Converse All Stars* hi-tops. Despite his overall look, which takes some fucking time to put into writing, he was pretty well liked and

respected. Especially when it came to drugs - especially the psychedelics... he had been my mushroom supplier for some time now and we'd had some weird but pleasant nights together. Yet, his coffers were dry of those delectable little Liberty Caps.

"What's happening people?" he swayed as he approached me and a few others that hardly knew each other at the skate park - but knew enough of each other to vibe - whilst attempting to pop ollies and ride the ramps.

"Nothing much..." I replied, eyeing him up and down as he started to sway a bit...

"You all good Jimmy?" I asked.

"Yeah, all good matey... I am just starting to get a little twisted on this fine Thursday afternoon... would you like to partake of some psychedelic delights my friend?"

"Well shit... depends on what you've got... I thought the shrooms were all gone now?"

"Ah yes, but I have another flora for you to try... if you're daring enough..."

I eyed the rest of the individuals at the park... they weren't heavily into the psychedelic scene. Hell, at this point I am sure people's opinion of me was already that I was some weird, spaced-out acid freak, that liked nothing more than tripping my nut off and having all kinds of weird left field experiences... especially seeing as I'd been found asleep many mornings on the benches around the park. I always looked well put together, spoke eloquently and skated hard - albeit terribly - but people just didn't understand these types of drugs anymore... it was all about the street stuff and acting like you're an extra in *Kidulthood* despite living nowhere near London's tough streets and estates.

"Fuck it... I am down... what have you got on offer man? This week has been boring as shit... I need to get off world for at least a couple of hours"

It was true. The last couple of days had been a drag, including having some real bust ups at home due to my current unemployment status. My moods were up and down, but at this point mostly in the lower position. This is probably what compelled me to be so into the idea of whatever it was Jimmy may have to offer.

He held out his hand and opened it out to reveal in his palm small seeds, some dark brown in colour, whilst others were of a tan complexion.

"What the fuck are those?" I inquire.

"These are Hawaiian Baby Woodrose seeds... They're totally legal, but basically just a natural form of acid... you just eat a few, and then you'll start tripping man..."

I stared down at the small little seeds, fixated on them, mesmerized by the speckled look of them.

"Sounds simple enough... how many do you need to take to feel something?"

"I've found 8 does the trick... Well, at least I did four at first and felt nothing, so took four more, but I didn't swallow them for a while. Just kept chewing them up and then holding them in my cheek... apparently that transfers over the acid quicker, before you swallow down and have the slow release after".

Jimmy had stated he only wanted £10 for 10 seeds, which considering the description, I felt it rather reasonable and was more than happy to acquiesce to such a meagre asking price - well, as it would seem at the time, the economy was much different back then. Freddo chocolate bars I remember were still 15p and we all thought that was already such a hike from the 5p they were at the turn of the new century. At least with 10 seeds I'd have two more than the 8 he had taken. If the 8 doesn't hit me the way I want it to, I still have two more to at least guarantee some sparks to fly about my cranium.

I slipped a crisp note over to Jimmy and took the 10 seeds from him, hastily chucking 8 of the little buggers straight in my mouth and began chewing at least four of them, whilst tucking the other four in my gumline. The taste was something foul. Although it was only a small amount of seeds, they had a dense earthy bitterness that was displeasing... they didn't exactly make your mouth dry, but they certainly had no moisture to them in spite of the fragrant aroma they gave off that battered the back of my throat - almost like eating a coconut from the nether. My gums felt a little tingly, but at this point I believed it to be so long since I'd had any kind of hit from a psychedelic, that I was just imagining it - attempts to manifest a trip. Plus, I suppose this was the

summer of cocaine for me, so anything hitting the gums sent signals up my spine to say, "he's at it again", despite the fact I may not have been. It was a time of fiendish antics and frivolity, so it was no wonder my neurons were starting to misfire in incremental responses to the slightest stimuli. Despite the challenges I was desperate to escape from, we were hell raisers, basking in the sun's bountiful rays on decent drugs, smoking high grade Kush, whilst dealing to our friends. We had enough money for pleasantries.

I was unaware what Baby Woodrose was, its makeup, risks or affects as I was with other drugs and despite having the release of the new Apply iPhone, none of us had access to it, so I had done zero research into this drug like I had now become accustomed to.

The facts I now have on Baby Woodrose is that the chemical compound released is d-lysergic acid amide (LSA) which is similar in its chemical makeup as LSD. Most promote it as being a "natural" LSD, but they tend to oversell it - or at least this is what experts believe. The seeds have been used for many years in religious ceremonies in both Hawaii and parts of South America to evoke visions as part of sacred rites of passage. We certainly weren't doing that of course, but I had a feeling after almost an hour of waiting and deciding to eat the last two seeds, that something was on the periphery, ready to cause carnage but still had my doubts I'd reach any kind of high that I had before... I just felt glum... frustrated... disappointed and overall drained.

ZAP! Suddenly the drug takes hold, and I started to feel a distortion expelling up and through me, splintering and causing ripples in my vision. The ground around me started to convalesce as if I could see the Earth stretching and the sun appeared to burn brighter. My hearing had a certain crispness to it, like that of when you come up from air in a pool, and the water rushes out of the canals, exposing the ear drum to the cacophony of audio in the leisure centre - a piercing and deafening screech in my hearing now. This then settled off, leaving me to feel comfortably warm, beginning to settle into and feel at peace with my surroundings; one with it. However, this peace was about to be short lived as the drugs got their talons into Jimmy.

"Holy fuck, they're trying to bite me..." Jimmy screamed, curdling the words as they came out, as if they were blocked

by vomit sat in the back of his throat. Choaking on the bile that had risen with fear from deep within.

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

"The fucking grass... look at it... little fuckers are trying to bite me..."

I looked at the grass and saw it flowing in the wind, non-suspect and content at just being.

"Get a hold of yourself... there's nothing there... can't you see it's just the hairs of mother earth; we're on her back now... she's just breathing... We should just breathe with her Jimmy..."

He squealed and jumped onto my back. I spun round, lifting my hands up to meet his that were firmly around my neck now as he held on for dear life... I rounded and flung him to the ground, before clapping him hard with both hands on the ears...

"Get the fuck off me you swine... you've lost it..."

As he fell back down to the floor, he convulsed and began to spasm as though he had hit electrified water.

"Ahhhhhhh!!!! They're killing me..." I stared down at him with utter bemusement...

I felt no sympathy. I felt like he deserved to be down there with whatever it was he was seeing. Let it tear him to shreds for a while, then I'll check him over for bites and take pictures, show them to him so he can see it's all in his head... but... wait... what the fuck is that. I peer down and can see that the grass now has no face... yet, it has something. A flat yet personable look about it. I see one blade is looking up at me as I get closer, then they all start to turn to me, fixing me with an eyeless gaze...

"What the fuck..."

I put my finger forwards, fascinated by how wherever I trace my fingers, the grass comes to meet it and caress it, as if each blade now has sentience and is aware of me. For a moment or two, I brush my finger through, feeling the soft and pleasant kiss of nature on my skin, completely distracted from the bellows coming out of Jimmy, who is still dying from some vicious beast or multiple on the floor... The world around me had fallen away, leaving me in this moment with mother earth.

"Ouch!" I pull back my finger swiftly, which is now racked with a sharp and piercing pain, like that of when I was at a friend's house, and their pet rat sunk its teeth into my flesh...

"Something bit me!" I screamed... pulling my finger away from the grass, seeing blood dripping from the tip...

Jimmy, now jumping out of his fit, climbs onto the bench we were sitting on...

"I told you! The fucking grass has teeth, we can't be down there... we have to get out of here... do you not see how much I have been bitten?! I am covered"

He was right, I looked at him and he was covered in bites now, blood pouring out of them too. He looked a real mess of a man. I looked back down at the ground, fearful of what I would see, and to my horror, the soft blades now in the place of the blank faces had little mouths, open and loaded with serrated teeth, gnashing at my boots, starting to eat through the tanned leather...

"Holy fuck! The grass... it's goddam alive man... it's eating through my fucking boots..." I jumped up onto the bench with him...

"I know... look what happened to my shoes..." I looked down at his converse and they were in shreds, however there was enough sole to continue to maintain some protection to the sole of his feet, but only barely...

"Jimmy, we need to get the fuck out of this field man... but I can't see the goddam end to it! Was it always this long?" I am starting to panic now... I feel my heart rate increase as the vital muscle in my chest pounds against my rib cage... I was so conscious that now it was just us... nothing else around. The skies had gone grey but were clear only moments ago... no one else was around and the skatepark as well as surrounding buildings were gone. All that was left, was the grass, with its blood-soaked teeth, rustling, beckoning and pleading for it to rip us to ribbons... a field spread out far and wide as the eye could see.

"Fuck... I'm sorry Jimmy..."

"You almost killed me!" he cried, water streaming down his face as I lay my hand on his shoulder to comfort him on our

bench raft, floating aimlessly surrounded by the evil things happening all around us...

"I know, I'm sorry I doubted you... they hid from me at first... pretended to be my friend... I'll get us out of here man... quick, give me your shoes..."

"What?"

"Your shoes man... you're a size 11 same as me, but they have a bit more give where the material on top has opened up too much, they'll fall off if you run... *but* I am thinking with that extra sole lashed to my boot, I can have enough protection to walk us out of this... it's not like we have any other choice here... come on... I'll get us out!"

Jimmy understood now, his forlorn face stretched and jagged with woe. He nods in agreement that this is the only way. It's now or never. Either he gives me these shoes, or we're about to be eaten from the feet up as we try to escape.

Disembowelled by little jagged maws that spit chlorophyll. He wrenches off what's left of his converse, and I rip the remaining outer edges off of them to create space to fit my boots in, whilst wrapping the laces round, tying them tight...

"Right... I think I'm good... Come on, quick...", I jump down off the bench and hear the crunching of the little demons beneath me, "Get the fuck on man..." I throw my arm up in the air and gesture to my back. Jimmy jumps on, wrapping his legs around tightly and holding with a firm grip the top of my arms and shoulders, head rested like that of a child's on my back, crying just the same...

"Okay... let's go!" I begin a run across the field and head for the only house I can see on the horizon... to what I hope would be safety...

I recall the rest of the evening as very much that of a graphic horror laden blur. The likes I do have the odd flashback of to this day if I am to drink a bit too much or have a manic episode due to my post-traumatic stress disorder. Visions of me in my childhood bedroom, the dark curtains pulled whilst the light had turned to that of crimson and bathed everything around me in red, which at the time I remember believing was due to the blood now pouring out of the pores of the walls, as they expanded outwardly and withdrew

back, with the sound of an old man wheezing as it dawned on me, that the house I was in, was in fact a giant beast that had swallowed me and I was slowly being digested, with the lungs above me encroaching on and rattling my new tomb of flesh. It was a nightmare of a time on psychedelics and something I had worried about since telling Lewis that story of the man who believed he could fly. A cautionary tale long forgotten, whilst I chased that initial high and buzz of the house party after prom...

Escapism is a funny concept. Many have been tricked into believing that psychedelic drugs can be the answer, and considering earlier episodes I had experienced with mushrooms, I felt there was no better way than to enhance reality, than with this type of article. What I'd failed to realise is that the trick is in playing, when you are in no mood to play... Dr. Suzi Gage had it right, it's all about *set* and *setting*. Two things that this day with Jimmy had gone completely sideways and I'd not even stopped myself to consider. I was in no mood, my set completely wrong for dangerous drugs and the setting was a field next to a skatepark, with no real safety in place or decent people to support us. Hell, I remember the videos and stories that came from this. People thought it was both part hilarious and part terrifying, bearing witness to two teenagers twisted on acid and screaming about the grass coming alive to eat them.

Why not? I'd be laughing too and filming a spectacle like that... but I suppose it would come to a point where I couldn't avoid the conscience and the need to *do* something to get them out of their twisted state and back on the straight and narrow.

After all, some of us are taking drugs for higher purposes than wanting to *feel good*. Some of us, are just trying to feel *something* or in fact escape that feeling anything altogether...

I guess there is an inescapable truth about escapism however and that is that the truth is, we know it's an impossibility, whilst we still exist with all the same thoughts, feelings and emotional baggage we had yesterday, or the day before. We're doomed to carry a piece of that which we mean to escape from, into the space we now temporarily occupy, despite any of the means we apply or prescribe upon us.

You can go on holiday to avoid work and 3 days in, you won't feel the pull of that space and it's accompanying manager. You'll feel as if you have all the time to forget about it all, enjoy yourself and settle into the kind of life you wish you could live every day. Despite this however the vacation must come to an end - as it always does - and the day before you're due to fly home, that imposing feeling of what you left behind starts to creep like a vine of poison ivy back into your thoughts. Thoughts that lurk in the shadows like *Nosferatu* waiting for their perfect opportunity to strike. The same goes for the escapism that drugs offer us. The drug will get your guard down long enough to feel safe, secure and ready to relax, but only for a delayed period that's set up for the beast you've attempted to run from, to catch you incapable of defence and then it strikes at you, much harder than before.

I'd learned all of this from this one scenario, I'd danced with the Devil that hid in the brown seeds of Baby Woodrose. The devil as always commands the legions of the undead and with it too the demons inside my head.

I first fell for the promises of a blissful escape from all that I knew, but then the Devil released the chains, and the demons ran through the grey matter, slicing out all of my fears, worries and nightmares to manifest in the real world.

I guess all this failed experiment and episode really proved, is that instead of seeking a drug to escape, we should all be focusing on finding the right tools to stand up to that which we harbour within and are attempting to run from..

Escapism may be a myth when it comes to drugs, but I stand by it being a key reason that institutions such as *National Institute on Drug Abuse* are choosing to be ignorant of. If we were all a little honest with ourselves... we'd know that we're all trying to escape. It's just that some of us are a little more daring - or stupid - to go to further extremes, than the average Brit that ingests 13.3 units of alcohol per week.

Perhaps it's time we stop running...

The New Forest

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