

Blind Date

by Pearce Hansen

He slowly came back to himself, the pill fog gone for the first time in years it seemed. He looked slyly around at the dayroom, keeping his face as slack as it had been the moment before, looking at all the other medicated zombies he lived with. He didn't bother trying to analyze why things were clear again, he was in the moment, assessing. Proud rage threatened to spill past his mask though: all the ward attendants appeared bored, they joked with each other as they wandered carelessly among all their dayroom charges. How dare they feel safe around him? Where were the restraints they'd honored him with when he first came here, the blood of his last victims still fresh on his hands?

He smelled Doctor Leeds approaching. He allowed his mouth to hang open, let his eyes go unfocused as his old nemesis studied him; there was a young woman next to him in a staff uniform.

"He's still in there somewhere, I'm sure," Doctor Leeds said, his voice deep and gloating. "Modern pharmacology has brought the old dragon low."

"Yes father," the uniformed girl said quietly, looking at the floor.

"Don't ever call me that here," Doctor Leeds hissed. Leeds's uniformed daughter winced, and then the two were gone.

He sat there patiently for the rest of the day, allowed himself to be herded along with the rest of the shamblers to the meds-locker just before lights out. Doctor Leeds daughter handed him his pills; the bored attendants made sure he swallowed the horse-pills, made sure he didn't hide them under his tongue. He joined the parade to the dormitory, and climbed onto his cot, irritated that he wasn't even confined to a padded cell. He waited for the pills to take effect, reflecting that his charade would become real soon enough, that this day's lucidity would be gone soon enough. This latest dose of meds would take him away into the haze again, this time forever. No escape, after all.

But later he lay awake in the night, eyes closed as he listened to the mumbling dreamers surrounding him, studying his continued clarity. 'Modern pharmacology,' Leeds had said – how it must have pleased Leeds to disrespect him, to make light of him by using pills as a cage. What was happening here? Why wasn't he doped up anymore? He was suspicious, this couldn't possibly be to his benefit. Once could mean a weak batch of anti-psychotics, but this ongoing lucidity had to mean enemy action. The good Doctor's "profiling" had put him in here in the first place. Perhaps Leeds was trying to trick him. But it didn't matter, the old needs were back in full force now – even if he was serving

another's plan, he had no choice but to go forward.

He uncoiled from his cot, grateful that the long inactivity had not stunted his physicality. He floated through the dorm-room to the staff-office in the corner, mouth open to improve his hearing as he tried to psychically locate whoever was on night duty. He reached the office and snuck a peek around the half open door. The attendant lay there next to the desk, staring at the ceiling with dead eyes. A spilled cup of coffee next to the white clad corpse, the brown liquid still steaming and acrid smelling as it puddled on the linoleum. There was no blood, which was frustrating – but the door to the day room was open, and excitement overpowered his irritation as he glided through.

The main security office looked unmanned, and he hurried so as to overpower the security personnel that he knew would be there, gleeful to be in the zone again for the first time in ages. But both the rent-a-cops were dead too, some one had gotten to them before him and stolen all his fun. This time there was blood however: they both had extra mouths carved across their throats, those twin bloody smiles calling out to him in old bon homie. His nostrils flared at the delicious copper smell of their uncongealed blood, still spreading from the death wounds.

“Hah!” he sighed softly to himself as he picked up the bloody butcher knife from the desk, as conveniently placed as if it had put there solely for his benefit.

Outside the main entrance, a car was waiting with the engine running. He was around to the driver's side in a blur, the butcher knife poised to address the driver. As he readied to insert the blade, he reflected on just how fortunate the driver was – he wouldn't be able to take as much time here as he liked.

The blade stopped as he recognized Doctor Leeds' daughter. The girl acted as if she didn't even notice the blade.

“You want to look in the trunk,” she said, as she pressed a dash button. There was blood on her hand

He moved to the open trunk. She was at his mercy, he could reach her before she could drive away – he was strong again. And now, looking down at Doctor Leeds hogtied in the trunk with his mouth duct-taped shut, he felt even stronger. Strong enough to kill God, strong enough to rape the Devil. It felt good.

Leeds's daughter was standing next to him now, looking down at her father. “After you're done with Daddy, I'd like it if you come home and take care of my Mom before you decide what you're going to do with me.”

He looked at the girl, and she looked right back, meeting his eyes without fear, as if they were family. He reflected that her being out of the car meant that he wouldn't get any blood in the car's interior – she'd deliberately made it easier for him.

He smiled down at her father, at her gift to him. "Deal," he said. Then, as she watched and as Leeds stared up at him with screaming eyes, he bent over and got to work.