

The One Where I Ruin Your Childhood

Daniel Crocker



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Welcome to Fantasy Island

You are either God or a god
in your angel suit

You even fought the Devil once
who, as I always suspected,
looked just like Roddy McDowall

Offer us love
offer us redemption
I dare you

No one's fantasy is ever
I ran out of weed
I'm too fat
I have cancer
My husband is a real asshole

A quick perusal of craigslist
shows that most fantasies have
nothing to do with dancing
with the late great Sammy Davis Jr.
finding love or
bearing a child
but are mostly about nipple clamps
and bodily fluids

And you can't just give anyone their fantasy

Instead, it's a week of devastating
psychological torture
only to find that
our fantasies were within us
all along if we'd just
been able to see them

I briefly entertained the idea
that your island was sponsored by
the Koch brothers as a way
to convince poor people
they never really had it as bad
off as they thought

But, I've never seen any poor
people on Fantasy Island

I only see rich people
mostly white
that I assume
are Republicans

Then again, if you *are* God
why haven't any of them
freaked out about your Latin Heritage?

Why hasn't Fox News declared Fantasy Island
a war on blue-eyed Jesus?

What the hell is Tattoo?

I need to know

By the time it's over
by the time you're done
toying with us
everyone wants off
this island

Even me. And I believe in
you, Mr. Rourke. I do.

C is for Cookie

I won't believe this is real
anymore. Like I'm going to just
lie here all night shaking, thinking again
of the cookie when there is a jar full
in the kitchen and if those are gone
a gas station right down the road

It's hard. My father loved the Oreo
and his father the macaroon. It was
good enough for them, I thought
it's good enough for me

But cookies are what got me into this
mess, cookies are why I quiver
but I'd known only hunger when
the chickens from my cookie eating
days finally came home to roost

The things I did all hopped up
on cookies do not suffer forgiveness

I've been a bad monster. In my endless
thirst maybe

I wasn't thinking straight. Maybe

she'd just given me all the forgiveness
she had to give. Maybe it didn't matter
that I had given up cookies

because I still thought of them. I still
kept one in my desk drawer just in case
You don't have to talk when you've got
a fig newton in your mouth. There's no
room to think with a mind full of sugar

So when she asked
I cracked one wide
and a million different
fortunes spread before us

I opened my mouth to
say so but it hung
a gaping black wound

all my life I've known silence
except deep down
where it whispers
insistently
madly
finally
Cookie
Cookie
Cookie!

Snuffleupagas

Well, Snuffy, you really pulled a fast one
You convinced us all that you didn't exist
There has to be a trick to it, right
a little sleight of hand
I'd like to know

What are you so depressed about anyway?
They have pills for that
even on your street

And would it have been so bad if you only
existed in the mind of one gloriously joyful
bird? You could have wrapped yourself around
him like a scarf. You could have
given him the gravitas he so desperately
needed

You were such a great metaphor

But then you had to go and be real
You wake us from our happy dream
face dragging
“Do you know what, Bird,
Nietzsche was right. Everyone dies alone.”
I know, I know

“It's all meaningless, Bird.
I've been reading Schopenhauer.
Want to hear my thoughts on marriage?”

You need help

“I'm fine, Bird, I'm fine.”

I don't believe you.

He-Man, You Smarmy Bastard

You're not fooling anyone. You drug
half of us out kicking and screaming.
Ram-Man, Extendar, Fisto,
you have to be kidding me

I see the way you and Beast Man
look at each other, the glances that pass
in battle

Don't you have enough going on?
What with ruling Eternia
and the way Man-At-Arm's
mustache feels fatherly
against your cheek

Who wouldn't want to see you
soaked in rain water?

Me. I have a fucking skull
for a head. No one wants to hang
out with the kid who has a skull
for a head. Let's put it this way,
I didn't get invited to many parties

What choice did I have then

but to be evil?

The Gods decided on a whim I would be your
eternal foe. Losing, always losing
Could it be that simple?

Fuck you and that stupid cat you rode in on.
Let me into Gray skull you sleek, shirtless barbarian.
You beautiful bourgeois man. Let me into
mother fucking Grayskull, you lovely bastard.

Dear Lion-O

So they went and un-gayed you in
their “re-imagining”
I'm sorry. It must be tough. Your abs really popped
in that purple leotard

Of course, you cats had problems, too
You destroyed Thundera
crash landed on Third Earth and immediately
started taking over

What did the mutants ever do to you anyway?

History is written by the winners
I understand why you would
sweep your colonialism under the rug

It's okay. We've all fucked up. But did they
have to make you younger, happier
give Cheetara bigger boobs and make
her a love interest?

A love interest for God's sake

We both know you're not interested

I know a little bit about rewriting my history

God knows they've tried to un-gay me as well,
and believe it or not, a few folks
have even tried to un-straight me

Try to keep going
you've got to try anyway
even under a barrage of questions you
hold onto the Sword of Omens
like the phallic symbol it is

You'll always be the reason I love redheads
and try as they might
that's one thing
they can't take that from us.

The Hulkster

Knees crumbled
like blue cheese and my back
always hurts. But when
my wife left and took all my money
what could I do?
I worked

I mean I wrestled
I'm not rocket scientist
for Christ's sake
I'm Hulk fucking Hogan.

She ended up dating
a guy who looks just like
I did the in '80s

Hes 19. That's weird
right?

I've never wanted so badly
to be young again

The '80s were good
Ronald Reagan, White Snake, Molly Ringwald
the old red white and blue flying in every other yard

I body slammed Andre
the giant. I dropped my big leg
on The Iron Sheik. It was
a metaphor, brother

I was the Hulkster

Now I have nothing
A trunk full of bandannas
a daughter who looks just
like her mother. It's hard

Even I can't Hulk up out of everything

The original real American
destitute, living in a one room apartment
with a television that only picks up CNN
I'm lying so still. Are all those
droned daughters my daughters, too?
The blood and bone of my daughters?
The missing limbs of my daughters?
The fathers who are gone forever
are they me?

I was made to hurt people

In the end, it didn't matter
who I worked for. They're all

the same suits, the same greased up
hair, the same fat white smiles

run so very wild

Don't feel sorry for me
I got my cut
and at night I still say my prayers and eat my vitamins
all of these beautiful pills for pain.

A Brief Statement From Kurt Cobain's Gun

Thank you all for coming. First, I'd like to say that I am deeply sorry for my actions. However, I'd like to make it clear that I didn't mean to kill him. Like many of you, I also think he had a few good years left. Of course, I can understand your skepticism. I am, after all, a gun. Then again, I don't kill people. You all kill people. And what was I supposed to do when he placed his mouth against mine, his toe curled around my trigger? My sleek body was built to fire. Am I to blame if all I could think, in my ecstasy, was pull, damn it, *pull!*

A Dream of Siblings

I dreamed first of my sister

She couldn't speak
She was smiling

Young and beautiful
with long, straight red hair

She bopped me on the head
with a pen like little bunny foo foo

Then I was in a hearse
with my brother's old girlfriend

We were driving through a gray
failing city

She was young. She
tried crawling into the back seat
and I caught a glimpse of her
striped panties

Shit, I thought, this is it
another sex dream about Vicki

But it wasn't

Your brother is still alive
she said. Your parents
didn't tell you

I ask her to take me to him
He's on the top floor of an impossibly
tall apartment building

He's lying on a couch
He's covered in burn scars
His jaw is webbed skin, and I
can see his teeth and fat tongue

He can't speak

It's been thirty years
It's me, I say. It's Dan

He weeps. He moans. He
tries to move, but can't
Pain and silent pleading

When I wake
I can't help but wonder
if this was a message from
the afterlife

My sister, so devout
happy, impish

and the pen?

I don't know

My brother who
carried a gun under the front
seat of his truck who died
driving drunk

in some kind of hell

Even though I gave up
believing in this shit
years ago, I still wonder

Maybe I never gave up believing

Maybe, once having faith, no one
ever gives up believing

Even if the things we believe in
are horrifying.

Brutal

"Let's have a gay night," he said.

"A gay night?"

Of course, we didn't know what he meant. I was eight and my cousin, Terry was nine. We were staying the night with our great-aunt and our 19-year-old cousin, Larry, who lived with her. Larry was handsome, and he could almost dunk a basketball, which partly explained our admiration. He seemed to like hanging out with us. Earlier, Terry and I (who grew up in the same house) had been playing Army with him in our back yard. Larry was tall, lean, and dark-skinned. Looking back on it over thirty years later, I'm surprised, and a bit upset that I remember him as being so attractive.

"A gay night," he said. "We all do it. It makes us men. First, let's show our dicks to each other."

This is where coherency ends.

What I remember are flashes—bits and pieces. Some of it, I didn't remember until a few years ago when Terry and I talked about it for the first time.

Terry and I were nervous. We laughed a lot. We finally all pulled our dicks out. Larry's was hard as a rock, huge it seemed to me, surrounded by a dark thatch of pubic hair. Terry's was just naturally big. Mine wasn't. So it, of course, became the butt of jokes for the night. It didn't help that I was fat. A little plump pig, which Larry

seemed to enjoy. After we'd pulled our cocks out and talked about them for a bit, Larry invited us downstairs. Our great-aunt had one of those old-fashioned exercise machines down there. One with a limp, stained belt.

"Let's take turns putting our dicks on it and turning it on," Larry said. So we did. Somehow this is the worst part of it. Has always been the worst part of it. Thinking back, which I try not to do, it's the monster in the basement. Dirty and stained. I knew even then that this was the turning point. There would be no going back after the monster. I even thought about stopping it then. Other than this, we mostly just went to church together. Larry would sit beside us, smacking green apple gum and asking as quietly if he could which girls in church we might fuck, if we had the chance. We thought that was really cool. He'd even ask us about his sister, who I had some sort of weird, 8-year-old crush on.

It got worse, of course. It was all about what we would do to him. Would we touch his balls? Would we take his dick in our mouth? I did. Hating it and liking it at the same time. I honestly can't remember what Terry did. I'm sure it was much the same.

When I titled this "Brutal," I expected it to be brutal. Other than a surreal poem I wrote and published in the late 90s, this is the only thing I've ever written about that experience. The poem dealt in symbolism. I told myself, if I ever have the guts to write about it, it's going to be brutal. It's going to be honest and detailed. The details, however, are like an impressionist painting. Parts of it, like the monster, are painfully vivid. Larry's white, white teeth. His beautiful body. The rest is images, textures, feelings. Feelings of guilt and desire

all mixed up in one. The taste of his cock and how I remember it being both hard and somehow soft at the same time—the way the skin of it followed my lips.

Whenever I would think about writing this, I'd think, there's a book in it. There's not. There are just these images. Whatever else there might have been, would be about the aftermath, and I've written about that until it's meaningless.

The next morning, I woke up naked on the living room floor. Larry had uncovered me to show his sister. She was laughing at how fat I was. Terry was already dressed for church.

We didn't see Larry much after that. He decided we weren't really that cool to hang out with after all. I guess we felt the same. The next time I remember seeing him was at my brother's funeral. He was still handsome. He had rented me a movie, "Better Off Dead."

When I heard about Larry, he had died in motorcycle accident. My hometown, Leadwood, kills a lot of people. I was happy he was dead. I'm not sure I am anymore.

For all of his talk about a gay night, Larry wasn't gay. Sometimes I am. And though I consider myself to have the most bleeding heart I've ever known, child molesters still make me scream out for the death penalty. That, is neither here nor there. That's just me still trying to defend myself for not stopping this. For not saying no to the monster.

When I was young, and I would feel like, or people would think, I was a really fucked up person, they would think maybe it was because my brother had died when I was thirteen. I'd let them. But it wasn't. It was this. This.

Terry and I were very, very drunk and in our 30s, at a bar,

when I finally said something about it.

"You know why were so fucked up?" I asked.

"Larry," he said.

I nodded.

"The thing I most remembered," he said, "was Larry fucking you in the ass."

I hadn't remembered.

"You screamed like a pig," Terry said.

I remembered then. I remembered everything. Hands and knees and pain.

You Better Fucking Believe There's a Monster at the End of This Book

So you've written a poem about every
goddamned person on this street but me?
Is that about right?
I know my book was scary, but come on
I tried to warn you. Don't turn the page
There's a monster at the end of this book
Did I look like I was kidding?

But you had to keep going

Well, buddy, I hope you're happy
because there's more. That's right
turn those pages, asshole
Look here, that's the birth
of Grover's daughter. On page 28
we'll relive Grover's DWI
Page 45? That's my mid-life crisis

Keep going and you'll see my struggle
with existentialism. Grover had a hell
of a divorce

The name of the monster at the end

of this book is cancer. It's addiction. It's
page after page of boredom and self-doubt

It's time you stop blaming me
If you could have, even once
just stopped, practiced even a modicum of
self-control, you
would have never come to that
bulbous nose, those longing eyes
that blue fur, even now, sprouting
across the compass of your body

You'd never have had to weep at the sounds
of your own wavering voice.

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