

- New Model

Jimmy popped two paracetamol into his mouth and washed it down with a swig of water, its coolness burning his throat. He smacked his lips, the sound echoing in the empty kitchen.

Smiling the idiotic grin of a drunkard, he stumbled through the door and headed upstairs, fighting his way past the mound of clothes that littered the floor. He managed to navigate the obstacle course and made it the bathroom where he pissed for what seemed like an eternity, taking aim in the dark, using the hollow splashes of the water in the toilet bowl to guide his aim.

Empty, he crawled into bed, barely managing to strip off his filthy layer of clothes before his mind became lost in the darkness, numbed for now into blissful oblivion where even the omnipotent arms of dreams could not reach.

Saturday morning should have meant work. Jimmy peeled open his eyes a little after eleven and was immediately struck by the grand epiphany of 'fuck it', rolling over and shutting his eyes against the hurtful sunlight that glinted through the slats of the blind.

His body was rigid, paralysed almost, the alcohol from the night before having stripped all strength from him. His head didn't hurt but a hangover had still gripped.

Underneath the covers he was hot, unbearably hot and Jimmy managed to somehow roll himself from their tangle and landed with a thump on the floor. His dank hair hung in his eyes, sweat sliding from it, its salty tang dripping into his eyes.

He needed a drink, fuck he needed to drink. His body felt withered like it had been trapped in a closet for a week, devoid of sunlight and moisture; like that experiment at school, where you put a plant in the dark for a week to see what happened to it. The outcome hadn't been a surprise.

Slowly, ever so slowly, Jimmy climbed to his feet, his hands splayed out on the bed for support. Once in the bathroom, he turned on the cold tap, dunking his head, his breath sucked from his lungs as its icy touch assaulted his face. He guzzled at the flow, almost drowning as, in his desperation, he forgot to breathe.

Scoffing at the very idea of getting dressed, Jimmy headed downstairs, navigating one swaying step at a time, his legs wobbling, knees ready to buckle. He made it all the way to the sofa before he had to collapse, his hip hitting hard against the arm rest causing a grunt of pain.

Head buried in the cushions, an arm blindly reached out seeking the TV remote, clutching at air until it finally found its target. Without looking up, Jimmy flicked the set off standby and waited as the air began to fill up with the noise of BBC One, inane chatter filling the room, none of it discernable to Jimmy's tired ears, still ringing from a night stood too close to the DJ's speakers as *Avenged Sevenfold* blasted out a monstrosity of guitar riffs.

Something lurched in Jimmy's stomach and suddenly he was up, sitting with his head in his hands, breathing deeply as he tried to calm the sickness, his mouth full of sour spit.

He sat for a few minutes, desperate for the aching sickness to pass. The glare from the TV hurt his eyes, penetrating through his closed eye lids, eager to imprint its images on his brain, to relay its message.

Reluctantly, Jimmy looked up, peeking through finger tips that were stained with cracked, black nail varnish. There was a man on TV, one who stood proud in front of an English flag. Jimmy stared at the screen, the redness of the St. George's cross running like blood down the screen, religion and violence intermingled, copulating on breakfast TV.

Jimmy didn't recognise the man who was speaking, though he didn't really watch much television any more, not since liking Spongebob Squarepants had become pathetically cliché even within the Goth community.

Jimmy strained his ears to listen to the words coming out of the set, trying to decipher them through the background noise that buzzed against his ear drums.

"My children," he thought he heard the man say. "My loyal disciples I stand before you a humble man."

Jimmy felt another lurch of sickness but ignored it, swallowing a mouthful of bile. While the man was talking, he had to listen. He looked into those deep, dark eyes, surrounded by jet black hair and offset against a pale face that wouldn't have looked out of place at a morgue.

"I bring you this message today, a message of hope, yet one of change. A new day has begun and with it we must embrace a new world, for the one that you went to sleep on yesterday has gone."

Jimmy blinked, his eyes adjusting to the bright light before him. The TV set was small, only a portable, but the image looked enormous, cinematic and the sound echoed out around him like a home theatre kit, the man's voice booming with a reassuringly manly bass.

"All the horror and poverty, the moral degradation of yesterday has gone from our lives," the man continued, his words gradually sinking into Jimmy's head, every syllable imprinted on his brain, revered in his memory. "All has changed as evil has finally fled the world with my coming. There has been a great surge of unity, as race, sex and position have all been cast aside in a great re-birth."

The enormity of the words were lost on Jimmy, his mind only receiving the language now, unable to decode it just yet. He sat and waited patiently for the words to take meaning in his head, to fight their way past the dense fog that clouded his mind.

The mouth on the screen widened until it seemed to overtake the head, every detail so vibrant, the Colgate white teeth, the lolling, red tongue, the dark gore of the man's throat. Jimmy could almost see the words forming on the man's breath.

"I am the standard that all man is now set by, I am the new model for your God and because of this, I have improved the world's population. Every person does not have to follow me, for I am no leader. Instead, I ask that you merely imitate me, adapt your lives to reflect my own. Learn from me and from what lies within yourself."

Jimmy found himself nodding, his hangover redundant in his body now. He could do nothing but stare into the giant mouth, like Jonah facing the whale.

"Be one with me," the mouth was saying. "See me and be me, change your life to better yourself."

Jimmy went to speak but only succeeded in forming a spit bubble that popped quietly against his lips, splashing his face.

The mouth began to shrink, the face pulling back into proportion until the man looked human again.

“Listen to me Jimmy,” the man said and Jimmy felt his arms prickle with goose bumps, the hair on the back of his head reaching up for the ceiling. “Listen to my words and take action.”

Jimmy found himself moving off the sofa now, down on all fours to the ground, crawling like a dog towards the TV, transfixed by the light.

“It’s time for a change Jimmy. I’m relying on you to spread the word, to enforce my message. Everyone must adapt, it is the dawn of a new stage of evolution. I am the way forward, I am the light at the end of that long and lonely tunnel.”

Jimmy thrust his face against the screen, the static jumping against his skin, his dank hair frizzling.

“Will you do that for me Jimmy? Will you help me make the world afresh, to reignite empathy?”

Jimmy nodded, his forehead squeaking against the glass. His body still felt numb but there was a warm sensation that began at the back of his head and was travelling down his neck, heating his back and spreading round to his burning stomach.

“I will,” he stuttered, his eyes aching from being so close to the screen, filling with a blue blur.

“Good,” the man smiled, his mouth thin now, like a fine cut from cheek to cheek. “It is the only hope that this world has, to embrace what I am, who I am. They must become me or else everything will fail.”

The blue spots multiplied in front of Jimmy’s eyes and he pulled away from the set as the pain became too much to bear, blinking, still unable to draw his eyes fully from the screen.

The man on the screen was smiling, his face contorted with the effort. The image was getting paler, starting to lose definition, shrinking away, the man’s smile unflinching.

A frown creased his brow and he narrowed his eyes, staring at the fading image of the man who now, in his departure, seemed so familiar. Jimmy rubbed at his eyes, pressing hard into his sockets to alleviate the ache and opened them again to find that the TV was off, the screen blank, filled only with his own reflection, his pale complexion staring back at him with dark eyes, a ghost in a mirror.