

Author's Note: Because "Go To Hell" is not complete, and needs some re-organisation and major polishing before I even have a decent draft, and because it might end up being extremely long (in the realm of fifty pages, give or take fifty pages) when I do it right, here is an excerpt. It is what I have worked on. One day it will be finished, when the things that I am working on, the things that are currently close to completion, are done.

Secondly; David Edwin Blanco

First, the darkness, calm and cool, spun around him, condensing the hot final breath to a solid soulful goo. Then came the shattering blazing brightness, whirling and twirling and stretching his essence to candyfloss, then pulling it together to a concentrated lump. The lump landed on a sturdy metallic platform, which shook with the impact, and after a heavy moment of weighing, the scale slipped, bringing the goo down, down, sliding off the platform and pulling itself down into the darkness like a melted slinky until it hit dirt with a forceful plop.

When David Edwin Blanco first awoke, he was face down, on the ground, becoming dirtier every second, on the wrong side of the River Styxs. He groaned as he got up, a sluggish feeling of heavy stillness buried itself in his joints from his recent death. He tried to crack his neck, and failed- David's neck had no more joints to for air to bubble through. Although his dead body was far away, David pathetically tried to stretch, and only succeeded in shifting his shoulder behind his neck. His useless pretend-breathing quickened as his mind distorted his body to unusual proportions. The form that mortals take in hell is only an extension of their consciousness, of which David gave a poor display.

As David tangled his own form, the Boatman watches with an eerie blankness in his eyes, his eyes shining with a cruel and innate ember-glow, his eyes the Hell-eyes, voids of light that trickled into focus and festered with power. David, finally noticing the Boatman, untangled himself. The Boatman does not move, even though his boat swayed delicately in unseen current. He has a solid, unreal quality, like someone has just spilled ink across the rotting, sulphuric banks that bordered the dark river. The river itself twists and turns away from the banks, writhing like a drowning snake. At points the river thunders with rage and power, a roaring border between life and death, screaming its might into the darkness beyond. However, at other points it whispers silent secrets down its banks, and the elegant venomous vapors spill mist across its surface, blocking the still mirror waters from the viewer on either bank, and blocking reason with lightheaded tune that sticks to the inner skull many miles inland. Here, at the crossing point, the banks stretch wide and flat away from each other, relative magnets finding parallel space in different directions. Years ago a type of structured platform sprung up on the bank, but was quickly turned into more solid blocky mud, the skeleton of which can still be traced by the keener eyes, even the dirt takes what it wants from the mortal world and fills in the rest itself. A curtain of mist, both light and wavering as cloth and as thick and solid as concrete fills the senses and guards against unwelcome travels. The water that the Boatman's ancient vessel makes its way across is still and silent, dead and listless, the only motion traced across the grey crystallized veins of solid smoke are the wrinkles the Boatman makes across the liquid skin of the water.

David startled, embarrassed by the Boatman's presence, but quickly regained control of his emotions; a lack of adrenaline or other hormones left him in a numbed state. However, David's attachment to his own weakness made him flustered, the Boatman was so much more

powerful than he was that he visibly shrank, submitting in that primal way that was all he knew. The Boatman stretches reality across the thin skeletal phalange towards his newest passenger.

“Come.” the Boatman growls; his skull dripping up and around the words like hot taffy. David, of course, did as he was told, yet he hesitated at the bank of the river with one foot in the small and paleolithic paddle boat. So this was what he had gone and died for, he commented to the small tremor of uncertainty that trickled through the thundering noise of shame in his head. The Boatman waits, patiently or not David could not tell if he tried to, although he does not try, he merely follows instructions. So he got on the boat. It held still for a moment after the redistribution of weight settled and then began to glide across the too shallow and too deep waters of the river’s ashy crystal waters.

The ride was quiet. The small boat was beyond creaking, and only sighed as David’s clothing shifted across the bottom, or mumbled to the jostled waves it made as it took another passage. David sat at the bottom of the seatless vessel, cross-legged in business clothing like a small child dressed in costume, sitting quiet while the adults discussed important matters. The monolithic presence of the Boatman engulfs David, who had never been strong willed in the first place. The boat hit the other side of the banks, stopping dead to deposit David where he was meant to be. David got out of the boat, his shoes squelching in the mud, after some delay, with a hurried apology. He was sorry for wasting a second of the eternity the Boatman had, for tarnishing the boat with his presence, apologized for his continued existence which had never been planned at all. David awkwardly shifted on the bank as the Boatman holds still, acknowledging the apology and taking it in for keeping. That David had given something as freely as an apology was almost like payment. All payment makes its way to the Boatman. The

stillness of the Boatman holds, the edges of him fray into mist, and his boat glides back towards the other side of the river again, receding into mist that is not there when one crosses the river Styx, only when observed from either bank.

David's black, shiney business shoes were muddy from the river banks. His face was covered in dirt that he had not dared wipe away in the presence of the Boatman. He alleviated that by spreading more ashy dirt on the sleeves of his clean, white, shirt. The world was mist, river and unknown mist. The mist beyond the river glimmered, every now and then, with a distant light, the same light that the Boatman's eyes contain and overflow with. The lights were less intense, a bearable pressure on David's will, and almost like fireflies. They left soft dimples into the Play-Dough of David's being, his true essence so bloated on fries and daytime television that even those small and distant presences left imprints on his form. But their small noises faded into the wash of silence that is the Boatman, their power was newer and tied to form, so David marched towards them, his shoes sinking into the muddy bank.

David walked for a long while, out of the muddy banks that clung like hands in dark and mossy teardrop blobs to the bottom of his feet and over the hard tanned cracked dirt of an eternal drought that didn't bother to hold his footprints for even an instant, although it gasped and licked with raspy tongue for a drop of moisture, through the shifting reddened dusty plains that stretched in the distance on all sides, even longer than they appeared, their edges wrapping tight and concave around the horizon. The dust threw itself onto him, hoisting its few grams of restless weight onto another's shoulders yet again, however temporary. At the end of the dusty plains David reached a tall, mangey, wiry patch of grasses, and he rested, trying to count his steps from the bank and forcing mental exhaustion in himself. He placated the cobwebs of his mortal

existence; took deep breaths to fill lungs he no longer had, wiped the non-existent sweat from his brow, massaged the skin that held aching muscles no more, and nibbled on the tender ends of grasses like he had learned when he was a boy, temping his mental stomach. He tried desperately to ignore the placid lack of feeling -of anything at all- beyond the dirt scraping through his skin.

The sun did not move.

The sun wasn't really a sun, as much as it was a presence, a law that ruled hell. It said, hanging over the expanse of the realm, that Hell must be hot.

It did its job very well.

David got up, dusted himself off as he could, and continued walking past the wiry grass, and on a little ways. He felt what he thought was good, or the approximation of good, better than he had before. He was accomplishing distance, and he knew where to go next, and that, at least, was something. As he left the grass behind, a wide gulch pooled around the ground in front of him, and he discovered that he was walking on a large cliff ledge. He walked to the edge of the ledge, and sat, dangling his legs above the hundred foot drop.

As David sat, and rested once again, a thought occurred to him. This was relatively rare, and he had luckily learned to listen to the thoughts that wandered onto him. This one whispered apathy around his neck. What reason had he to continue, when he could just... sit here, in the pleasant, warm, breeze. He could just be. It was his afterlife now, apparently. He could sit if he wanted to.

Rest in peace.

And sit, in his spot, not a full mile from where the Boatman stopped him. He could rest now, not like he had in life, when he rushed around from point A to B to C, trying to work all his afternoons away so he could watch TV all of his Saturday. And that wasn't rest either, just a way to fill his head with one noise to make the other types of noise go away. Now he could sit. And fill his head with nothing at all.

The sun moved, slowly, and nothing else changed. David did not change, except to settle, ever so slightly, into the cliffside dirt. He did, however, find that he was beginning to accept his death. The fact that he was not hungry no longer surprised him. The more he sat, the more he considered himself as unliving as the rocks or grass around him, and the sun trickled across the sky, and David settled even more into the dirt. He closed his eyes, and felt only the warm, decomposing heat.

He laid down, into the dirt in the ultimate victory of apathy and gravity.

The ground beneath him trickled down the gulch, and the deeper layers of earth rumbled and gave way with the impact, and the whole foot and a half of the cliff laid down with him, giving way from the rest of the cliff, so stubborn in its standing even as everything around it found deeper rest in the earth. So David and his foot and a half of dirt careened into the gulf.

David awoke as he was falling. He formed and solidified himself around fear and anticipation of pain that may come. He dived feet first, into the gulf, and his fear became brighter and louder until it turned into a scream, pitching down into the depths, warm breeze becoming blistering wind. Rushing until it compressed, pulled down into itself with a warm, wet crunch and the quiet black blankness deeper than sleep.

David found himself, fully formed, up to his torso in dirt. The dirt looked as though it had been disturbed a few days ago, and was now as hard-packed and hot as the surrounding ground. Around him, a few of the rocks from the cliff high above rested, as immersed in the dirt as David was himself. David attempted a few kicks, but could barely wiggle his toes. Seeing as there was nothing else to do, he began to try to pull himself up out of the dirt. He strained against the ground, pushing his entire body up with barely enough force to shift himself. Nothing happened but the unsettling of the ground's top layer of dust. David placed his hands a different way and tried again. Finally, the ground cracked audibly, and hot air and dirt rushed into David's pants with a sigh of both relief and annoyance. From behind a rock, a small, high pitched, scream-like peep flew out. David stopped, statue-still.

Following the scream-peep came a whiskered nose on the end of a thin, tusked muzzle. It twitched, and out leaped a fluffy off-yellow head, with large pale-red echo-imitation eyes of the Boatman's, and mousy ears with stretched out veins that came up into a point. With a few twitchy steps it came out into the open towards David, and sat, facing him, twiddling its too-long fingers in a mesmerizing way. It looked something like a cross between an opossum and an Eye-eye the size of a Border Collie. David, having never seen an opossum nor an Eye-eye, only realized that it was both ugly and friendly, both traits that made David uneasy but were extremely helpful in this moment. He tried to push up against the dirt again and found that he could go no farther. The thing inched forward, and sniffed David's face with its wet snout. Its tusks tousled his hair, and its tongue reached behind his ears in a wave of hot, sulfurous breath. Some strange compulsion convinced it to snatch David's shirt's tag between its large front teeth,

pressing into his neck and shoulder, and yank him out like a plump white tuber. It was much stronger than it seemed, and dragged David forcefully a few feet away from the hole.

David shuffled up onto his feet, unsteady and quick. The thing snaked its way into David's impression in the dirt, pecking and rooting around, sometimes stopping and chewing intensely. It tumbled in, and climbed out holding a single round dirt-covered object, which it ran back with and purposefully placed in David's hand. David, surprised, brushed the dirt off it and found that it was a small fresh root. Seeing that David had accepted the fare, the creature dug its claws all the way up to David's shoulders, turning around somehow on nimble feet, and settling there.

"I suppose I am to take you someplace?" David said. The creature lazily bated its thin duster tail, settling in. David looked out on the plain, seeing a flat expanse outside of the gulch, with a few outcroppings of rocks before the view faded out of his sight.

"Well, better get going, it seems." David said, pausing for any response, and then starting out the long walk to nowhere.

David nibbled on the wild tuber in curiosity, and almost dropped it in shock at the metallic spiciness it held. The creature now appeared to be asleep, or at least enjoying the ride, an expression on its face not unlike people on airplanes lucky enough to own a pair of noise canceling headphones.

"Do you have a name, then, thing?" David said. The creature did not respond.

"How about Franklin?" The thing twitched.

“Right. That’s a horrible name. Sam. You’re Sam.” Sam seemed content with that, or so David thought, as it fell into a twitchy sleep, David’s thoughts melted away and he settled into the long silent pace of walking.

David did not stop walking until Sam shifted on his shoulders and awoke, yawning and leaping onto the ground. David stopped suddenly, stumbling, then turned to watch the strange creature forage. Sam dug around and tapped the ground, listening carefully to the secrets it told him about tubers. The process was slow, and David sat down while Sam pulled up more of the small white tubers, and ate thin red roots that tasted like bitter fennel, out of a sense of gratitude for Sam’s hospitality. It would be rude to not accept food from a willing host. But it was also payment, and David realized, it was stupid to not accept something owed to him. That, perhaps, was the first lesson that David learned. So Sam and David ate side by side, legs dangling over the pit that Sam had excavated. Sam leaped back up on David’s shoulders, and David lifted his dusty legs again, continuing towards the horizon.

The days in hell were unpredictable. Some days the sun touched the edge of the horizon just to begin the trip back across. The dust heated until each speck stung on David’s face, and Sam brushed each speck away by running its long fingers through its fur. They stopped periodically so Sam could dig up the hidden plants in the earth, from watery berries that exploded into an alcoholic fluid, to thick, thorny husks that Sam stripped of outer layers with its tusks, exposing soft and pulpy fruit.

The sun once decided to set at its peak, and hurried towards the horizon, rushing through sunset. Once the last golden rays dissipated there were no stars. The night was black and glowing red, cracks in the sky cast a faint reddish tinge on the shifting shadows that slinked across the

once-empty plains. After a few minutes of steady walking, David slowed to a stop, and Sam stayed frozen and tense on his shoulders. Sam snaked down David to find a small patch of tender earth in which to dig a den for the night, guiding David when he stopped in the dark. They slept tangled together like wild things, twitching at the not-noises that the night shadows trailed behind them. When they awoke out of a shared uneasy doze, the sun was already peaked in the sky, and stayed there for many hours, spirally slowly around in the sky like a vulture.

David continued to walk towards the horizon. As they sat together chewing on hardy, charred-looking vines that Sam had dug up, David began to hum. It was a song that had been bothering him, nudging at his memory for thousands of paces, and it bubbled out into a hum, dripping slowly, but picking up momentum, getting louder and louder as David became more sure of the words. It was a campfire song David had learned when he was young, with a verse tacked on at the end about following the camp leader's instructions. But the heart of the song was in the simple, heart-felt melody, and David sang like he was surrounded by friends, all singing together, not bothering to correct his mistakes and knowing that all together the group would sound wonderful. At first, Sam was cautious, but it eventually seemed to feel the music, twitching along to an approximation of the rhythm. At the height of the third chorus, Sam pitched in a shrill scream, almost on key. David faulted, but began the song again, singing it over and over as Sam whistled its shrill whines across the planes, and they were almost-singing together.

The journey was long, and David's suit was covered with the reddish dust. Sam was the same as always, but seemed to have gained an affinity for David that went beyond taxi, and laced it's tail around David's neck like a favorite car, old and trusted. At first, David began to notice a

glint in the distance. He walked faster, and looked around to see small outcroppings of bushes, exposed roots, even a rose bush in the wild expanse. As the glint got larger and larger it became more and more familiar, until it became a city. A city! An honest-to-god city! And it wasn't abandoned, or even in disrepair, but gleamed with promise, full of unknown people and opportunity. The only faces David had seen in the past weeks were memories, washed out and sopping with emotion. David began to run, almost unconsciously, faster towards it. Sam was startled, and patiently waited for his means of transportation to work off his excited energy. David did, eventually, when he came to a glassy, smooth road. It stretched on into the distance parallel to the horizon. It was obviously engineered with skill, and seemed to show the border between the plains and the city, for beyond the road there lay tall grass, waving green around the farming land between him and the city. As David stopped and stared in wonder at it all, a faint buzzing came up from the left, coming closer and closer until a rusty beat up car was approaching David. So David did something impulsive; stuck out his thumb.

The car zoomed past him at sixty mph. Disappointed, David walked slowly across the road, plodding towards the city. The buzzing did not go away, but screeched around as the rusty car wiped itself in front of David, Sam watching intently. The driver's door popped open like a crypt opening, and pivoted away to reveal a young woman in 20's style dress.

“Sorry I missed you as first, sunshine, I was just goin’ too fast, you know how it is.”

David stared, overwhelmed by his first sincere conversation in months.

“Not much of a talker, are ya, hon? Well, I’m goin’ to the city, if you need a ride, sunshine.”

“Yes, t-thank you. I’ve been walking.”

“I can see that, hon. You been walking across all of Dante’s plains, ever since the Boatman dropped you off on our side of the river?”

“Well-”

“I’m kidding, sugar! Of course you didn’t! It’s a joke, you don’t have to answer! Come on, get in the car. Probably haven’t seen another human being since before you found yourself on our side of the divide. Well, what are you waiting for! Get in the car!”

David slipped around the car and opened the passenger side door, and Sam scampered into the back seat, while David settled himself onto the passenger’s place. He shut the door calmly, And the young lady slammed her door shut, spun the car around clumsily, then sped off down the road.

“That’s some critter that you found.”

“Well, really, he found me.”

“Don’t they just? You know, they say that even minor demons, like the one you’ve got in the back of my car, are prophetic creatures. They latch on to somebody who’s got a bright future, make them take that soul where they wanna go.”

“Sam’s a demon!”

“Sam! Now that’s a name. He’s adorable, really and truly.”

David sat back in his seat to think it over. The car was going very fast on the slick glass road, on and on in the distance, towards the city, still in the distance. There was really only this one road in, thought David. The city has a tangled web of glass and tar the closer you get to it, an interconnected being with a shell made of gates and all of it’s veins on the inside. Only one main artery comes in or out of the city, an old tradition, from the founder’s years spent wandering the

expanse of Hell, a place not kind to lone mortals with no cave to hide in at night. But the city is becoming a facet of Hell, as the second true city it is beginning to call attention to itself, for the first time not just bad, but good. Perhaps David would do well there, and begin to have the second growth that many experience after their life is over.

“Where are we going, actually?” David said, as the city slipped into the distance.

The young lady took her eyes off the road, turning to David with a sincere look.

“Now, I’m really sorry. I lied to you, and you have no reason to forgive me. Sorry hon, no, I cannot stop this car, I have to get you to the place we’re going. Can’t tell you where that is.”

“Oh, alright.”

A silence settled in, and the young lady soon shooed it away by blasting the radio, pumping the car full of bright and energetic noises.

“I’m afraid I didn’t catch your name!” David strained to say above the blasting sound.

“That’s alright, hon!”

“I don’t think you heard me!”

“Oh, I did!”

The car sped on on the dark glassy road, far past the shining hopeful city.

As the car drifted along the plains of Hell, the sun began to set. A low, dusky light cast itself over the scene and stayed there. And running, somewhere in the distance, was an old man, chasing after the car.

“Stop! Stop! For the love of anything holy, please!”

Firstly; The Devil and His Children

Children, let me tell you a story. Children, I've been here a long time, such a very long time, but the sun keeps drifting across the world. I've still got such a long time to be here, still such a long time for here to be.

Everyone comes down here to us eventually. You know that. They have made this place-this dust their dust, this earth their bones and blood, their notions of self turned to rock, their neurosis growing tubers under the earth, their hopes forming ribbons of salt under the mud of their memories. They built this place, but we were here first. Our forms are twisted, changed by these people who have pressed the world into this form. But we remain, and you remember, the hissing patterns, you, my children, still hold the language before language in your mouths, you spit it up onto each other and into the world.

So spit up this, hold this fountain, this story deep in the pocket where lives the form you were before this shape that you are now. You will pass on this story to all those who could not come to this court, to your neighbors and friends who had wandered too far, to the wandering hounds who still chase the ever-drifting sun, to the clans of polishers, gardeners, crafts-beasts, who could not leave their lives to come to court. You wandering mages, you young sprouts, you animals and common folk who found themselves adrift at my call, you will spread this story, so that every soul that calls themselves daemon knows it like they know the shape of their teeth. Yes, you will even pass this story on to your children, although you are all still children now, some time so far in the distance from now you will tell this story again.

In the beginning there was no Hell. There was no after-place, no dreaming world, no humans, no earth, even the drifting tendencies of space were not yet in the before. I...was. I only was. I only was for a while, numb, unfeeling, serene. In time things began to collect. Small rocks. The tiniest drops of water. I spun. Bounced against these things. Moved around through, towards and against them, above, below, around. The distances between me and these objects took form. They became real. I had few feelings--touch, balance. I wanted another. A being, a sense, another small thing to hurtle myself towards. So I created that brilliant ever drifting sun. The light was my first playmate. I suppose you could have said that back then I was a child, but then my childhood would contain only molecules, and the Nothing would be my parents.

The first time that something other than myself or that brother-child Sun moved was the first time I felt fear, fear that I was not alone, that things could change. So I took the tiny cell that moved and I pulled it into its smallest pieces. But more came afterwards. So many tiny things, they filled the space that I had lived in. The sun did not think, we did not plan, we simply lived off intuition, as much as the tiny cells did. So I grew, larger, farther away, until I towered over the cells. But then my oldest playmates, the drifting bits of dirt and molecules and atoms were too small for me to see. I condensed myself for the first time, into a spherical being, a roundness, not a force that lives in everywhere. I had edges. The sun tried to copy me, but it's being was so primal that it still cast itself across the world, yet it's edges were darkness and the first night.

The cells grew so plentiful that I stopped tearing them to pieces, and eventually, stopped being scared of them. They were part of my world. I lived on them, played amongst them. They were my new playmates, and I and the Sun both learned and grew. We changed form continually back then, growing organs inside and out, tiny systems that processed nothing. Eventually, there

came to be so many cells that there was quite a distance of them, a small planet made of life that once was. There was too much. I needed something that had no name at the time, order. So I made something that was as different from me as I could, a being that was solid where I moved, that held form for years, that knew distance and motion instinctually. That could hold many things in it's mind. You now call him the Boatman, but I knew him as rock, my oldest friends brought back to me with consciousness. He kept the lifeforms in a certain structure, strictly, always. He ordered them, and I and the sun played.

Perhaps that was where it all began. With order came the concept of work, and with the concept of work came a hundred thoughts, like *payment* and *fairness* and *forced to* and *want*. But then, the bite of bitterness that effort pulled through this world was still, and festered. Things were the same for a while. The cells changed form, inside and out. The colors, organs, systems and functions of the many cells we found I copied and played with. My round form was a collage, like and unlike any cell. This is a trait that I passed on to you.

In amongst cells we were outnumbered. I became tired, after thousands and thousands of years of living with only the Sun and the Boatman. The Boatman's strict rules constrained, his duties kept him from playing. Each cell must be analyzed, put into its place. The sun was such a rudimentary thing, made of light and space more than life and form. If all these cells that came from some outside place could overwhelm me, why not could there be more suns, more of myself, made as the cells but better, different. These early demons you still trample under your feet today. They played and preyed on cells, and ran wild, their powers only a fraction of mine yet still overwhelming. I spent years and years making hundreds, thousands. Their forces were

only kept in bounds by the Boatman and the sun, high above, showing the end of the world. We ran rampant and wild in the deep lacklight night.

But soon enough more water filled the world, the water of cells falling to pieces, losing the little life they had and breaking down themselves. The creatures I saw had fins, tails, bits and pieces of body parts, hard shells and sometimes skeletons. I made more demons, and changed some of you, the oldest of you, my children, who now sit here. The inner pieces of creatures I never understood to serve any but an aesthetic function. So I twisted each and every new development and feak mutation for my own ends. Each day I played with form, and began to understand the strange creatures that came down to this world. But I needed to know more.

Now the world looked different, as the sea creatures continued to develop, their bodies sank low and built muddy banks on top of each other. The plants that had begun to creep up the sides of the mud now dug themselves onto the shore and threw their heads into the sunlight air. I copied, moulded, combined. I grew, larger and larger, knowing only that I must be larger than each subject I encountered, to keep myself from fear. But my fear, over eons, subsided. I felt wonder at these strange creatures, even as they and I grew larger and larger. My world was built of them, our world, made in mimicry of theirs. I started to experiment more and more in the shape of you, my demons. I admit now that it was selfish, but back then both you and I were barely more than lumps of reflexes and echoes of form. I wanted you to be more mine, to carry my mark imprinted on yourselves. And as I built you stranger and stranger, the world above the waves changed and shifted.

The creatures that were once only plants were replaced with other forms, shells with muscles inside, all ordered by the boatman into rings, rows, grids. Below the sea I warped and

twisted you, above the water the strange shapes that took over the Earth were ranked, filed, and classified by the Boatman. In the sea we ran wild, we tested our boundaries. On the surface, the Boatman filled the world with exact measurements. We were bound to collide.

So there came a day when we under the sea began to explore the physical boundaries of the great ocean. I had created a thing like a walking fish, but with the teeth of one of those ancient sharks and the long, stiff, stilt-legs of a deep-sea crab. These poked at the shore of the sea and found the delicate copies of life that the Boatman had created. He captured some of you, my children, and yes, some of you here remember your malleable forms being turned into life-like models by the boatman's careful hand. But then, in that long, long, time ago, I did not recognize you, I only saw you as some foul product of the Boatman's powers, and I sent after you some of my creations to capture you, so you could be studied and understood.

But the Boatman knew his creatures better than I knew mine, and felt the moment when some of them were taken.