

What Might Have Been

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Invader Zim short fiction. A future Dib returns to an empty cul-de-sac

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1 - What Might Have Been

(A/N: this is just something I thought up while I was waiting in the dentist's office. One thinks up the most depressing things there, wouldn't you say? Anyways, the entire thing is really anticlimactic and it has absolutely no point. Just some thoughts from the mind of a possible future Dib.

Disclaimer: Zim, Dib and all related titles come from the ever-insane mind of Mr. Vasquez, as we all know...but I must also mention the cursed name of Viacom International. I hate them.)

I step out the door of the church that dad's funeral had been held at. I glance up at the blood-red sky with a sigh of disappointment. I like the days when it's blue better.

I know I should have felt at least some emotion over his death. He was my father, after all. It had been his influence that had gotten me into the school I had attended for six years. His money had paid for just about everything in my life; up till the point where I refused to take any more. He had raised me and, though he didn't really support my past dreams or ambitions, he managed to allow me to make it all the way through high school having me committed only twice. To an insane asylum, that is.

I feel nothing, though, nothing but a small cold fear that I won't be able to make it in this vicious world without him. Well...without his money.

I allow this fear to grip me, then smile in satisfaction as it subsides itself. I don't need him, I don't need anyone.

My thoughts drift as I begin to walk. I think about Gaz, wondering briefly where she is. She hadn't been at the funeral. As a matter of fact, I haven't heard from her in about three years now. Last thing I knew she had been kicked out of some college or another for refusing to do the stupid homework they assigned. She was a lot like me, seeing the uselessness in busywork, getting strait A's in every class with test scores alone.

The world had hated her. It had simply been waiting for the chance to rid itself of the independence she represented. She had no friends. She wouldn't comply with people's idiotic wishes and so they shunned her. Pushing her away and treating her like she was worthless.

It isn't really any concern of mine, however. I always knew I was the smarter of the two of us. So much weaker, of course, but, I was the one with a high paying job and at least *some* respect from the world. I have come to realize that being strong is useless. To survive one must comply completely with whatever one is told to do. Whoever is in charge stays in charge, and one person can make little difference in this world.

Independence will bring you nothing but pain and regret. In thinking for yourself you will harbor nothing from existence except hatred and spite.

I had been the smart one. I had surrendered my free spirit and allowed them to transform me into the thing I hated and feared most.

She had resisted, and look where she is now...

I glance around in dull surprise when I realize my feet aren't taking me back to the hotel I had been staying at. I don't really care, I haven't really cared about anything since that day; I decide to simply allow my feet to carry me where they will.

I end up standing in front of an empty lot at the end of a lonely and familiar cul-de-sac.

How long ago had it been? I can barely even remember. Everything that concerned that little green bit of my past has long since been shut away. Not out of fear or regret, but out of the simple need to forget.

I don't believe in aliens anymore. I am now a man of, as my father would have put it, 'real science.'

I look at the decaying fence and the long-dead layer of grass that covers the lawn. I step onto the sidewalk that leads to the nonexistent house and walk up to where the front door should have been.

The dirt that had been so tossed about when I was last here has settled back to the way I assume it had been before he had come. I try to remember when it had been that he had disappeared.

I think back to the day he had swaggered his way into my life with that arrogant grin that seemed to be plastered permanently to his face. I had been...eight...no, nine? Something like that, I knew I had been in fourth grade.

He had been here for barely two years before he left.

I'll probably never know where he disappeared to, although I can't deny I have often wondered about it. I remember crying when I came to investigate his unusual absence from school. I had found his little lot empty, devoid of the eerily glowing green house and the tubes sticking out into the neighbors' walls.

He was my proof, I had thought. He had been my only chance to prove myself to my classmates, to my family, to everyone. I had sat in the gaping hole that had been left in the ground and I had cried and cried. He was gone.

For a few years after that I continued my paranormal investigation, but I knew I had lost my only chance. My sophomore year in high school I decided I would follow in my father's footsteps. He couldn't have been more pleased.

I went through the motions of collage education, and I even made a few of what one might have called friends; but I never really cared. I don't remember ever being truly happy since he left.

That had been thirty-two years ago. I stand at the end of the sidewalk and look into the dirt that had once

held all my dreams and hopes within it. As I stand there I feel more of my memories fading back to me.

I remember the lawn gnomes, and all the ways I had devised to get past them. I remember the little green robot dog that would always help me in my efforts to infiltrate the base if only I asked him nicely. I remember Zim's screaming voice and condescending laughter.

I remember how much I have missed him in the long lonely years since he left.

I never went to look for him. He was my best...my only friend. But I never went to look for him. I wish I could figure out why.

He told me once how happy it made him for me to chase him, for me to try and thwart his each and every move.

That's not to say I wouldn't have sliced him open on an autopsy table, don't get me wrong. I hated him as he hated me, and we would have destroyed each other given half the chance...

But for him to simply leave...it had been terrible, like a chunk of my very being had been ripped out, never, ever to return. He didn't even leave so much as a note to let me know what had happened to him.

I felt so worthless that day. He had been the only person I had ever known who had understood me, and I thought I understood him. I thought he had seen me as a threat to his mission; as a force to be respected (if not feared), as more than just another human.

He never saw me as I saw him. I understand that now.

To him I was just what he always called me; a stupid earthmonkey, not worthy to stand in the way of the amazing plans of Zim. He never respected me, I was only fooling myself. Just as I was always fooling myself to think that I could make it in the world as anything other than what society wanted me to be.

I studied paranormal investigation, as I said, for a few years after he left; but my hopes and dreams died that day. He took them with him away into the stars, neither realizing nor caring what he had done to the little smetling he had left behind.

I would be surprised if he has thought of me even once since he left. Maybe he has forgotten that he ever came to this pitiful little dirt-ball; he never did have a very long memory span.

I envy him. I really do.

I feel a drop of water run down my cheek and glance up to see that it isn't raining.

My steady, deliberate footsteps can be heard as I walk away from the empty lot.