

# Artists' Society

## See the real thing

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### Prolog: The Way has been made without you.

"Take back the night", said the boy. He didn't understand what was meant, but he also didn't care about this. He just met the boy accidentally. Both of them came along this street from opposing directions and ran into each other.

"Sorry, what do you mean?" He took a closer look at him. On the first sight he may have looked filthy and creepy but this was just on the surface. Beneath it, he had white teeth, short brown hair and his young face was shaved.

"Take back the night. There is more need for midday's light."

"Oh boy, it is half past eleven pm. What do you think should I do about this?" The boy grinned and the next thing Joe could remember was the pain all over his body.

Someone had beaten his head badly. As he touched it, he reached an area barely bleeding, but his hair was stuck together from the blood, so it was supposed to be better being treated, than lying alone in the dark.

He took a look around. At first he didn't see a thing. But surprisingly his eyes got used to the dark and almost unnaturally sharp was his sight. Joe was definitely in a warehouse with lots of boxes around him. It seemed to him, that this was arranged to cover him from strange looks. That was not something to calm him down. He listened carefully but there was no sign of others in the nearby surrounding. As he tried to get up he felt twisted around and his evening-meal was about to return. Just with a conscious afford he managed to get finally up on his feet. "Dear, this is strange." Joe tried to get hold on this boxes, because his legs were still slightly shaky. "This is a hell of a nightmare. I shouldn't drink that stuff again..."

He recapitulated the evening. His old friend Mike had called him surprisingly and asked to meet him in the 'prancing pony', a pub, a freaky fan of Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings' had opened about a year ago. "Hey, Joe! How are things going? Will ya meet me in the 'prancing pony' this night?" Mike had asked. Joe was so perplex that he could hardly refuse. "Sure... I didn't know you're in town. When did ya return??" – "See me at 9 pm, I'll explain later" Mike had said laughingly and hung up.

Considering Mike's habit for long speeches, this was more than unusual. But Joe knew, he would not get away from the 'prancing pony' without exactly one of those long speeches. Maybe he had to endure even two of them for they haven't met for a damn long time. Joe had smiled about his upcoming memories. *Yeah, we had lots of fun back then.* In school hadn't passed a day they weren't together and playing tricks on everyone.

Now he started to wonder. Mike was supposed to have lived the past 6 years

somewhere in the middle east. Some sort of peacekeeper or something. Every now and then they had a telephone call and some letters, but Mike always stressed he wasn't able to come home for a vacation. And the past 3 years Mike had complained that besides him – Joe – no one else replied anymore, neither the phone nor his letters. *So, how did Mike get to know the 'prancing pony'?* Joe himself hadn't been there yet. And according to Mike's explanations he had called him right away from the airport. After their visit there, Joe could say that the 'prancing pony' was a nice little pub, but it was nothing more. But in his thoughts he stressed the attribute little. *Yeah, little it was indeed.* Too little to have any advertising.

Besides his current situation – he had been struck down, was in a completely dark warehouse and it seemed that he was all alone – he was about to develop a full grown paranoia towards his best friend.

The optimist in him asked himself, what he should tell his boss tomorrow. Doubtlessly he had to pay a visit to a doctor. And of course, he needed a shower, other clothes... and, thinking of it, some sleep would be fantastic. But it was so damn cold in that warehouse, that the optimist within him grew silent. Another closer look around his prison made him see a dark irregularly shaped mark on the ground, just where he had lied. "What the heck...?" He tried to squat next to that mark to have a closer look, but failed and almost fell. With another try he was close enough to notice, that there had been a liquid. There was a faint but yet strange smell in the air and he suspected that mark to be the source. Reconsidering the wound on his head and this mark, he felt very weak all of a sudden. *No... That can't be. Dear, that had to be at least a gallon. Man, if that is my blood, I should be dead by now.* Automatically he went for his pulse. His fingers sought in vain, hysterically. "Where is it, where, where, where...???" He tried to calm himself down, but had little success. He sat down and stared at this mark, and thought, that he could feel the blood loss instantly. Desperation had a tight grip on him. "I'm about to die, I gonna die, ... die... die as dead, I'll be gone, all alone... die..." His voice died away. There was no reasoning in him anymore – so he did not understand, nor embrace what had happened to him. After all, it appeared to be the tragedy of his life and he was his exclusive audience. Thus he felt to be the unhappiest man ever to have lived upon the world's cruel face and slowly fainted away, out of his own misery.