“Yo, Jake, you free after school today?” Ryan said, winking at his friend from across the room.

Jake looked up from the book he was reading and for a moment nervously glanced around.

No one was looking at them; the library was mostly empty and they were in a section off to the side.

Ryan snorted when he saw Jake's reaction.

“Relax. No one gives a shit man. Hell, most of these people are doing much worse, I assure you.”

Jake blushed for just a moment and snapped the book closed.

“Y-Yeah, I'm free. You got something interesting?” he asked, looking up at the other boy.

Ryan nodded and a grin soon ran its way across his face.

“Something interesting, I swear. I tried some already and, I can assure you it has my seal of approval. 100% satisfaction guaranteed.”

Jake seemed to relax a bit and nodded back. “Same time? I can jump on the bus after practice.”

“Sounds good. But you gotta help me with that damn essay for history.“Ryan said, futzing with the strap on his backpack. ”Ms Merran says that if I don't turn this one in she's going to fail me.”

“Jesus man, how many assignments have you missed?” Jake asked.

“One too many apparently. Do you have the rubrick? I think I lost mine.” He admitted sheepishly.

Jake rolled his eyes. “Yeah. Its online too. But seriously man, if you want to get into a good college you gotta try a bit harder right? I can't imagine your parents will be very happy if you fail history...”

Ryan pursed his lips. “Those who fail history…?” He said, a grin reappearing, then dissapearing as suddenly as it came. “But seriously, they would be hella mad, which is why you've gotta help me on this one, right?”

Jake sighed but nodded. “Definitely. You can't fail.” He said sweeping his book into his pack. Ryan stepped back as Jake got to his feet and swung his backpack onto his shoulder. “That would just be pathetic, wouldn't it?” he said with a grin.

“Don't even fucking joke. My dad would murder me.” Ryan added as they walked out of the library.

“So. You said you got something good?” Jake asked, lying on the sofa staring up at the ceiling. The fan rotated slowly above them.

“Yeah, and my parents are both out of the house until real late. Its perfect.” Ryan said, dissapearing into his room.

“What do your parents do again?” Jake asked, throwing a baseball towards the ceiling, and catching it.

“Moms a nurse, but she does evening and night shifts.” The muffled reply came back from the other room.

“Cool. At General in the city? I went there when I broke my arm.”

“Nah. She has to go all the way out to St. Michaels. Thats why I have the house free all the time.”

Ryan came in from the other room with a duffel bag slung over his shoulder. As he walked, he rummaged through its contents.

“That sucks. Thats gotta be a hour and a half to there, no?”

“Yeah, I guess so. But its a bit better than normal since she works such weird hours. Damn, where did that stuff go?” He placed the bag onto the ground and started bulling out random pieces of clothing.

Jake caught the baseball and looked over at Ryan. “Ha, you've hidden it so well you can't even find it!”

“Shut it. Its in here somewhere...” Ryan went back to digging through the bag. “Ah. Here we go.”

A sudden thought crossed Jake's mind. “Its getting colder. What are we going to do when we can't vent your room out?”

“Eh, we'll think of something. Maybe go out to the forest, or that abandoned lot on 35th. No one's ever there.”

Jake rolled off the sofa and got up. “The forest for sure. I don't want to get caught trespassing.”

Ryan made a noncommital response.

“Ah, fuck yeah. Here it is!” he said, yanking out a baggie.

Jake walked over and peered at the contents which Ryan held out triumphantly.

“Wait. What the fuck is that? That's not weed. Is this some weird synthetic shit?”

In the baggie were some nondescript looking tablets the size of a dime.

“Uh, yeah, I guess so. But its ok, I've already tried one of them, and its just like the stuff we've been smoking only like fifty times better. Its scary how good it is.” Ryan said, continuing to hold out the baggie.

Jake was not quite convinced. He rubbed his forehead and inspected the tablets.

“This isn't like acid or something, is it? These tablets are pretty small. Are you only supposed to take one?”

Ryan shook his head. “Haven't you been listening in health class? LSD isn't addictive and you can't even overdose, even if you take massive amounts.”

Jake raised his eyebrow and stepped back from the bag.

“You paying attention in class? Thats a god damn first.” Jake said with a slightly nervous laugh, crossing his arms.

Ryan palmed the baggie and drew a bit closer to Jake.

“Listen man. I actually do take this stuff seriously. I'm not out to do anything dangerous. I always make sure its safe beforehand. I'm not an idiot. I know how serious some of the synthetic stuff is. I look up all the side effects and check some of the books in the library as well.”

“But to answer your question, yeah, this stuff is basically acid.” he said, tossing the bag onto the end table, where it skidded to a stop.

“Basically?”

“Uh, yeah. The guy I got it from warned me that its some newer version, pretty exclusive stuff; its just hitting the streets now. Apparently some lab in California is producing it.”

“California? Seems kind a weird. How do people know where its coming from?”

Ryan smirked and retrieved the bag again and held it up to Jake for inspection.

“Take a look yourself.”

Jake did. On the bag of the bag, there was a small white label: 685 West Coast Lane. Rynco Pharmaceuticals. Tempo.

“Thats weird. They actually have their address on here? Isn't that kinda stupid?” Jake said, holding the bag. Looks legit though.

“I looked it up online. Its not a real address, but the guy who sold me it let me in on the secret: its actually a boat. The whole thing is named Rynco Pharmaceuticals. I guess they drive around to avoid the cops.” Ryan shrugged.

“I'll be honest. I was pretty sketched out as well. But this stuff is way more legit than most of the stuff we've been getting. They could have mixed whatever in the weed, but these bags are shipped with an oxygen reactive packet. You can't open it to the air without the person buying it knowing. Kinda smart actually. Me and Yero talked about this stuff for a while before I agreed to give it a shot.”

“You know I don't fucking like that guy right? He's just hella sketchy. I trust you Ryan, but I really don't understand why you trust him. Seems like the kind of guy to beat up old ladies in back alleys.”

“Yero's not a bad guy. Sure, he's not the brightest tool in the shed, but he knows his shit when it comes to drugs: he's never steered me wrong before. Remember that great stuff we got two months ago? Yero got me that on his recommendation.”

“Hmmm”

“Look man. Do you want to try it or not? I'm not going to fucking force you… We could just play video games or whatever. I just thought it was pretty good last time and I wanted to let you try it as well.”

Jake thought for a moment. On one hand, he was nervous about trying something so clearly non-natural. He had gotten used to the weed which at least looked like an actual plant. On the other hand, he really wanted to try new things. Ryan was way more popular than he was, and hanging out with the other guy had let Jake get closer to Ryan's friends, many of whom were girls for some reason. He was still a noob when it came to drugs, he as sure that at some point he was going to be at a part at some point and the topic or the substances would come up and he didn't want to look like a loser…

“Fine.” Jake said. “How do you take it? Its like under your tongue right? I've seen it in the movies.”

Ryan looked relieved. “For some reason you actually chew these. They don't really taste like anything though. You have to wait like 20 minutes for it to take effect, so don't take more even if you don't feel it working.”

Ryan started to open the bag as they both sat on the couch.

“I just want to take one.” Jake said firmly.

“Fine bro. I just took one last time as well. It was quite the experience, but it only lasted like half an hour. My parents aren't coming home until crazy late so I'm going to take two this time. Yero said that he took like five of them but that just seems wasteful. Its pretty powerful stuff.”

Ryan shook out three tablets and gave Jake one of them.

“Bottoms up!” Ryan said, laughing as he crunched the tablets.

Jake waited for just a moment of hesitation staring at the tablet before he joined.

Like Ryan had said, the tablet tasted bland as hell.

“Eh… It tastes pretty poor.” Jake said, as he felt the chalky substance disintigrate. “But I guess its better that they don't mixit with sugar. Some poor kid might think it was candy or something.”

“Let me tell you, no kid is going to mistake this stuff as candy. Not after the first time.” Ryan said, his voice more confident now that Jake had joined him. Despite his reassurances, he still was a bit nervous. He had always really admired Jake's skill in school, he he respected the other kid's judgement. It was in fact of because of that, that he wanted Jake to try this Tempo stuff he had bought. He had a feeling Jake would really take to it, he had found that he was super productive after he had tried it the first time.

“So you want to play some halo or something until it kicks in?” Jake asked.

“Fuck yeah I do. Lets own some poor kids.” He said, jumping over to the TV as he turned on the game station underneath it.

Almost exactly twenty minutes later, Jake had a funny sensation and the paused the game quickly.

“Shit dude. I think its kicking in!”

“Cool. Just lean back and stuff. You don't want to try to play stuff while its going on. You'll see what I mean. I think it would be like way to much sensory overload.”

He got up to turn off the TV and stumbled a bit.

“Woah. Ok. So its definitely hitting me as well.” He quickly turned off the TV and returned to the couch. “You definitely want to be sitting down for this. Never take this stuff at school, yeah?”

Jake turned to respond. “For sure...” but before he could finish his sentence he suddenly became aware of a sense of otherness. It had been creeping up on him for a bit now, but as he turned, the disorientation grew. His head swung as if in slow motion, and the mere turning of it on his neck for some reason felt liberating. It was as if a horrible tension had been lifted from the back of his head.

His face was swimming through some sort of liquid, because the stuff around him was obviously too thick to be air. Yet he didn't seem to have any trouble breathing, and rather than constricting, the sensation was war and comforting, like a reassuring weight across his entire body.

As he finished turning his head, he could have sworn that the physical movement of his eyes and his face preceeded that of his mind, and the lag between the two was, for some reason, immensely pleasureful.

“Are you… uhhh… feeling this?” He asked Ryan, realizing that as he did so, that he had never been more aware of his lips as he spoke. They seemed strange and foreign.

The world seemed to lag even more, second by second, to the point where he was having trouble concentrating on individual objects, like the world was made of somewhat indistinct smears instead of actual physical objects.

Lines and edges of things either blurred or doubled. The concentration of color reduced somehow, the light through the window becoming more of a pleasant suggestion than a thing that could be observed. He felt himself start sweating, and his breathing slow. A last truly conscious thought ran through his head: What the hell was going on?

And then he was sinking, slowly at first, a burst of searing satisfaction inundating his vision in a jarring violent blue. It was in a location that he couldn't quite place. The rest of his vision was still in three dimensions, or at least what passed for it given human limitations, but this thing existed in something like two dimensions. It just existed. It hung there, refusing to be placed, like an overlay or, more frighteningly like a hole.

Yet while although the vision might have scared him earlier, the particular shade of color seemed very pleasant. As he stared at it (and stared was a poor word, since it didn't actually exist) he realized that it wasn't actually blue at all. It was in fact impossible to place. The total sensation was blue, but the edges of it were rapidly shifting and a perplexing array of red and searing green, which interchanged even as focus was put on them.

The full sensation was more than visual though, the sinking was getting deeper, and at this point it was impoosible to argue that he hadn't in fact sunked through the sofa, straight through the sofa, and not under it, but somehow in-through it. He and it were perfectly capable of coexisting in the same confines. And that explained the pressing sensation. The pillows next to him, around him, through him.

The world inside himself was heating up, panting and out of breath, sweat running down his face but it wasn't a problem. Everything was going fine. More than fine. He was suffused with an infinitely percolating warming sensation, and it was growing by the second. Inside him obviously lay the furnace of the whole operation, it was central to the entire endeavor, and it was doing a spectacular job. Seeping through his veins was a liquid warm and through is bones was a slow advance of comfort, with just the slightest tinge of sparks on his skin.

He might have been observing within, but it was definitely happening from without. It was selfless, a sublime obliteration of obligation and ownership and worry. The things that could have been and might have been, and could still be, were in fact an impossibility. Everything floated off. Everything left. There was just pleasant sensations.

Yet the pleasant was transforming as well. The strength within was heating, and the vision had spawned friends, which reverse evaporated across the vision, filling the outside with that deep shifting not-quite-blue. And it was all meant to be.

A moment of precognition and sense determined that the heat was growing and the vision was growing, and at some point that meant that the boundary between the two wouldn't exist anymore. In fact it was going to happen quite soon. The edges were already starting to go. The two worlds were going to meet and whatever was left of him was in the center, and already it was falling away into perfection, mind shedding perfection. It was just his skin now, with inner flame on one side and the cool shifting blue on the other. And now skin was all that was left, such a thin and incidental, artificial boundary that was there for just a split second before everything