

WHAT THE VOICE WANTS ME TO DO

By Bradley Walton

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CHARACTERS: DANNY/DANI, a teenager, and the VOICE. Both characters may be either gender.

AT RISE: *DANNY is looking at something on the ground as the VOICE begins speaking to HIM.*

VOICE: I know what you're thinking.

DANNY: No you don't.

VOICE: If I'm here, then we both know what you're thinking.

DANNY: Go away.

VOICE: I'm sorry. I can't do that.

DANNY: You're not sorry.

VOICE: You're right. I'm not. But can you fault me for trying to be polite?

DANNY: You're horrible and disgusting. Why bother with polite?

VOICE: Because horrible and disgusting goes down easier when it's coated with a nice, shiny layer of polite.

DANNY: Whatever.

VOICE: *(indicating what DANNY is looking at on the ground)* That's a beauty, isn't it?

DANNY: No it's not.

VOICE: Don't lie.

DANNY: It's not.

VOICE: Maybe not to most people, no. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder, right? So with that thought in mind... is that not just about the most beautiful thing you ever saw?

DANNY: It's in pain.

VOICE: So yes.

DANNY: That's not what I said.

VOICE: You know and I know how you feel about things in pain.

DANNY: It's wrong.

VOICE: You said that the last time, and it didn't stop you. Same thing the time before that. And the time before—

DANNY: I mean it this time.

VOICE: Maybe. It doesn't matter. You'll cave in. You always do.

DANNY: I'm going to walk away.

VOICE: I seriously doubt that.

DANNY: I mean it.

VOICE: You mean a lot of things today.

DANNY: I can't keep doing this.

VOICE: Sure you can.

DANNY: No, I can't.

VOICE: Danny... everybody has bad habits. Some people smoke. Some people drink. Some people eat too much. You play with animals.

DANNY: I don't play with them! I torture them!

VOICE: I was just trying to help you feel better about it.

DANNY: I don't want to feel better about it!

What the Voice Wants Me to Do - Page 3

VOICE: Does that make it more satisfying for you... feeling bad about it?

DANNY: No.

VOICE: So embrace it and don't worry about it.

DANNY: I don't like it when *I'm* hurt. I shouldn't hurt other things.

VOICE: You're the higher life form. It's okay. I mean, think about the first time. Do you remember the first time?

DANNY: It was a spider.

VOICE: That's right. And what did you do?

DANNY: I pulled its legs off and set it on fire.

VOICE: And how did that make you feel?

DANNY: Strong. Powerful.

VOICE: It made you feel like a god, didn't it?

DANNY: Yes.

VOICE: It made you feel like a god, inflicting punishment on a sinner and sending it to everlasting torment. Because nobody likes spiders.

DANNY: No. Spiders are bad.

VOICE: How many spiders did you do that to?

DANNY: One hundred and thirty-three.

VOICE: That's right. One hundred and thirty-three. And they all deserved it. Every last one of them. Nasty, horrible spiders.

DANNY: I hate spiders.

VOICE: I know you do. And what is it that you hate most about spiders? At least, about the ones you're able to catch around here?

DANNY: They're small.

VOICE: That's right. They're so tiny, and after a while, it just didn't mean as much anymore, being a god of torment over little spiders. It didn't make you feel as strong and powerful as it used to. Because after all, they're just spiders, and you could do so much better than that.

DANNY: Crickets.

VOICE: A small step up from spiders, but a step nonetheless. That was a short phase. You didn't torture many of those, did you?

DANNY: Five.

VOICE: Not very fulfilling at all. But then you caught the mouse. Do you remember staring at the mouse in the little clear plastic box you'd trapped him in?

DANNY: Yes.

VOICE: That was a big moment, wasn't it?

DANNY: Yes.

VOICE: As I recall, you thought he was cute, didn't you?

DANNY: Yes.

VOICE: And you were actually considering letting him go.

DANNY: I was going to.

VOICE: But you didn't. Because that was the exact moment that you met me. Of course, I'd been watching all along. I'd just never had a reason to say anything before. You'd never needed encouragement up to that point. But we had such a nice chat. It made you feel good, didn't it? Knowing that you weren't so alone? Knowing that there was someone else who had the same interests as you?

DANNY: I am alone. You're not real.

What the Voice Wants Me to Do - Page 4

VOICE: I beg to differ.

DANNY: I'm alone and I'm sick.

VOICE: You're not sick. You're special. You're powerful. You can do things other people are too weak to do. You don't want to be weak, do you?

DANNY: No.

VOICE: And mice lost their thrill a long time ago. Guinea pigs, too. And rabbits. Cats.

They've all lost their luster. It's time to move on to the next thing. And here it is. A dog.

Hit by a car. Two broken legs. It's not going anywhere. It's like an offering to you... a divine sign that you should keep going. That even though you may have misgivings, you should press on to bigger and better things.

DANNY: I really want to.

VOICE: I know you do. And you should. It's okay.

DANNY: It's not okay!

VOICE: Don't think about it. Let me do your thinking for you. That's what I'm here for. If you do what I say, then you don't have to feel guilty about it, because I'm the one who said to do it.

DANNY: But I'll have made the choice to listen to you.

VOICE: Don't choose. There is no choice. No thought. Only doing. Do what I say. Let go. Be what you were meant to be.

DANNY: I wasn't meant to be... this.

VOICE: Of course you were.

DANNY: I'm leaving.

VOICE: You know you'll come back.

DANNY: It'll be dead by the time I come back.

VOICE: I don't think you can keep yourself away that long.

DANNY: I will.

VOICE: Think about what you're saying. You're going to just walk away and leave this poor dog here to die on its own.

DANNY: That's right.

VOICE: You know you want to watch it die.

DANNY: I do. But I'm not going to.

VOICE: You know you want to make it die.

DANNY: Shut up!

VOICE: It's going to die anyway. You might as well kill it yourself. It would be the exact same result in the end.

DANNY: No, it wouldn't! It'd be worse for the dog if I did it! It would be worse for me! Every time I do this... it feels so good... I feel so alive, but when it's done, I feel like I've lost one more little piece of myself, and if I keep going, there won't be anything left.

VOICE: Those little pieces that slip away... you don't need them. They make you weak.

They make you feel. Gods don't feel. Gods do what they want and they don't care.

DANNY: I'm not a god.

VOICE: You can be just like one.

DANNY: No I can't.

VOICE: I can make you like one.

DANNY: You're lying! I'd be better off without you!

VOICE: You are nothing without me.

DANNY: I'd rather be nothing!

VOICE: You are *less* than nothing.

DANNY: I know I am.

VOICE: You're a waste.

DANNY: I know.

VOICE: Of a body.

DANNY: I know.

VOICE: A mind.

DANNY: I know.

VOICE: A soul.

DANNY: I know.

VOICE: You have no reason to be.

DANNY: I know.

VOICE: The creatures who die for you have more purpose.

DANNY: They don't die for me! I kill them!

VOICE: They have more purpose than you have without me.

DANNY: I don't want you here with me!

VOICE: You would be lost without me.

DANNY: You're just a voice in my head!

VOICE: I am so much more than that.

DANNY: No you aren't! You're a part of me that's broken!

VOICE: You are broken, but I am the thing that completes you.

DANNY: What... what are you?

VOICE: Everything that you can never be.

DANNY: Are you real? Tell me!

VOICE: If I wasn't real, we wouldn't be having this conversation, would we?

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