

## Roswell

by Eric Barcelos

I looked up and found myself standing next to my dusty truck again. I didn't want to be here. It was as dusty as it was this morning and as empty as its been for the past few months. I closed my eyes and found myself at a gas station with a wad of cash and bruised knuckles. The teller handed me a gas can and pointed me to a pump. I filled it without saying anything. I'd be lying if I said it was new to black out like that. I learned to hide my surprise and just roll with whatever it was that I was doing. I knew where I would be taken and decided to head back to the truck.

An ungodly pulsing pain raced into the nape of my neck once the truck came into view. Thousands of pricks set themselves into my spine as I filled the old Ford. The engine struggled to turnover, it coughed and sputtered as I twisted the key. The sun fell and died as I went back to what I knew best, aimlessly driving. That invasive, bright light consumed me again. I approached it as fast as I could, relief was coming.

I remember that dull hum on the dusty air that night, the kind that you feel in your spine, your skull, and your gut. I rolled out of my bed and shuffled to my window. I opened it wide and looked out lazily at the New Mexican skyline. Over the tiny homes and the low hills floated a pulsing pure white light. It was almost blindingly gorgeous there and I wanted it, I needed it. There was a light resisting voice in the back of my mind telling me it was nothing and to go to bed, very quickly my autonomy was silenced I grabbed my keys and, in only my slippers and underwear, hopped into my truck and floored it. The beaten truck only had half a tank, I passed a gas station and didn't even consider stopping. It ran out of gas and the instant it stopped moving I hopped out and kept walking. The crushing darkness of the desert night invaded my vision.

Bubbles of black and white popped and grew at my peripheral vision but all I needed was the center of my focus. All I needed was to behold The Light.

The bubbles took form ever so slowly, bit by bit they formed into lanky people. Tall and inhumanly proportioned they glared at me as I moved. Invading my vision they nearly consumed that blinding white pearl in the sky until one bright flash banished the beings.

In a white flash I woke up tucked in comfortably into my bed. A hot knife of unadulterated, searing pain cut a path across my chest. I ripped the blanket off me to see what it was. A pulsating lump sat under my skin. It looked to be as fat as a softball at its widest point and longer than my forearm, it tapered off from its midsection to its tips. It was curled slightly under a thin, faint line that hadn't been there before. I slammed my fist down on it and immediately it frantically forced itself between my ribs and rested in my chest cavity. I could feel it nestled against my lungs as I screamed. I couldn't see it anymore while it rested in my chest cavity.

"I need it, don't you deny me" I screamed as I became conscious of myself. It was an odd sensation at the time, I hadn't gotten used to it yet. It was like watching someone else from inside myself.

"Sir, we've already checked and we think that exploratory surgery is needlessly dangerous." the doctor said from behind the desk.

As I slowly gained control over myself I began to cry, "You don't understand, I can't control myself anymore. Sometimes I black out and I don't know how t-" A cold chill ran down my spine and an irrational cold fear washed over me, "You're in on it! You know what they did to me!" I bolted out of the tiny office like a bat out of hell.

I pulled out an old doctor's note and flipped it over and over. Negative, negative negative, it's all it ever says to me. It had an x-ray attached to it showing my chest completely normal. Something was wrong, maybe it hid somewhere else in my body, maybe it camouflage itself from the x-ray or, I could be insane. Everytime I think about it there's a lash of anger that cuts across my brain, forcing my attention somewhere else, never letting me get to the bottom of anything. Even though it stared me in the face I couldn't rationalize anything. The random fits, the screaming, they weren't me.

I was starting to get closer to where it came from. I could feel a small circle of needles digging into the nape of my neck. Thousands of pins and needles dug in up and down my spine. It was pushing up against my spine and the chair, I was pushed forward in my seat by the mass of it. I tried to distract myself with the radio, it was only AM. I couldn't afford a new truck with an FM one so I had to make due with scratchy and strained versions of Bing Cosby songs.

I began to anticipate the end, soon enough my hoarse throat would be free from the late night screaming fits. My stomach might finally stay full for once. The stretch marks on my skin, the ones that are carved by its path, will finally be relaxed no longer drawn taught. The time was now, I rolled out of my car as the white consumed my vision. This time I did not black out, I was fully conscious but completely blinded by the white. My jaw popped and cracked as the hinge was ripped from its joint. My uvula rubbed against the slick body of that thing. I wretched, and wretched, and wretched. I desperately tried to vomit but it chose to take its time. My lungs screamed for relief and my heart beat against my ribs in a bid to escape the hell of my body. I was held in consciousness as I wished for death. Finally it slithered off my face, never letting me see it and at last I could embrace the black.