

**THE PSI-CHOTIC  
ADVENTURES OF  
DREW DARBY**

**RICHARD W. KELLY**



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The Psi-Chotic Adventures of Drew Darby Sample

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## THANK YOU

I would like to thank Phyllis Foley for editing this manuscript. And my wife for editing all the others.



# ONE

## **SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, PLEASE**

The engine revved with humiliation as Drew steered toward his new place of employment. The bright greens and yellows of his HappyLand employees' shirt mocked his sixteen year old brain with the unwanted reality that he was who he did not want to be.

A green light released him from his neighborhood drawing him ever closer to the ridicule that was likely to accompany his first day on the new job. His foot let up on the gas and shifted over to the brake pedal of his ten year old car. He drove the decade old rusted out hatchback every day to his high school where he lugged a huge tuba in and out of the small car and into the band hall where he helped the band director police the halls and snitch on his fellow students who were breaking rules. He sported old fashioned pilot glasses that came down below his cheek bones magnifying the blemishes on his face. He even let his hair hang shaggy and in need of a trim while leaving a receding hairline already noticeable at his young age. All these things and being employed by HappyLand left his stomach twisting with

anticipation of the humility.

He drove his beloved vehicle into a left turn lane and stared out the side window at the hideous fast food restaurant that matched his bright shirt glowing from the corners of his vision. The light flashed a green arrow. He stared at the building. The arrow turned yellow, then red. Honks came from behind him upset that he refused to go to work. A deep breath filled Drew's lungs and he turned back to the traffic light.

His eyes trained on the red circle, but the cartoon colored restaurant mocked him from the periphery. When the green arrow came back Drew forced himself to press the gas pedal just enough to approach the store. Dark music played in his head as he slowly crept toward HappyLand. The soundtrack in his mind could have been appropriate for an approaching army of demons, but that would somehow seem less intimidating than the idea of being seen working for HappyLand.

Still barely rolling down the road, his car gently drove up the driveway into the parking lot. He instinctively parked in the back and let his head fall into his hands as he overdramatized his unfortunate place of employment.

His stomach filled with the uncomfortable carbonation of anticipation as he opened the car door and placed his black sneakers on the asphalt. Every step he took toward the door felt like a step toward the end of his social life or at least what was left of it. As the wind played with his unkempt hair he scorned his parents for forcing him to take

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a job.

They saw his lack of friends as a weakness and making him gain employment was their only solution. His pleas for a reprieve fell on deaf ears when his father called an old buddy who happened to own a franchise of the horrid HappyLand outside their neighborhood.

Drew had told them he was fine, that he did not need money, that many highly looked upon people were hermits, but it was no use. Apparently, his parents did not want to raise a monk or a serial killer and chained him to the prison that was a job.

Drew looked at the door not wanting to walk inside. It was a metaphor for an entry into a darker world. Or maybe it was an exit from his childhood. Either way he did not want to enter. He could see Mr. Harkins walking around with perfect posture in his sweat-stained Wal-Mart business attire. The pale blue tie swung around his thick neck reminding Drew that his new boss and his father's longtime friend was former military. The realization of just how horrifying his new militaristically disciplined career may be caused his knees to go weak.

Drew's balance went and he fell forward with his face and the glass echoing an ugly splat into the dining room. This caught the ear of Mr. Harkins who quickly trotted over to obtain his new employee.

The manager's military humor kicked in as he pushed the door open with enough force to toss Drew into the parking lot while he remarked, "Oh, gee, didn't see ya there

young man.”

Drew pulled himself to his feet refusing to look Mr. Harkins in the eye. He walked with slunk shoulders past his new boss and into the headache-igniting dining room of HappyLand. The bright greens and yellows made Drew squint in agony, a feeling he never felt as a customer in the grease-filled death trap.

Mr. Harkins looked down on the boy, slightly disgusted with his lack of self-hygiene or at least self-respect for his fashion sense. “Report to the training room behind the kitchen. You are a bit early, sit in a chair and wait for your trainer to arrive.” He turned on his heel to march back to the bathrooms leaving Drew to find the training room on his own.

He watched the ground as he walked past the cashier’s counter and into the kitchen. Slipping on the greasy floor he kept his eyes on the ground to avoid meeting a gaze with anyone who was employed there. He knew that he was on the low end of the high school totem pole, but that did not mean he did not want to move up on that scale and working at HappyLand could do nothing but the opposite.

A deep voice came from Drew’s right directing him to the training room which he mechanically wandered into. The floor went from a greasy slip and slide to dry rubber tiles being temporarily tarnished by his now filthy black sneakers. The room was very empty - a chair, a television and a few inspirational posters on the wall. Drew collapsed into the chair, exasperated with defeat.

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He looked at the walls ready to give in and accept the misery that was now to be his life. He read the first inspirational poster trying to convince his sub-conscience to learn its lesson.

The first in the nice line of six inspirational said, “Get up and get to work, NOW.” Drew thought to himself, ‘I don’t feel motivated.’ The accompanying picture was no help either, just an empty boat with a paddle lying inside.

The next said, “The job you deserve is this one.” The picture was a smiling cartoon sheep knitting a sweater. Another feeling of self-worthlessness swept over him.

“Hell isn’t punishment, it’s just for failures.” Above the slogan was a picture of an ugly bodybuilder type man that had so much of a fake tan that he looked orange. In it he was signing a last will and testament and he was oddly happy about it. Drew could not stop his disgust at how demented Mr. Harkins was.

“Out of desperation, unwavering dedication is born.” This one had a picture of a man from the eyes up tapping his temple as if to say, “What an epiphany this is.” There was an odd tattoo on the man’s hand, looking somewhat like the Greek letter ‘delta’.

“Of everything you want, you have this.” Mr. Harkins was pictured above the somewhat inspirational line in full military garb with a very serious look on his face, but for some reason he had one eye opened wide while the other was noticeably closed.

Drew thought how much his new boss had fallen

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from the height of the military to being a lowly fast food manager.

The last poster bore the image of two people on a roller coaster with a thought bubble above their heads saying “YipeeeeeeeE!” The last e in the word was oddly capitalized. Drew wondered about the purpose of the capitalization as he read the line below. “Here is the rest of your life.”

He leaned back in the chair looking at the line of posters, the big E in the last still perplexing him. Out of boredom he started to play with the posters, counting the number of words in each phrase, looking for repeating words, comparing the background colors of each...

But after a couple of coincidences, he noticed something that made his neck hair stand on end. The first word of each poster made a sentence he did not want to see. “Get the Hell out of here.” He figured it to be coincidence, but it made him a bit nervous.

Unable to sit still he continued searching the signs for other hidden messages. He kept staring at the E.

He looked at the ‘delta’ in the fourth picture and couldn’t help but focus on Mr. Harkins’ eye in the fifth. His heart began to race as he put the letters together. Delta was the Greek letter for D. Eye. E. DIE. Drew’s breathing began to pound his chest. His heart was racing faster than he could handle.

The rest of the posters began to make sense. There was an oar in the boat. A female sheep was a ewe. The orange man was signing a will. He put them all together. Oar ewe will

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D I E. Get the Hell out of here or you will die.

Drew was terrified. Forget coincidence he decided as he sprang toward the door realizing there was no handle on the inside. The message made no sense, there was no reason for him to fear for his life, but it was no time for logic.

Drew took a few steps back into the room and charged the door with a shoulder block. He bounced off the steel door and fell to the ground, his head cracking against a hard rubber tile dislodging it from the ground. He picked up the tile instinctively wanting to return it to its place when he noticed the word wrong was written on the back of it accompanied by a small twenty-seven. He turned to his side and ripped up the tile next to it.

Another wrong with the number twenty-six. Over the intercom came a weasel-y little voice speaking directly to Drew. "I'll be in a minute, why don't you turn on the TV before we get started."

Drew tried to ignore his fears and turned on the television, telling himself he was crazy. The old television came on with a small electrical buzz in the background.

There was a man in a HappyLand hat talking about inspiration, but Drew could not focus. He kept looking at the tiles on the ground that he had pulled up. There were eight tiles from wall to wall in each direction making sixty-four tiles total. Counting from the front corner of the room they were tiles number fourteen and fifteen. Counting from another direction they were tiles ten and eighteen. Why were they labeled twenty-six and twenty-seven?

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The television spoke in the background, “At HappyLand we help every customer. We pay attention to every word. If we are speaking to a customer, we count every smile. If we are cleaning, we clean every tile. If we are reporting, we pay attention to every column and every row. “

Drew continued to try to calm himself down by taking slow relaxed breaths while the television repeated the same line over and over. As his heart rate slowed, the words of the TV drilled into his skull as if he was having brain surgery. He began to chant the line.

“Every word”, he paused. “Every Smile”, another pause. “Every column, every row”, then it hit him. The tile was not labeled twenty-seven it was column two row seven. His connection to the randomness of the situation pumped the adrenaline back into his veins.

He repeated things to himself again. Word. Smile. Column. Row. He turned back to the poster and counted words again. Forty-two. That can’t be it. Six posters and each had seven words. So, seven was the column. He looked back at the posters looking for smiles. The sheep was smiling, the orange man, and the two coaster riders. Four.

He kicked the chair out of the way to get to tile seven four. Again fearing for his life, he pawed at the rubber square yanking it out of the ground. As the tile came up, he could see a small red button sunken into the ground. Without hesitation he pressed the plastic circle and the door popped open.

A wave of relief flushed through Drew’s body as he

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saw his freedom open to the kitchen. Until he saw Mr. Harkins step into the door frame. The large fit man stepped into the room closing the door behind him.

“Let me out of here! My dad knows where I am!” Drew screamed out through the crackling in his pubescent voice. His hand kept mashing the red button popping the door back open.

Mr. Harkins kept slamming the door each time it popped open. His jaw began to clench and his face reddened. “Drew. Stop hitting that button. NOW!”

“I don’t know why you want to kill me, but...”

“I am not going to kill you.” He took a step toward Drew, but had to retreat to close the door again. “I said stop it.”

Drew just kept pressing the button as tears weld up in his eyes.

“You are safe. I need your help actually.”

“What are you talking about?” The words came out in globs past the tears streaming down the boys cheeks.

“Pull yourself together! You are the first one to solve the puzzle. You are only the second one to notice it even exists.”

This caught Drew off guard. Maybe he was safe after all. “Puzzle?”

“Yes, it is just a puzzle. We need to be able to identify those who can read between the lines of the universe.”

Drew popped the door again. He was relaxing a bit, but still didn’t trust Mr. Harkins. “Who is we?”

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“The United States military.”

# TWO

## **APRIL MAKES YOU WONDER IF YOU WANT TO JOIN**

Drew sat inside another stark white room. This time there were no posters to encourage inspiration. Instead he was left to take the ASVAB, otherwise known as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. There was a camera in the ceiling watching him, making sure he was being honest in his test taking tactics.

His hand shook as he filled in the bubbles on the sheet. The graphite of the pencil smeared outside the small circles while his body refused to leave the fight or flight mode. Drew worried that he may not be delivering his best work since he was so shaken up, but even in a traumatized form his agile mind was no match for the ASVAB.

He breezed through the math portions, the grammar, and the vocabulary. He answered them so quickly that when he stood up to signal his completion of the test a voice boomed over the intercom. “Why don’t you take another look at those answers, son. This could change your life.”

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Drew slowly bent his legs and returned to his seat. The rough fabric of the cheap chair irritated his back, but hearing someone suggest he missed something focused him. The lack of decoration in the room became a non-issue. The annoyance of the uncomfortable chair dissipated into a void. The hideousness of his eyesore of a shirt left his mind. Even the excitement of the events earlier were forgotten. Now he was determined to ace the test that lay in front of him.

He began by going back through the questions themselves, but he made quick work of that review. Then he began to check the patterns of his answers. A. B. A. C. D. C. B. A. D. D. D. A. B. D. A. He saw no discernable patterns. He flipped through the pages looking at the wording of each question searching for some hidden code that may give him instructions on what else to do on the test. Nothing.

He began to look around the room, but it was blank. His mind raced with possible patterns he could look for, but every one that he investigated turned out to be a dead end. He put his hand on his forehead trying to force back an impending headache knowing that the action was futile. He was exhausted mentally and still no answers as to why he needed to look again at the test.

He hunched down in the chair and asked himself why he cared so much. Why did he want to perform well on a military aptitude test? He had no desire to join the military. He was still in high school. He couldn't enlist until he was eighteen anyway.

The door smashed into the wall and Mr. Harkins

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stood on the threshold. "I assume you are done." He stretched his arm out toward Drew awaiting the test.

"Sure." Drew was beaten down and defeated. It didn't matter anymore to him if he passed or not. His head facing the blank table he blindly handed the test over to his boss.

"Good. I will return with your results shortly." Mr. Harkins was out the door before Drew could make any inquiries. But there was not a long wait in the room before Mr. Harkins was back in the doorway along with two other men in what appeared to be some sort of uniform.

There was a black man and a white man, both with the short crew cuts and both were standing straight up with their hands behind their backs. Their clothes reminded Drew of Star Trek. Black skin tight pants with what appeared to be a spandex shirt coming out of the top. They also both adorned a single badge portraying an unfinished pyramid with the eye of providence above it, the same symbol that was on the back of the United States one dollar bill.

The three men stepped into the room and closed the door behind them. The sight brought fear into the heart of Drew as his knees quaked even while sitting in the chair. He took a hard swallow and tried to compose himself.

"Mr. Darby?" Mr. Harkins waited for Drew to answer, but the association he had with his father and the name Mr. Darby left him quiet. "Drew?"

The boy looked up into the eyes of Mr. Harkins.

"Stand up, boy." Mr. Harkins voice went soft as if not

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to tip off the other two men that Drew did not understand. “I need you to raise your right hand, repeat after me.”

“What? I haven’t agreed to anything! I can’t join the military; I’m not even old enough.” Drew went right back into panic mode.

“Major Smith here has your new documents. You are now eighteen.”

The black man stepped forward and placed a new social security card, driver’s license, and birth certificate on the table. Lesson one - the government can solve a simple problem like age.

“No! I am in high school. I have my parents here. I can’t just up and leave and join...”

Mr. Harkins cut him off. “Drew.” Mr. Harkins abandoned his authoritative tone. “You don’t understand what is being offered to you. This is your chance to be a hero. This is your chance to make a difference. This is not just military service; this is saving mankind from evil.”

“But...what about my life here? What about my friends?” He was lying. He didn’t have any friends. “What about my family?”

“All will be taken care of. And you will only be gone in short bursts. If you pass this up, you will be missing out on a whole different world. If you walk out of this building without us, you will just be a HappyLand cashier.”

That was the motivation Drew needed. He had not put two and two together. Joining Mr. Harkins was his out. It was his relief from the torment of high school, from the

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embarrassment of HappyLand. He stood up and raised his right hand.

“I, Drew Darby.” Mr. Harkins reverted back to his military voice.

“I Drew Darby.”

“Do solemnly swear”

“Do solemnly swear”

“That I will support and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic.” Drew repeated. “That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same” Repeat. “That I will obey the orders of the President of the United States. That I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion. And that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Private in the Psy Guard of the United States upon which I am about to enter. So, help me God.”

As the last words passed his lips a feeling of bondage came over him. There was no experience within Drew’s life that could compare to the realization that he had just pledged his life’s purpose to his country. It was not something he was ashamed of, but he felt he was left helpless. He thought he should have put it off until he had experienced more in life.

The ideas swirling through Drew’s head were pointless. There was no escaping his duty now.

“Congratulations private Darby, you are doing a great service to your nation.” Mr. Harkins let a glow of pride emit from his façade as he watched the young man fight with his mind over his new obligation. “I apologize for the secrecy up

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until now, but we required your service to the United States Army's Psychic Operations. The recruits are few and far bet..."

He was interrupted by Drew who just realized what branch of the military he had just joined. "Psychic Operations? I am not psychic! How could I..."

Another interruption. "Private!" Mr. Harkins voice boomed throughout the tiny room. "I understand you have not been through basic, but in the service, we do not interrupt our superiors. I was trying to explain to you that you show promise for being able to acquire the necessary skills to operate as a psychic operative. This may not mean seeing the future; there are many specialties that fall under that category." He looked at his associates who stood stone-like at attention. "But just like any other branch you will be required to go through basic, be assigned a specialty, and then work within that grade."

Drew largely ignored the words as they echoed around the room instead choosing to focus on the word psychic. He did not believe in psychics, which left him in a reality that made about as much sense as Saturday morning cartoons. He looked up at Mr. Harkins, looking for some kind of guidance, but all he got was a hard stare.

They stood in silence for what felt like hours and ended with the older man leaving the room.

Major Smith stepped forward and in a near robotic tone he explained the current situation to Drew. "At this point we will administer the ASPVAB, Armed Services

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Psychic Vocational Aptitude Battery. Major Wallace here will be participating in the examination with you.” The white man stepped forward at the mention of his name.

Major Wallace, who was appearing younger as the minutes went by, spoke to Drew in what sounded to be the same voice as Major Smith. “If you have any questions or concerns please ask them now or wait until we have concluded the exam.”

Drew was too flabbergasted to cover the questions that he wanted to ask. Why him? What was he going to have to do? How could he leave his life behind even for just short bursts? But all he could get out... “If I did alright on the ASVAB, then why did they tell me to go over the answers again?”

“Just wanted to make sure you didn’t make any errors, the minimum score to qualify for the Psi Guard is very strict.” Major Wallace showed no emotion in his response and he turned to Major Smith the second he finished speaking.

Both men turned their backs to Drew so the voice could have come from either. “Then let’s begin. Private Darby please stand in the center of the room.”

He did so trying to accept the culture of the military by following directions with no objections.

“There will be ten short sections that will test your initial ability in the Psi arts. Your attention to detail and your intuition to act on the puzzle we put before you shows promise for your ability to gain perception of the hidden world. You may do well in some of the tests and poorly in

others. Do not worry about your score; we will analyze your results to place you in the appropriate position.” There was a pause. “We will now begin.”

One of the men came up from behind Drew and wrapped his arms around him. Drew struggled from the man fearing many things from the situation. There was a stigma of sorts with male on male affection and that stigma suddenly made a lot of sense to Drew. He wanted to punch the man, he wanted to run and scream for help, but before he could truly react to the unwelcomed hug the other spoke again.

“Do not worry; we just need a close connection to you. Please tell me how Major Smith feels right now.”

“What?” Drew thought he was in some perverted hidden camera show. “What do you mean how he feels, feel him yourself?” The whole situation began to feel very unreal.

“Please do not speak to me that way private! I mean what emotions is he feeling right now?”

“How would I know? This doesn...”

“Calm down private. Take a couple of deep breaths and then focus on Major Smith. Tell me what he is feeling right at this moment.”

Drew, realizing he had no way out of the situation, did as he was told. He thought about Major Smith, but nothing came to him. There was no realization or sudden connection all he could think was that the Major was annoyed with Drew’s reaction.

“Annoyed.” As soon as the words came out of his mouth, the Major let go.

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He turned to face the two military men. “Well, Am I right?” Disdain clearly oozed from his voice.

Major Smith looked at him with a tweak of his neck. “Those were my thoughts, not my emotions. I was happy. But in regards to that lets move on to telepathy.”

Major Wallace briskly walked to face Drew seeming like a tidal wave of authority coming at him. The major bored a stare into Drew’s eyes that unnerved him so much he thought the Major’s face was morphing as they stood there. Major Wallace spoke straight into Drew’s mind. They were not words as much as thoughts. Rather than hearing a sentence, it was an idea that became realized in his head. It was a threat of violence, it was the notion that Drew was trapped in the room with the two men and he was about to be physically destroyed.

It was all the incentive Drew needed. He backed up from Major Wallace slamming his back into Major Smith who grabbed him from behind in a bear hug. Drew kicked his feet and achieved a front mule kick to Major Wallace’s chest pushing him back a couple of feet. He struggled to free himself and try to subdue the army man who was holding him when another thought overtook his fear. This one was one of calmness and kindness. He understood he was not in danger and was only being tested.

Major Smith let Drew go as he quit struggling and Major Wallace retorted, “You seem to be a natural at telepathy. Congratulations on that.”

Drew was exhausted from his day. The frights had

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been coming and going leaving him in a strange fight or flight mode similar to an energized drunkenness he had only experienced the couple of times he snuck alcohol out of his parents' cabinet. He looked back and forth between the two men waiting for direction, but after a couple of minutes he became agitated. "What do you..."

With all the force of a bull Major Smith yelled, "DO NOT SPEAK!"

Major Wallace turned his attention to Drew's eyes bearing down on his soul. The color of his eyes seemed to move from their deep blue to a more fiery color. The presence of the Major caused a strange claustrophobic feeling in Drew as ideas came to him again in the same forced manner as before. He understood his instructions; speak back to Major Wallace with his mind not his mouth.

Drew strained his brain, contorted his face, and stretched out his fingers. For no particular reason he envisioned a cow and he did everything he could to force that bovine into the mind of the Major before him, but with the lack of recognition on the man's face Drew had no idea if he was successful.

The tests went on and on trying to create things out of nothing, predict what card would be pulled out of a deck, trying to look into the dining room without leaving the room he was in... But after a couple of hours of mind games that hours earlier would have seemed like a joke, Mr. Harkins returned to the room.

"Congratulations, kid. You excel in a couple of areas

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and you will have a significant career in the Psi Guard. But I am going to need to have you go out back and wait for the bus.” Mr. Harkins stepped aside expecting the boy to follow his directions, but he was not used to this sixteen year-old’s tendencies for pushback.

“Bus? To where? My shift is almost over, I need to go home. I have homework.” He blathered on while Mr. Harkins smacked himself in the forehead, open handed hoping some sense would be smacked into the boy by osmosis.

“Calm down private. You are now enlisted in the United States Army and as such you are required to attend six weeks of basic. Now go out back and wait for the bus to take you to basic.” The man felt he was dealing with a toddler, but his deep breathing and attempt at rationality was helping him keep his sanity.

“But my parents? You said I would be gone in short bursts. Who will tell them where I am? What about my school work?” Again Drew just rambled until Mr. Harkins cut him off.

“STOP TALKING!” He dropped the possibility of reasoning with Drew and went into his military personality. “Major Wallace is here to be your double. He will assume the role of Drew Darby completing all of your school, family and social obligations.”

Drew chuckled showing his lack of respect and maturity, but there was no way Major Wallace could pass for him, not at school and definitely not at home. He turned back

to look at the Major, but the vision was shocking. Major Wallace had lost all of his muscle mass and was starting to look somewhat like Drew. “What the Hell?” Drew backed into the wall as if he was being introduced to a ghost.

Drew’s voice came out of Major Wallace’s mouth full with the puberty cracks, “Sorry to frighten you, but I am what you would call a shape shifter. Doubling for a new recruit is what I do, so don’t worry about a thing; I can keep your life held together nicely.”

“But how do you know how I act and where I live and what my schedule is and who I know and...”

Mr. Harkins looked down at the boy happy to see the end of the conversation in sight. “Just get on the bus, kid. We are all a part of the Army’s Psychic Operations. We know more than we want to.”

And with that Drew accepted his fate and brushed past Mr. Harkins. He stared at the rubber tiled floors as he slowly slumped through the kitchen to the back door. In an attempt to take in the enormity of the day he clanked the bar on the exit door exposing himself to the bright afternoon sunlight.

He looked at the sides of the building contemplating making a run for it, but it would be no use, he would be caught. How could he run from the psychic military? He turned his focus to his shoes. Tears welled up in his eyes under the realization that he may have just condemned himself to years of his own personal Hell, the end of his childhood, the end of the world as he knew it. Even if he

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could get out of his new obligation the new understanding that the physical world was different than he knew could never change. That glass had shattered already.

Looking up Drew saw a light green bus stopped just a couple of feet in front of him. He had not noticed a sound, no vibration, no nothing, the bus just seemed to appear. It was a testament to his worry as opposed to another supernatural occurrence. The door swung open with a perfect A sharp tone and the driver looked down at Drew.

He was an old man with short mangy hair and a green tie-dyed shirt. He motioned for Drew to board the vehicle and when he obliged the driver slammed the doors shut. “Have a seat kid. You are our last recruit to grab. Next stop inter-dimensional basic.”