

A boy sat. He sat counting. He counted: "one, two, three, four, five, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero." The boy sat in a courtyard surrounded by flowers and insects and doting family members. They all spoke to him, calling his name, trying to get him to come to them, to answer to them.

He answered to no one.

The boy's face gave no emotion, either happy nor sad nor unhappy. He sat there thinking and counting. He counted: "one, two, three, four, five, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero." Then he smiled, and all the adults thought he smiled at them, but he smiled because his father was Satan and that did make him happy.

"Six!" he called out in glee. But the parents, the adults, had no idea what he was saying because he was a six year old and six year olds just babble all the time. What they didn't know was that he was speaking Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ, the son of God. The boy had been given many earth names in folklore: Adrian, Damien, George W. His name, truly and honestly, was "Zzzdhsko", which is very difficult to pronounce. He knew that when he came to take over the world, people would call him "Zzz" or "Husko", which he didn't like.

Zzzdhsko stood up abruptly. He wanted to go to the water's edge. "I wish to travel to the water's edge," he said in English to his mother-person. She smiled at him, and then she went to pick him up to carry him. Zzzdhsko didn't like that. He punched his mother-person in the gut. She doubled over, but she laughed.

"Boy he's getting strong," she said, trying to catch her breath. "We're going to the water's edge, sweetie," she called to her husband on the deck near the house. He waved the tongs which he was using to grill delicious burgers and fries and some tofu for his wife's sister, Kalicia.

"Have loads of fun, you two!" called Mark to his wife Jenny. "Boy I sure love my wife and son. I hope nothing happens to either of them on their outing to the water's edge," he said to his sympathetic brother-in-law, Louis. "Have

you ever been to the water's edge, Louis?" he asked Louis.

"Oh, sure. Tons of times. That's where I do most of my drinking, by myself," Louis answered, his voice losing volume a little at the end of the sentence.

"What was that Louie?" questioned Mark.

"Oh, nothing. You want that I should go watch them?" Louis asked. He wanted so much to just hold Mark and feel his muscles right then, but he fought the urge.

"That would be great of you, best buddy!" cheered Mark. Then he raised the tongs in the air again, like he'd won some sort of victory, and Louis shuffled off after his sister and her son.

Zzzdhsko led the way down the path, with his mother some distance behind him. He enjoyed the water's edge because that was where the animals were. Sometimes the animals wouldn't recognize him, and they would play with him, and he would plot how best to kill them. Sometimes one set of animals would come by and play with him, and another set of animals would call out to them, and then he would have to bash those original, first animals with a rock or something to take care of them. And by "take care of them" I mean basically the opposite of what "take care of them" really means. Please, try to keep up.

Jenny heard the voice of her obviously gay brother call out to her. It bothered her, sometimes, that he was so incredibly in love with her husband, yet he had still not come out to their family. It was screaming them all in the face when he "excused" himself to go upstairs to change into whatever Mark had worn over. Today they were wearing a similar outfit of pastel-colored sweaters over colored shirts with khaki slacks and loafers. Mark, for how oblivious he always was, had no idea that his "best buddy" had a huge man-crush on him. "We're over here, Louie."

Louis came running over to her. "Whew. What a run that was. Like I was trying to impress someone. I don't know who, though..."

"Oh, don't you?" Jenny snidely remarked.

"What was that?" Louis asked.

“Oh, nothing. Damien is always rushing off to the water’s edge. What do you suppose he finds so fascinating about it?” Jenny changed the subject.

“Oh, who knows. Probably writes poetry in his head while he slowly loses consciousness. At least, that’s what I do- I mean, that’s what I would do, in his position,” Louis looked a little nervous, but, really, he was dying for people to ask him what was wrong.

“Speaking of children and what a joy they can be, when are you getting married? You still interested in that blond I saw you with last Christmas?”

“Oh, no. That... that didn’t work out so well. We were just two different people. She said that we both needed time to figure out who we were. Then she gave me her box set of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. I guess she meant my interior decorating needs help. I don’t see why. I watch all those shows,” Louis fretted, playing absent-mindedly with his sweater.

Jenny rolled her eyes. “Poor girl,” she muttered under her breath. Then she spotted Damien sitting on the edge of an old, wooden abandoned dock. She felt worried. He always seemed to deal with the most frightening and dangerous situations with quiet abandon and emotionless calmness. Sometimes, she felt like he just wasn’t right. “Damien, why don’t you come closer, huh, babe?”

Zzzdhsko continued to sit on the edge of the dock. He was staring at a duck in the middle of the pond. The two had made eye contact, and it was now a contest of wills. However, Zzzdhsko always won. Always.

“Your face is growing hot, isn’t it, duck? You feel very thirsty, and your face feels really quite warm. You can feel the skin beneath your feathers reddening and heating,” Damien told the duck, using his mind-thoughts and his demonic powers of persuasion.

“No, no it’s not. I’m just... fine,” answered the duck, feeling his will slowly being broken. “I’m just in the sun right now.”

“Oh, that sun is terrible, isn’t it? But there’s hardly any shade to hide from it. The trees are all losing their leaves. And the sun grows hotter every second. Can you feel the heat on your face and back, duck?” Damien continued to probe, feeling the duck slowly lose his ground, mentally.

“There’s shade. There must be... The sun will go down, at sunset...”

“Oh, but sunset is not for a very long time, ducky. It’s only just noon. The sun is at it’s highest point right now. You can’t be getting warm, yet, you still have hours of sunlight to go, duck,” said Damien. He heard his mother’s voice, somewhere, but he paid little heed to it. He was very close to winning this struggle.

“Only just noon? How can it be so early yet? It is a bit hot...” The duck was losing his grip on his mind. Slowly, the Devil, Zzzdhsko, was moving in and taking over. He was even moving mental furniture in, so to speak, along with matching wall coverings and light fixtures. The duck’s head was starting to fall, lower and lower.

“You know what can cure such dreadful heat, my dear friend, duck? The cool water that you are swimming in can easily douse your heated face. You should just duck your little head beneath the waves,” crooned the Satanic child.

“Well, I suppose it couldn’t hurt, just for one moment,” said the duck, and he dipped his tiny head into the water of the lake. With that vulnerable moment, Zzzdhsko pounced. He pushed the duck’s head under water, with his mind, holding the bird beneath the water’s surface. It began to flap it’s wings in panic; it’s legs thrashing about, trying to get traction in the water.

Jenny saw the duck suddenly begin to panic in the water. “Damien, come away from there. That duck’s in trouble, honey. Don’t watch it,” Jenny called to her son, but he didn’t move. His eyes were focused on the thrashing, panicking animal in the water. Then the duck stopped. Zzzdhsko continued to hold on, keeping the head underwater until he was sure the duck was dead. When he let go, the head bobbed back up to the surface.

“Damien, honey. Come back from there. Let’s go see Daddy,” called Jenny.

“Come on, little man. Let’s go see your big, strong Daddy,” mirrored Louis.

Zzzdhsko didn’t move. He didn’t want to leave the dock. “I don’t wish to leave, mother,” he said with an emotionless tone.

“Please, honey. Don’t make me come out there and get you, Damien,” Jenny cautioned. They were now at the water front. Jenny didn’t like the look of the dock, and she didn’t feel comfortable going out there. She, even then, didn’t want to go out there. She felt she might have to.

“No,” Zzzdhsko said. “I do not wish to leave the dock.”

“Damien. Now. Listen to your Mommy,” Jenny said, with a harsh note and tone in her voice.

“Damien, come on back, bud. Let’s go see your Daddy,” said Louis, with a bit of a whine in his voice. He was regretting, more than ever being out there now.

“Come and get me, fools.”

“Damien! Fine, I’m coming out there to get you,” Jenny said, her voice letting out at the end. She made her way shakily to the dock, taking each board one at a time.

“Stop,” Zzzdhsko said. His voice like a snare beat.

Jenny stopped, unsure of why. She was a couple steps from picking up her little boy and taking him back to shore.

“Jump,” Zzzdhsko said. Jenny didn’t want to.

“No, Damien,” she said, but she felt her legs bend. She jumped, against every mental muscle in her body, and came down on the board. It held for one glorious moment, then it snapped in two, and Jenny crashed into the water below. There was a terrible thrashing in the water.

“Holy crap! Damien! Jenny?” called out Louis. He ran to the dock.

“Stop,” Zzzdhsko said. Louis stopped, unsure of why, at the edge of the dock.

Louis said, “Damien? What are you doing?”

“She needs to be taken care of. I do not desire her any longer,” said the child, speaking in measured tones. “I know that you long for my father’s touch.”

Zzzdhsko stood and turned to his uncle.

“You keep my secret, and I’ll keep yours. You can be great in the world I shall build,” said the six year old, standing on the edge of the dock. Between them, his mother-person quit moving just below the water. Louis nodded, in agreement. Then Damien began screaming.