

A teenager 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 teen-aged boy sat in a courtyard surrounded by students and teachers and doting girls. 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 teenager's face gave no emotion, neither 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 others thought he smiled at them, but he smiled because his father was Satan and that did make him happy.

His name, truly and honestly, was "Zzzdhsko", which is very difficult to pronounce. Here at George Washington Carver High School, the kids just called him Damien, which is what his mother-person used to call him before her tragic drowning. The teenager's uncle sat in his suburban vehicle in the parking lot which overlooked the student commons. He drove Zzzdhsko to and from his high school so that Zzzdhsko didn't have to waste his energy and time learning and operating vehicles. He needed to prepare for the coming reign of his father, The Most Horrible, His Excellence, Satan.

Zzzdhsko's father-person had passed away shortly after his mother-person had. While the police report had finally been marked as an "accidental death", most in the family and neighborhood thought that it looked like a murder. A neighbor had found Mark hanging in the closet, both legs broken, with clamps holding his eyelids open. His body bore several bruises and strange markings that could have been brands or scars. The fingers in his hands had been broken, and some of the finger nails had been forcibly extricated from the hand pre-mortem.

Louis, impatient to get going, honked on his horn to get Damien's attention. Zzzdhsko simply ignored the beck. He stopped the counting, and he turned toward his favorite school subject: history. Zzzdhsko poured over the pages of his history book, memorizing vast passages on great wars. His teacher, Mr. Art, had even lent to Damien several books on the Civil War and

World War II. Zzzdhsko liked to put himself in the middle of the action. He would see, in his imagination, the carnage, the blood, and the misery. He enjoyed picturing how the weapons of those eras would tear and destroy the flimsy human bodies they came in contact with. He grew particularly fond of the dictators of Europe and Asia, and slowly he began to learn their ways.

Louis honked the horn again. Zzzdhsko set the book aside and stood. He gathered his things and made his way, deliberately to the vehicle. When he was nearly there, a female classmate of his came up to him. "Damien! Wait up!" she called to him.

"Hey, Damien. How was that math test for you?" she began.

"Math is irrelevant. I feel I may have tested poorly on it," came Zzzdshko's honest and learned answer.

"Oh, yeah," she laughed. Zzzdhsko felt that she didn't really understand what he said or meant, but that she wanted to continue the conversation despite that. "So, are you going to the dance tonight?"

That night was scheduled as the Homecoming Dance. The entire week had been devoted to outrageous theme days, crazy gym games, and a large amount of hazing on Freshmen. It was the kind of ritual that made Zzzdhsko think of Autumn Solstice and the unbridled witchcraft ceremonies that resulted.

"I had no plans for such," Zzzdhsko answered her. He sensed that the reason she was asking was because she, in fact, meant to ask him to this dance. Or that she intended to convince him to ask her. Zzzdhsko sized up the girl, determining her value to The Plan. She would not bear his child, but perhaps an amulet could be made from her bones, he thought.

"Oh. Well, do you maybe wanna go with me?" The girl bit her lip in anticipation as she waited for his answer. He gave no emotion, and he held her gaze as long as she could stand it. When she looked away, he smiled for the briefest moment.

"No, I'm sorry," he told her. She smiled in a way that was supposed to make him think it was okay, but he saw the sadness rush up into her eyes. It made him yearn for blood. He hadn't killed another person since his father-person, and he once again felt the desire to end a human being's life.

The girl, Daria, had replied, "Ok, cool. See you around," and then had begun to walk off to the school.

"Daria. Wait," Zzzdhsko called after her. She turned back to him with a hopeful look in her eyes. "How long can you hold your breath?"

"What?" She took a few steps toward Zzzdhsko, and she was smiling, but she had felt a cold chill run through her. "What are you-"

"How long can you hold your breath? I bet not long. Your lungs must find it hard to function beneath so much mass," he told her, causing the hope in her eyes to die. She quickly replaced it with anger and hurt. She took two more steps, her emotions taking hold of her body. She wanted to slap him.

"Please? I'll time you," Zzzdhsko taunted her. Daria stopped and decided, in a unique effort of forward thinking, to not spend one more second thinking of or interacting with this creep. She began to turn when Damien said, "Go."

With a sudden flick of his hand, Daria felt her throat close. It was like the muscles in her neck suddenly constricted for no reason. At first, it knocked her a-back, and she assumed her breathing would resume normally in a second. But soon it became apparent that that wasn't the case. Despite the futile effort it was, she clawed at her throat. She opened her mouth and closed it several times, like a fish on dry land. She tried her best to suck with all her might, but her lungs remained rigid, refusing to take in oxygen or give off carbon dioxide.

Daria felt her head swimming. With her panic and struggling, she was drastically coming close to passing out. She caught a glance of Damien. He stood there just staring at her, with his hand out, poised. He looked relaxed and almost pleased with himself. Daria thought for a moment that perhaps Damien was doing this, but he couldn't be. That would be crazy.

"Hey, doofus!" shouted another male teenager at Zzzdhsko. Then a frisbee came out of nowhere and struck him upon the head. Zzzdhsko lost his concentration, and Daria's airways were restored. She gasped for air several times, close to the ground. Several of the other teenagers had seen them, and now they noticed that something appeared to be wrong.

"What's going on here?" came a very authoritative voice. "Damien, what

were you doing to Daria? Daria, what happened?"

Daria stood up, tears trickling down her face. "He was choking me! Damien was choking me! I thought I was going to die!" She huddled into several of her girlfriends, and they broke off and began to walk back to the school.

"Damien, is this true?" asked the Algebra teacher, Mr. Shorten. Zzzdhsko didn't answer. "And, Louis, did you just stand by and watch while your nephew choked a classmate for no reason?"

Louis looked up at the teacher. In his mind he felt he should tell the whole truth and find a way to stop Damien, but he knew that Damien was probably reading his thoughts that very second and that they couldn't defeat him anyway. His eyes betrayed a heaviness that told others that he had seen too much and been told to keep it to himself. His head ached from the secrets. Louis said, "I didn't see anything, Mr. Shorten. I must have been daydreaming."

Mr. Shorten was enraged by this. "I'll see to it that you get suspended, Damien. You won't get away with this!" Then Mr. Shorten ran to catch up with the girls who had escorted Daria away. Zzzdhsko felt anger. He had been told "no". He also felt stronger.

"My powers have suddenly improved," he told his uncle, still feet away in his vehicle. "I hadn't felt the urge to kill since ten years ago. Now it is overpowering. I see things so clearly." Damien began to walk toward the school. His uncle put the car in reverse and kept pace with him.

"What are you doing, Damien? Let's just go, huh? You can have a snack and watch TV before supper," offered Louis. He was really pleading with Zzzdhsko to agree with him. Louis was treated like an idiot slave. Zzzdhsko often berated him and physically abused him for talking too much, talking too little, or asking the wrong questions.

Zzzdhsko walked along in silence. He was analyzing the building with his new-found sight. He carefully planned out a way to exact his revenge. He was gaining on the group that had insulted and scorned him. With his powers, he was slowly mixing up chemicals in the chemistry lab, preparing the

building for a massive explosion.

Zzzdhsko was close enough to hear the conversations of those who had just left him. Daria was recounting the tale of how she had thought Damien was cute, but now she knows that he's a monster. Mr. Shorten was trying to calm her down, and he felt in his heart that Damien was a very troubled child.

"Mr. Shorten," called Zzzdhsko. "Can I ask you a question before you sentence me to suspension?"

"Of course, Damien," said the teacher, stopping and turning. "You have the right to speak in your defense. What do you wish to ask?"

"How fast can you run?" asked Zzzdhsko. Mr. Shorten gave Damien a puzzled look. Then, with a flick of his wrist, Zzzdhsko said, "Go." Scarcely had the words left his lips when the entire High School building exploded.