

The Zombie and his existential crisis

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Chapter 1: in denial

Salty. Fredrick's mouth was filled with something that was definitely salty. As far as he could tell, it was crunchy too. But more like toasted earthworms than peanut butter. Wait, how would he even know what earthworms tasted like?

As it happened, Frederick woke up and found himself in total darkness and a mouth filled with sand. He coughed and inhaled deeply but nothing happened. Nothing! His lungs didn't expand! Air passed straight through him!

He started panicking, to be more accurate he started to freak out. "I can't breathe! I can't breathe!" he screamed. True, he wasn't breathing, but he wasn't suffocating either. How was he even able to scream? *Sound waves need air to travel, right?* He patted himself all over, looking for something that would help shed some light on the matter.

He reached for the matches he always carried in his pocket. He managed to light one. He looked around and discovered that he was in some sort of wooden confined space. Tapping all around him, he tried to get a feel for his surroundings. Then it hit him. A coffin? He was in a freaking coffin!

Frederick punched his way through the top of the coffin and hit nothing but soil. The supernatural strength behind his punches surprised him. Like a wild animal he started tearing the box apart and pushed his way through the loose sand until he reached the surface. He crawled out of the dirt and discovered that it was a quiet, moonlit night. The whole setting would have been quite beautiful if it wasn't a graveyard. Frederick leaned against the tombstone behind him to catch his breath, even though there was no breath to catch. Suddenly he realized that he wasn't tired. Not even after all that digging and punching. What was happening to him? What **had** happened to him?

Slowly tracing his fingertips over the engraved lettering on the tombstone, he found the answer: "Prince Frederick III ~ 1620-1641". Now why did that name sound so familiar, he wondered. Was it his name? Was he dead? Frederick checked his neck for a pulse. Nothing. He took a sharp rock and cut the tip of his finger. No blood. Royalty or not, one thing was certain: he was a zombie.

Chapter 2: perfectly imperfect

She pressed her palm against her chest as if it would numb the pain. She never imagined that this type of heartache was even possible. She kept replaying the last few moments with him in her head. Maybe she could bring him back to life in her memory.

The news of his death came as a shock to her. “I have bad news Princess Minna. Your young prince and his advisor Lord George have been found dead next to the riverbed. The healers were not able to determine the cause of their death.” Lady Melinda, her nurse, told her.

Before she met Frederick, there were many young men who were interested in her, but they were all so boring and predictable. Worst of all, she could easily spot that they were just after her family’s money. They didn’t know the real Minna - or care to.

She was smart and she knew it. The princess longed for someone to share a proper conversation with, not just someone staring at her, or using her for an ego boost. Then one day, out of nowhere, she met **him**. Not the most handsome. Not the neatest either. He had an awful dress sense, messy hair and rough hands. But he was a gentleman and surprisingly well-spoken. It was almost as if his interior didn’t match his exterior. Oh, and he was funny!

It was after meeting him that she realized how much she hated perfection. Her whole life was all about perfection. Having the perfect look, perfect wardrobe, perfect life and being the perfect, good little girl. She hated perfection. Perfection was boring. He, on the other hand, was everything but perfect- a little bit of a mess, a little bit broken, but very, very real. He was perfectly imperfect, and she loved him for it. She loved him for every single one of his beautiful flaws. But now he was gone.

Chapter 3: a case of brain-worms

Just when Frederick thought things couldn't get any stranger, a talking cockroach ran up to him, "Prince *Frederick! Prince Frederick!*"

What the hell was going on?

"My goodness. Prince Frederick, thank God you're alive. Well, sort of." The cockroach suddenly seemed a little sad seeing his friend like that. "What is **going on here?**" Frederick shouted at the talking insect in front of him. "Calm down, calm down, my lord." the cockroach said as he moved four of his feet up and down. "Who the hell are you? And why can you talk?" Frederick asked. "My Prince! How can you not recognize me? Yes, I know I have a different exterior, but my eloquence, my charm... it should all be a dead giveaway – if you'll pardon the pun Sir." the cockroach placed three legs on his chest as he gasped.

"I just discovered that I don't have a heartbeat and that I cannot breathe. I don't have blood in my veins. Now I'm arguing with a talking cockroach! So, excuse me for not immediately being able to recall who you are exactly." the zombie said as two frown lines formed between his brown eyes that still appeared to be warm even though he was dead. The cockroach looked at him and with a dramatic sigh, he said, "Alright, alright, allow me to explain. You are Prince Frederick. Well, used to be, and I am Lord George. I used to be your most trusted advisor and friend while you were still alive and still the Prince of Ginthonia. You were to be made king, but somehow you ended up in that grave and I ended up being..." he paused, finally at a loss for words.

"A cockroach?" Prince Fredrick finished his sentence for him. "Well, actually, I prefer to be referred to as an insect of the order of *Blattodea*." Lord George said with a polite chuckle. "Look, why can't I remember anything of my life before?" Frederick wasn't amused.

"Allow me to point out that there might be worms in your brain, my prince. I have been told that worms are particularly fond of the hippocampus area of the brain where memories are stored." George replied helpfully. "What? Are you telling me that there are worms in my brain?" Frederick shouted hysterically. George ran up the zombie's arm and stood on his shoulder. "My prince, permission requested to access your brain through your ear in search of worms?" As if he had a choice. "Permission granted."

In a flash, Lord George jumped into the zombie's ear. Frederick didn't feel anything, but he did hear kicking and boxing noises followed by tiny, little screams. A few seconds later Lord George crawled out of his ear holding two dead worms. He threw the worms on the ground. "There! Problem solved. I also tried to reconnect some of the wires in your brain that were eaten away. Hopefully you will start to get flashbacks soon. But your memory will never be fully restored I am afraid." Frederick stared at the worms, "Where did you learn how to do that?" The little roach puffed up his chest. Lord George

loved nothing more than to have his intellect admired, “Gaston has taught me many things over the past few days while I was searching for you.”

“Gaston? Who?”

“Oh, Gaston is a ghost that lives here in the graveyard. I thought it would be wise to befriend some of the locals.”

“This is not real. This is not real. This is **not real**.” Frederick’s panic attack started up again.

“May I say that ghosts are the most fascinating creatures? They can travel through time! Gaston has been around for 300 years and has all the knowledge of the future.”

“What is that sound?” Frederick asked, as he looked around him.

“Pardon me my prince, but my stomach is still getting used to this new diet. On occasion, my body involuntarily produces some unpleasant gas.” Lord George said.

“No, this was not a fart! It’s something else. Something quite lovely actually.”

“I do not hear a thing!”

“We must follow it! Find out who is making that beautiful music!” Frederick started walking in the direction of the music.

“My prince! My prince! Wait for me!” Lord George shouted and ran after the zombie.

The music led them to a castle covered in pink flower creepers. The music was coming from within. “Now what?” Frederick said in frustration as he eyeballed the tall, thick castle walls and the soldiers keeping guard.

“Now what, *what*, my prince?” Lord George asked out of breath.

“How am I supposed to find out where that music is coming from without being caught? I doubt the living will be hospitable towards a walking corpse and a talking roach.”

“Well firstly,” said Lord George as he raised one of his feet in the air, “I find the word ‘roach’ to be derogatory to my kind. Secondly, why don’t we just swim to the inside through the canal?”

Frederick looked at castle canal filled with black water and said: “Swim through the canal, but how will we sur-“ “Survive? Allow me to remind you that you do not need to breathe and in my new form I now possess the ability to hold my breath for up to 40 minutes. Easy-peasy” Lord George said with a little smirk on his little face.

The two sneakily jumped into the canal. Out of habit Frederick held his breath which made Lord George chuckle a bit. With their new found strength they swam underneath the castle effortlessly.

They crawled out of the canal to find themselves inside the palace garden. The garden was perfectly manicured and filled with pink trimmed rose bushes.

Beautiful music filled up the garden and washed over Fredrick like a warm gust of wind. With Lord George on his shoulder, the zombie slowly pushed the branches of the large willow trees aside and followed the music. Then, he saw her - sitting there at the pond with her harp, singing, as the moonlight made her pale hair sparkle. Frederick was mesmerized. He listened and watched as her fingers brushed over the strings of her harp. It was lovely, but sad. Why was she making sad music? How can someone so beautiful be so sad?

Just as Frederick and Lord George were both spellbound, Lord George accidentally passed some gas that made the sound of a small bomb going off. Startled, the princess dropped her harp and looked Frederick straight in the face. She looked at him in shock, but not the kind of shock when you see a monster. Frederick was surprised that she didn't scream.

"Frederick?" the princess asked as she stared at him with a frown between her large green eyes.

"Princess Minna!" Lord George shouted and ran towards her. This time she did scream. "Princess Mina, it is me Lord George. Don't be scared! Yes, you are correct, this is Prince Frederick, but both of us somehow died. Fredrick returned as a zombie and I as a cockroach for some absurd reason." Lord George informed her. "Wait, wait! What's going on?" Frederick was utterly confused. "Oh, forgive him my lady, his brain had worms and as a result he suffers from memory loss." Lord George explained.

"Lord George!" Frederick was horrified. Brain worms aren't likely to impress a princess. "Fredrick, it's me, Minna. We knew each other really well while you were still, well, alive I guess." she said. "What? Really? But why can't I remember anything. Why can't I remember you? Not even death should cause you to forget the most unforgettable thing." He stopped when he realized he was getting a bit emo. "Worms, worms, worms!" Lord George shouted as he stumped his needle-like leg. "Lord Geooorge!" Frederick hissed through his teeth. The princess giggled.

"Princess Minnaaaaaa!" they heard someone shouting.

"Oh, that's my nurse calling me. It is time for me to get ready for bed." the princess said. "Oh, no, do you have to go already? Can't you decide when you want to go to bed by yourself?" Frederick asked. "Since my father fell ill, my schedule has become even tighter. As long as he is ill, the duke is in charge and he's very concerned about my safety," the princess continued. "Sounds like someone's a control freak." retorted Lord George.

"Princess Minnaaaaaaa!"

"I'm sorry, I really should get going. Goodbye! Come visit again tomorrow." the princess said and ran off with Miss Agnes, her mouse.

The princess rushed into her bedroom. Her nurse was already waiting for her. "I'm sorry I'm late Melinda but the most wonderful thing happened!" the princess said out of