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don't think i'm anybody's thursday someone's  
saving me for a rainy day*

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## It's Like Walking Through a Steam Bath

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## IT'S LIKE WALKING THROUGH A STEAM BATH

"It's like walking through a steam bath," I mumbled as the fallen rain from the damp, porous ground seeped through my boots, soaking my feet. I tried to endure my discomfort as I trudged along through the oppressing silence of the lush jungle. Tall bamboo and rubber trees obstructed the sunlight so that only the most intense radiations pierced the tree-tops. Mosquitoes and tsetse flies droned listlessly from the edges of myriad stagnant pools stopping only for an occasional feast. Lagging behind me panting exhaustedly were the other ten resolute, spartan-like men. Handpicked by me, they were among the most highly trained archeologists in the world. As we hacked our way through the dense, tropical underbrush, I spotted their fatigued faces. They had toiled diligently throughout our journey with only scanty rations.

I watched their haggard faces brighten as I informed them that we were rapidly approaching the village.

Our steps quickened as the distance between our party and its goal melted like lard on a hot skillet. It had been a month since our ship penetrated the shark-infested waters of Dangerous Reef. Our quest was to further explore the tombs of the recently unearthed Atalle civilization deep in the Australian interior. Along with the newly discovered ruins an unknown tribe was found. Extremely primitive, they had not yet advanced beyond the late Neolithic Era, and they had lived cut off from other humans for over two thousand years.

With my heart pounding and my nerves taut, I stepped into the village clearing, timidly followed by the others.

Suddenly, from out of the blue, an immense form bounded towards us, landing only a hairsbreadth away from me. My eyes darted from its head to its feet in utter disbelief. For standing in front of me was the towering hulk of a nine foot tall tribesman. He was clothed in only a loincloth, and his entire massive chest was tattooed with decorative scars. From behind thick bushes the remaining tribesmen slowly emerged to huddle in fear around their huge counterpart.

I extended my hand to show him that I meant no harm, and a huge, evil grin spread from one end of his face to the other. He then grabbed my hand and preceded to drag me along with such brute force that I feared my arm would be pulled out of its socket. In the center of the clearing stood a crude hut into which he shoved me. I tripped and fell hard upon my arm. My head was reeling while the savage was squatting on the floor with the same sinister grin plastered on his face.

It was necessary for me to express my intentions of exploring the ruins to him. So I picked up a stick and began to scratch pictures on the hard dirt floor of the hut. He seemed to comprehend and snatched the stick out of my hand. With much labor he sketched a primitive picture of a man smiling with approval and a group of people dining. It was obvious that he wanted us to attend a feast in our honor that evening.

As soon as night had lowered its black curtain over the jungle, the festivities began. The native women sat before us massive platters piled high with various village delicacies. The villagers crowded around them, greedily bolting down great handfuls at a time. Never before in my life had I seen such an array of mystifying dishes: fruits and berries I never knew existed; strange tidbits like roast wallabee and boiled bushbaby. The chief was busily absorbed in brewing some mysterious concoction in a small urn beside him. Every so often he added a dash more of this, a pinch more of that. Then, he passed the pot to me. I took a tiny sip and finding the beverage palatable, guzzled it down. My men did likewise.

Not a minute later I noticed something alarming. My vision was becoming double. Instead of one chiefton I saw two, each grinning hideously. The drums of the village beat incessantly with shattering volume causing me to hold my head and writhe in excruciating agony. Kaleidoscopic patterns whizzed before my eyes as I felt myself being thrust through ions of time looking at the earth from the blackness of space unlimitable. From the depths of this chaos came the motion of whirling wind and the shrieking pandemonium of wild, insane music which had no semblance of anything on earth. I was bombarded with the sound of piercing, spastic yowls of some half-human thing galaxies beyond. The explosions of nebulous gasses forming new planets passed into view in front of my horror-stricken eyes. It was the abyss of terror, and try as I would, I could not extricate myself from its tangled bindings, no matter how I tried.

Suddenly, a hot ray of light pierced the nothingness like a ray of bright hope.

I awakened, feeling strange and stiff. I was cramped in a sealed box. In the distance I could make out the muffled sounds of laughter and the thunder of a huge boulder being rolled into place.

The tomb! They had given me a drug and carried me into the Atalles crypt to seal me up in this ancient sarcophagus! What grim torture had they dreamed up for the others?

In a hysterical frenzy I tried to pound my way out, screaming in fright. My hands were bruised and bloody, and I perspired profusely with sweat, or was it blood? My breath was coming in short gasps as I was slowly being asphixiated. There was nothing left for me to do but lie back, knowing that perhaps thousands of years from now I, too, would become a new archeological discovery.