

**Door #3**

**A choose your own adventure haunted house novel in which you go to your ex's wedding and pretend the world is not ending. And the instructions voice may or may not have your best interest in mind.**

(A work in progress)

**by Syr Hayati Beker**

**Epigraphs**

“You and I both know the house is haunted;

You and I both know that the ghost is me.”

- Shakey Graves, *Dearly Departed*

“To tell a ghost story means being willing to be haunted.”

- Jack Halberstam, *In A Queer Time and Place*

“The world is a radio for light.”

- Adam O. Davis, *Index of Haunted Houses*

“What have I been writing love songs for?

What have I been singing love songs for?”

- Sinéad O'Connor, *Take Me To Church*

## Read This First

Most stories are about other people. This story is about you.

Even if the wedding you are going to is *not* your wedding, this story is still about you. You get to make choices; for instance, you chose to buy a new outfit for the occasion.

Even if the wedding you are going to is not your wedding, is in fact the wedding of the person you used to love and thought you would marry, you want to believe this is still your story. You are the one going to the wedding. You got invited. You decided to go. You're in control. It's your story. Its you in the mirror, watching the erosion where your cheekbones used to be.

Even if this is a queer wedding, which, one could make the case, is an oxymoron, because all that resistance just to end up right back in the heteropatriarchy is quite simply not *What It Was All For*, you are going. And you are going at great expense, and in excellent style.

You check the mirror to confirm this is true, you are handsome or beautiful or stunning in this outfit you are wearing, with flared pants, and a shirt cut to accentuate your arms, and your tattoos, and your new haircut, and the secondary trim you did this morning to make it perfect.

So it is your story. This is a ~~book~~ day is about you and about your choices, and what happens when you make a choice. Because you have choices.

Do not read this book from the first page through to the last page. Instead, start at chapter 1, and then read on until your first choice. Then you can decide what to do. When you come to the end of a story, ~~it'll be your fault~~. You can go back and start again. Every new choice leads to a new adventure. You can play this day over again until you get it right.

When you were a child, you loved stories that gave you choices, especially the haunted house ones. How do you feel about choices now? Do you believe in free will, or do you believe in destiny? Do you believe in haunted houses? Are you talking to yourself?

So take one last look at yourself, meet your eyes, exhale. And then find your wallet, phone, keys, the pocket bottle of coconut rum you bought when you were buying gift champagne, and the sharp pocket knife with your initial and the initial of the person you used to love. For luck.

Why are you going? You don't really know. Because you were invited. Because you want to make a showing. Because you want to believe that you still belong in this community, here's the invitation, in your hand, to show it.

You call a rideshare. Your adventure begins here, but you don't really have much of a choice yet. And that's ok, really.

*Get in your rideshare. Turn to chapter one.*

## 1. One.

I like it when you do as you are told :)

The rideshare driver does not talk to you, and does not ask you where you are going, he follows the map on his screen. When he sees you, and what you're wearing, in his rearview, he reaches out and turns up the volume on the Jesus station. Sure, it's called *The Positivity Station*, but suddenly here in the back of the car with you via crackly audio are many white men trying to melisma Je-hee-hee-hee-su-huu-hus.

Outside, Oakland, and then the bridge, from which you can see the liquefacted land that used to be the coastline of Berkeley. The outer row of apartment buildings are tilted like the apartments are leaning back on a couch to puff on a joint. The second row of buildings is still upright, but has been evacuated long ago, and you can see right through their skeletons, from highway to sea.

The water in the Bay hits the bottom of the bridge, in a way that it didn't used to, before the 4 Degree Shift, and shines in a way that you don't think it used to, before the oil, and the traffic is only in your direction like everyone is going to the same place.

Cell phone: You're not going to the wedding are you?

Me: Yes, I am.

Cell phone: Whyyyyyyyyyyyyyy (there are three scrolls of ys).

Cell: Because I want to.

Come on.

Because it's the right thing to do.

Facepalm emoji.

You do not write "because I need to tell her something important, and she hasn't wanted to speak to me, and if I can tell her this thing, she'll call off the wedding, and she

invited me as an oversight clearly, but if I can just tell her this one thing, she'll call off the wedding and everything will be ok again.”

Because you know this is the kind of thing that makes people ask you how therapy has been going. Therapy has been going very well, thank you. Dr. Loria is an excellent therapist. It's been going so well that you've been staying over at your therapist's apartment, now and then. You wonder briefly whether Loria will be at the wedding too, and whether you should hug, or wave, or pretend you don't know one another, or make out in a supply closet (do they have supply closets?) and what you will do if you're seated at the same table, and whether there will be tables, with names on them, and whether you will be seated in the same zip code as the couple, or even if your table setting will just say *nolpe*. Remember you were invited. Why were you invited? Should you turn back?

Across the bridge, San Francisco.

Here and there you see apartments in which you used to live. Here and there, you can still see fire damage, from last summer's fire that was not supposed to spread to the city. Some of the old Victorians are streaked with soot, like big claw marks. Most parks are now made of plastic, but here and there you can see the ones that are brown from drought. There are shades of green that exist only in your memory. The sky is soot-grey, as it is summer, and the fires have been burning for three months, and the air feels metallic in your mouth, or maybe it's the hangover, or maybe it's how you feel driving across the city you barely know anymore, to celebrate a love that should have been yours.

The car turns abruptly in front of the electric tram, and here in the dirty district is the stripper cooperative where you all used to work, where you all met and thought *we will be friends forever*. And next to it, the lab where you all used to work too, and where everything went south.

***Which memory would you like to revisit?***

- a) I want to remember the strip club. I want to remember the robotics lab.***
- b) I want to remember the robotics lab.***

(End of Excerpt)