Daniel Pinchbeck and the New Psychedelic Elite
How a cynical son of beatnik parents combined drugs, the devil and the apocalypse into a modern movement

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It's midnight on a Sunday night, and Daniel Pinchbeck, a pop psychedelic author, is smoking a cigarette on the couch of a dramatically sparse apartment in Manhattan's East Village. An Austin Powers-like character with buckteeth, tangled hair and a pinched, nasal delivery, Pinchbeck, 40, does not exude cool, but he is well-known in New York as a philosopher and proponent of drugs not available at your corner dealer, which has made him quite popular indeed. It's been a busy weekend: Saturday afternoon with Sting at the Edvard Munch show at the Museum of Modern Art, Saturday night at a downtown rock show with Moby, and this evening visiting a bunch of people on dimethyltryptamine, considered the most potent hallucinogen on the planet. DMT, a harrowing seven-minute trip that feels like seven centuries, is Direct Mystical Transmission, says Pinchbeck -- Drastic Magical Transport. It is "the doorway you can step through to greet the beings who run the cosmic candy store," he has written. Smoking a bowl of it, he adds, tastes like "a shard of lawn furniture."

Now everyone is quiet. In the living room, a rich, bearded Greek who has come to New York to experiment with psychedelics far from the prying eyes of his family kicks back in a La-Z-Boy. "You should come to this full solar eclipse in Turkey next week," he exhorts Pinchbeck. "If you're tripping, the energy gets ripped out of you during the eclipse and then comes rushing back a thousand times stronger." He cocks his head. "Lots of Israelis are
coming to the festival, though -- that makes it a terrorist target for sure."

Pinchbeck chuckles and walks over to a futon covered with a bright orange quilt on which a slim brunette is lying facedown. He pats her head with long, slow strokes. She groans. "People are becoming more and more cognitive that something is going on in our world that is not explicable by any of the maps and matrixes we have," he says later, taking his glasses off and cleaning them with a small blue hankie. Wars in the Middle East, peak oil, the extinction of the species -- something is wrong on our planet. Pinchbeck thinks the answer may lie in the potential of psychedelics to transmit a new consciousness at the moment of our peril. "Our culture wholeheartedly endorses drugs like Ambien and Prozac, while repressing natural substances such as mushrooms that are sacred to indigenous cultures," he says. "The system is in free fall, and we need to go beyond our ideological constraints to find ways of dealing with the situation."

He pops his glasses back on without missing a beat.

The past few years have been good ones for the psychedelic community. The first study of psychedelics at Harvard University since Timothy Leary was kicked out in 1963 began last year, on the effects of MDMA in treating cancer patients for anxiety. Last month, Johns Hopkins medical-school researchers published the results of a major, six-year research project on the effects of psilocybin mushrooms, in which more than sixty percent of the participants reported positive changes in their attitude and behavior after taking the drug, even calling it one of the five best experiences of their lives (a couple of participants disagreed, likening it to "being in a war"). Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann, who discovered LSD in 1943 after absorbing a compound meant to induce childbirth into his fingertips, celebrated his 100th birthday in January, and Sasha Shulgin, the Bay Area scientist who resynthesized Ecstasy in the late Sixties, continues to invent new MDMA-inspired compounds. The last week of this month is the annual festival Burning Man, which Pinchbeck calls a "fulcrum for the evolution of consciousness on the planet" -- a psychedelic swap meet between America's 25,000 least conventional people, clad in Mad Max-inspired costumes as they wildly carry out pagan rituals on the endless expanse of a Nevada prehistoric lake bed that they call "home."

"The times have been darkening recently because of President Bush's idiocy, and some are realizing the potential of psychedelics to wake up humanity," says Alex Grey, the psychedelic artist whose work is featured on Tool's 10,000 Days album and who is a friend of Pinchbeck's. "As we come closer to a kind of apocalyptic culture, psychedelics give us an opportunity to look through a lens into our own mind and reflect where we want to steer our future."
Pinchbeck, who is actively bidding to become his generation's Timothy Leary -- or, more precisely, the less famous psychedelic thinker Terence McKenna -- has created a scene around him that is perhaps the youngest and most vibrant of the current psychedelic establishment. "Leary, and Aleister Crowley before him, had messages that were essentially optimistic and expansive, about making your life a joy and a triumph through the methods they touted," says Brian Doherty, author of This Is Burning Man. "Daniel is much closer to McKenna's raging prophet, with an even more puritanical message about how we as a planet have to straighten up and fly right."

When Pinchbeck came onto the scene in 2000, both Leary and McKenna had passed away, and he seemed poised for ascendancy. His current book, 2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl, has been largely panned in the mainstream press. In fact, his original publisher dropped it, with Gerald Howard, a venerable editor of authors like Don DeLillo, offering the comment "Daniel, you're not Nietzsche." Says Pinchbeck, "It was hard for him to conceive that someone of my generation was doing something of primordial significance."

Just as Leary promoted once-little-understood drugs like mushrooms and LSD as the key to unlocking the doors of perception, Pinchbeck promulgates the gospel of a group of psychedelics that have not yet found their way into the mainstream, taken in a shamanic context. As detailed in his first book, Breaking Open the Head: A Psychedelic Journey Into the Heart of Contemporary Shamanism, Pinchbeck has experimented with nearly every drug available around the globe, ingesting all manner of cactuses, seeds and weeds, plus "riding Hofmann's bicycle," a euphemism for tripping on LSD. But Pinchbeck's most popular choice of mind-bender is ayahuasca, an Amazonian jungle brew that carries the DMT compound, usually combining the leaves of a plant containing DMT with a vine found snaking around rain-forest trees, whose beta-carbolines make the DMT orally active.

"Drugs like ayahuasca are like interfaces that allow us to take messages from other realities instead of being overwhelmed or short-circuited by them," says Pinchbeck. "Some would insist that these messages come from your own psyche. I think it is possible that they come from another reality or, perhaps, a higher dimension."

A thick, brown tea that Pinchbeck describes as tasting like the "distilled essence of forest rot," ayahuasca is called yage in Colombia, which a South American Indian tribe translates as "vine of the soul" or "the rope of death." Vicious bouts of vomiting and even diarrhea are the usual side effects of the drug, which lasts a few hours. Until five or ten years ago, one still had to travel to the Amazon to take it, but lately it's become available in the right circles in the U.S., brought into the country in big jugs by leisure-suit-wearing shamans, or synthesized here by Catholic-spiritist religious sects primarily in the Southwest, who take it as a psychoactive Eucharist. People usually take the drug in small groups, almost always in a religious or quasi-religious context, much as peyote was usually taken in the context of Native American ceremonies in the Sixties. This January, settling a case
brought by a Seagram's family distillery heir in New Mexico, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that ayahuasca was legal for these sects' religious rituals.

"If the leading edge of psychedelic exploration in the Nineties was characterized by ravers taking synthetic research chemicals, this decade has been about the spread of the ayahuasca religion," says Erik Davis, author of The Visionary State: A Journey Through California's Spiritual Landscape. "DMT was around in the Sixties, but it never became a cultural force -- you'd have to have been a real head to have taken it. But there's something about the televisual, hyperdimensional, data-dense grandiosity of the DMT flash that seems to resonate with today's globalized, hyperreal culture. At the same time, because it's an ancient jungle brew, ayahuasca ties us to so much we have lost -- it gives one a sense of being part of something that is rooted in nature, which is such a source of longing and anxiety right now."

The earliest descriptions of the drug come from William Burroughs, who tried it in the 1950s a short time after he accidentally killed his wife. He had placed a glass on her head in a lighthearted mood; "It's time for our William Tell act," he said, and shot a gun at her brain. On ayahuasca, Burroughs found himself in a city where dead carcasses littered the streets. "Funerals and ceremonies are not permitted," he wrote. "Albinos blink in the sun, boys sit in trees languidly masturbating, people eaten by unknown diseases spit at passersby and bite them and throw pus and scabs and assorted vectors hoping to infect somebody." He began "seeing or feeling what I thought was a Great Being, or some sense of It, approaching my mind like a big wet vagina . . . a big black hole of God-Nose thru which I peered into a mystery -- the black hole surrounded by all creation." He said ayahuasca was the scariest drug he'd ever taken.

Pinchbeck's perspective on ayahuasca is quite different. He took it for the first time about ten years ago in downtown Manhattan with a California shaman introduced to him by the poet Michael Brownstein; Pinchbeck wore Depends and a blindfold, and kept a plastic vomit bucket by his head. A year later, after ordering ingredients from a botanical-supply Web site, he cooked up the brew for two friends in his apartment. On the drug, "the thought came to me that human consciousness is like a flower that blossoms from the earth," writes Pinchbeck. "The stem and the roots are invisible cords, etheric filaments that lead back to a greater, extradimensional being. Our separation from that larger being was only a temporary illusion. The universe was, we would know if we could perceive its workings, purposeful and good. Then I was looking up from my grave as dirt was thrown on my coffin. Yet this horror-movie vantage point didn't bother me. It made me feel calm." . . .

Calm is how he seems tonight, sipping an almond shake at a dimly lit vegan restaurant in the East Village, talking about his childhood. "At some point in Carlos Castaneda's books, he asks Don Juan what he was like as a
child, and Don Juan says, 'I have no personal history,' " Pinchbeck says with a strange half-grin. "I feel that way too, pretty much. Just trying to stay open."

But few have been as shaped by their upbringing as Pinchbeck. An only child, he was raised in Manhattan by his parents, Peter Pinchbeck, a little-known abstract painter, and Joyce Johnson, a Beat author who raised Daniel as a Jewish atheist. Johnson was Jack Kerouac's girlfriend -- "an interesting young person, a Jewess, elegant middle-class sad and looking for something," is how he described her. He exhorted her to meet him in foreign lands -- "we'll do our writing & cash our checks in big American banks & eat hot soup at market stalls & float on rafts of flowers & dance the rumba in mad joints" -- but they were mostly together in New York, making love all night before hitting the city streets to pick up the New York Times review of On the Road in the morning. A polite muse, she watched in the wings as Kerouac became a superstar, standing backstage when a TV interviewer asked him, "What is it you're looking for, Jack?" He responded, "I am waiting for God to show his face."

Johnson brought up Pinchbeck in New York, where she edited books by Allen Ginsberg and Abbie Hoffman. When young Pinchbeck was two and in his highchair, Hoffman appeared at their window after the Chicago Democratic National Convention, screaming, "I have a book!"; upstairs, he grabbed a banana out of Pinchbeck's hand and astonished him by breaking it in half and eating it. Similarly grand gestures by male role models were the stuff of Pinchbeck's adolescence, with trips made to his father's loft and that of neighboring male painters in SoHo after his parents' divorce, all the men in a "mad, iconic battle against the establishment," says Pinchbeck. Like a true Beat dad, his father showed little interest in him and even said he wished he had never had a son.

"And I was the classic paradigm of one who can't make it in the aggressive social reality of high school, so I geeked out on Dungeons and Dragons, poetry, chess and go," says Pinchbeck. He toted Ginsberg's books to school, taunted by his classmates when they opened one to find a poem called "Sweet Boy Give Me Your Ass."

For a long time, Pinchbeck, who spent part of his adolescence in a body cast with a crippling back ailment, was afraid of sex, of his fragile body being intruded upon by another. After dropping out of Wesleyan University in the late Eighties -- a nerdy New Wave kid, he didn't fit in at a college of prep-school Deadheads -- he sought to cure himself of this condition, say friends, by hanging out at a bar near Columbia University once popular with the Beats and hitting on every girl there until he no longer had any fear or shame, and caught a couple, too (today, friends note with head-shaking wonder Pinchbeck's skill at landing beautiful women). "I always say, 'You haven't lived in Manhattan if you haven't thrown up out of a cab or fucked Daniel Pinchbeck,' " says an old conquest. "He will yell and whine and make you date him."
He applied a similar focus to becoming successful. In the early Nineties, Pinchbeck co-founded the literary journal Open City with Thomas Beller, an author of wry coming-of-age fiction and Parker Posey's ex-boyfriend, and Robert Bingham, the mad scion of a Southern newspaper family who seemed like he might become his generation's Robert Stone. For a few years, they were the talk of the town, publishing and befriending promising new authors and indulging their taste for sex in the constant pursuit of erudite high-cheekboned nymphs. When the scene began to fall apart, with Bingham soon dying of a heroin overdose with the galleys of his first novel on his desk, Pinchbeck was left at loose ends, with two novels rejected by publishers and magazine work not entirely forthcoming. (He now distances himself from this world he once strove to dominate: "Almost anyone involved in my generation's literary books is [now] holding on to a world perception that is only leading us to destruction.")

"Wandering the streets of the East Village, I spent so much time contemplating the meaninglessness of existence that I sometimes felt like a ghost," he writes in Breaking Open the Head. "Perhaps I am already dead, I thought to myself. The world seemed to be wrapped in a cocoon I could not tear open, and I was suffocating in it. I did not want what other people wanted, but I didn't know how to find what I needed. I wanted truth -- my own truth, whatever bleak fragment of whatever hellish totality it might turn out to be."

Now over thirty years old, he was little more than a cynical, angry, poor and usually drunk midlevel writer -- at one party in Tribeca, he was thrown out after a pretty book editor resisted his advances, all the while protesting the iniquity of Manhattan women who only desired rich men. There had to be more. With a friend, he started experimenting with mushrooms before going out to hipster bars, where he perceived his friends as wounded medieval knights with their wenches. After reading a book about the rare African root-bark iboga and its use as a heroin cure, he secured a magazine assignment to travel to the West African country of Gabon to eat it with the Bwiti tribe, who a botanist had told him initiated Westerners into the cosmic secrets of iboga to show them the "essence of love." In Gabon, the shrieking king of the Bwitis shoved Pinchbeck naked into a stream, covering him in red paste and clothing him in tanned animal skins, with a red feather for his hair. Served in a plantain, iboga tasted like sawdust mixed with battery acid, and the trip lasted thirty terrifying hours. The upside: The Bwiti shaman told him the spirit of his grandmother, a sadistic woman who had administered unwanted enemas to him as a child, had been banished from his life. It was she who had been stopping him from accessing the etheric plane that exists beyond our four dimensions.

For the next ten years, while having a daughter with a European art-world heiress whose parents were painted by Andy Warhol, Pinchbeck embarked on a worldwide odyssey that took him to visit shamans in the Mexican
mountains of Oaxaca, the Hopis on Navajo reservations and to the small tribal villages of the Ecuadorian rain forest. In the netherworlds of psychedelic domains, he claims to have met elves and goblins and eventually aliens, who assured him that they were not figments of his imagination but part of an "entire sentient system" in the "self-weaving cosmological firmament." He snorted DPT, the lab-created cousin of DMT, with a twenty-four-year-old fire dancer and stripper named Charity, who hitchhiked from Mexico to meet him with her cat, Prometheus. On DPT he glimpsed pure evil and became convinced that the drug could provide access to the devil -- an area also inhabited by corporations that control us through their slogans and logos.

Meeting the devil -- a lounge lizard with a white mohawk in a mirrored bar -- is a risk Pinchbeck believes was worth taking. "I'm generally a humble person, but I do feel I'm surfing the edge of consciousness on this planet," he says. "A shaman risks their ass to get knowledge that the tribe needs to continue. In this case, the tribe is potentially the whole fucking world."

Pinchbeck and his crew, some of whom are starting a new magazine, Evolver, call themselves the "New Edge," a term taken from Bay Area Nineties rave and cyber culture. It's a group of mostly Brooklyn-based professionals in their thirties -- sensitive, beta guys brought up on sci-fi who work in the media or as graphic designers; women who like astrology, do a lot of yoga and listen to electronic music. I know a few of them: a guy I used to know who wrote sketch comedy for MTV in the Nineties and is now trying to open a health-food chain; a graduate-student couple in Hollywood who invited me over for martinis once but then offered me a new drug they had gotten from Shulgin, a "poly-drug" of the MDMA-inspired Foxy and Special K. And then there's Sting -- when we called to do the fact-checking for this article, Pinchbeck was at Sting's house in Wiltshire, England, about to board a helicopter to check out new crop circles, those odd geometric patterns often found in English wheat fields, made either by pranksters or aliens.

Vocal proponents of alternate realities, like Sting and Oliver Stone, have been open about their experiments with ayahuasca, and in the hipster circles where ayahuasca has taken root, many people are making weeklong trips to Peru, which cost about $600 without airfare and include about four ayahuasca ceremonies. It's a kind of Merry Tripster scene, with guided shamanic journeys to Peru, Colombia and Hawaii available nearly monthly with shamans like a white-turbaned, middle-aged female guru from L.A. who channels a spirit called "the Mother," and with whom Pinchbeck has a close relationship. Bimonthly ceremonies are offered in upstate New York under the auspices of a Catholic-spiritist church. Participants must wear white; men and women sit on either side of the room, banned from interacting. In his role as a "wizard in the realm of ideas," as he calls himself, Pinchbeck has also provided the stuff to visitors in his apartment. "Daniel hovered over me on the couch, asking, 'Have you
seen the face of God yet?" says one who has partaken.

Many who take the drug become true believers, and it has particular appeal to those concerned about the rapidly worsening state of the world, who are drawing the conclusion that the planet will soon revolt against the human race if we don't kill ourselves off first. "There's an extraordinary group hypnosis going on in this country right now -- it's an amazing lock-step moment," says Ken Jordan, an old friend of Pinchbeck's and the co-founder of the music site Sonicnet. "Having an experience with natural plants like ayahuasca can connect you spiritually to the planet in a way that I had not experienced personally before, even on LSD. It was an extraordinary thing for me. For the first time, I felt that the world was alive."

Like in any elite group, there are those who cannot hang with the program, and two followers who posted frequently on Pinchbeck's online discussion board -- both of whom made pilgrimages to New York to meet him -- committed suicide in the past few years. The first was a graduate in mathematics from Johns Hopkins who began to hallucinate a series of numbers with pernicious messages, like John Nash, eventually throwing himself off a bridge. He was followed by Dan Carpenter, a house painter who hanged himself with an extension cord after fifty out-of-body experiences and thirteen closed-eye trips on DXM powder, the anesthetic in cough syrup. In a book published posthumously, Carpenter writes that life was meaningless: "Something 'winked' at me as if to say -- 'Shhhhh! You see now?' My friend who lived down the road who trip-sat me all the time, the people at Daniel Pinchbeck's web site, the fact that I'd stumbled on DXM when I did . . . the fact that my boss had given me three days off which I'd used for tripping, was all somehow a program. Everything was visionary, both everyday and altered reality. There is no free will -- only the sense there is."

This was all before Pinchbeck himself started making some very unusual claims. After separating from the heiress in 2003, he made a trip to Hawaii and the Amazon with an incredibly hot abstract painter and Santo Daime priestess, sunbathing nude with her by the Hawaiian cliffs. In the Amazon, he received a transmission from God, in the form of Quetzalcoatl, a mystical bird-serpent in Mayan myths. Quetzalcoatl told Pinchbeck that he is a prophet -- all those times in his life when he thought he was a loser, because his birthdate happens to be in June 1966 (666), and his surname happens to be a fancy word for "false gold," were signs that one day he'd be chosen to transmit some very special, intradimensional knowledge to the planet. Here it is: The world as we know it is about to end -- on December 21st, 2012, the last day of time in the Mayan calendar.

Like every good guru, Pinchbeck has perhaps intentionally made the details of this prophecy hard to pin down (and, in fact, he liberally borrowed from McKenna and Jose Arguelles, the ex-Princeton professor who has dedicated his life to promoting such ideas). Whether there will be a complete collapse of the world before 2012 is
not for him to say, he says. All he knows is that the upsurge of militarism and terrorism -- as well as an increase in coincidences in his own life -- presage a time when spirit and matter will converge into one. We will then be released from the occult power of the Gregorian calendar, which is keeping us out of synchronicity with our psychic powers. We will receive the powers of telepathy and get to speak to our alien neighbors, not necessarily by mounting spaceships but through psychic evolution.

"Everyone I know has started to think something's going to go down in 2012," says David Wolfe, the raw-food chef. "I was just on a lecture tour, and the big question was 'Where are you going to be in 2012?' I'm thinking Hawaii's Big Island or the primordial rock of the Canadian Shield."

But according to Pinchbeck, not everyone will be saved in 2012 -- only the psychedelic elite and those who have reached a kind of supramental consciousness will make it through the bottleneck at the end of time. Or perhaps they can save the planet before the collapse of our socioeconomic system in about 2008, in which case they will transmit good vibrations to the rest of us, who will be saved too. "There's a crystallization that takes place within a small elite group, and once that happens you can transmit across the planet with amazing alacrity," says Pinchbeck. "We might need to do that very, very quickly."

This kind of psychedelic fundamentalism has its critics, especially at a time when Timothy Leary has come under attack in a new biography as an opportunistic huckster with allegiances to little but his own fame. "The current state of psychedelia is about as bad as it's ever been," says author Douglas Rushkoff, a friend of both McKenna's and Leary's. "While those who approached the drug scientifically, like Leary, are now being skewered over their personal-life mistakes, those who are imposing mythologies of Armageddon onto simple drug-induced shifts in perspective are winning ardent followings." The argument against Pinchbeck's prophecy is not lost on many who have watched the downfalls of other gurus. "Daniel is predicting things that aren't happening far enough in the future -- he has a sell-by date that is six years away," says Richard Metzger of the Disinformation publishing house. "He could have done the psychedelic-guru circuit making lectures at Esalen forever, but whether he has a career beyond these predictions is hard to say."

Nor have Pinchbeck's colleagues in the soothsaying world missed the fringe benefits of his prophetic deadliner mentality, as he opens the minds of nubile young things -- one of his more recent pronouncements is that the nature of the sexes is not necessarily monogamous, and that some who prefer that way of life are living in false consciousness. "The sad thing is, this is what any of us geeky, overeducated nerds who've gotten to hang out a little with rock stars want," says one peer. "I want nineteen-year-old girls sucking on my penis too, especially if I can justify that a nineteen-year-old girl sucking on my penis is, in the process, saving the world."
Just as Kerouac began to change the consciousness of an entire generation, Pinchbeck believes that he and his friends will catalyze their generation to supersede the current state of the baby boomers, all these comfortable middle-aged folks living in a secular materialist world. "The Beats recognized the wrongness of the modern social paradigm on every level, but they weren't able to embody a positive new way to be," says Pinchbeck. "Not that I can completely do that either, but I can see it as a model."

It's an odd way to think when your mom is an old Beat herself, living in an Upper West Side loft around the corner from Strawberry Fields, her apartment filled to the brim with books, plants and elemental, palate-cleansing abstract paintings. On a recent afternoon, she sits on a black leather couch, with blond, graying hair, talking about the old days. "Kerouac used Buddhism as a way of rationalizing all the things that were wrong in his life," she says. "His attitude was 'Why do anything? We're all heading for the void.' " As for her son, she says of his adventures in psychedelia, "If Daniel had come to me and said he was becoming an Orthodox Jew, I would have been equally shocked."

Pinchbeck clears his throat. "I think that because of the way my mother was constituted, seeing people from the Sixties crack up, she had an extra-large helping of anxiety, melancholy, worry and depression," he says. "Those things pressed down upon me, and I felt psychically immobilized trying to sort through those forces. In some way, I have to see that as positive, because it forced me to make this leap to the unknown."

Johnson shifts uncomfortably on the couch.

"I've tried to express to my mom that Quetzalcoatl is not just my dream -- though she may not know it, it's her dream also," says Pinchbeck.

"What do you think about that?" I ask.

"I don't know," says Johnson.

The first couple of times I meet Pinchbeck, he's affable and calls me "sweetie," but this soon goes sour. Confronted with this not-hot-enough girl with an open notepad and disbelieving eyes, he starts shooting me private e-mails asking why I'm not interacting more seriously with his ideas: "As I have kept trying to point out to you, the 'story' here, as I see it, is not just about me -- it is about you as well. Now that you have encountered this set of ideas about the immediate crisis facing our world and steps toward its solution in the individual death-and-rebirth process of the apocalypse . . . what effect does it have on you? Does it shift decisions you might make about subjects you write about, or whether you will pay into a long-term pension plan, or anything of the
Tonight at his apartment, an East Village one-bedroom too small for his outsize personality, he seems unfriendly and morose. His daughter is lying in his unmade bed watching The Lion King as Pinchbeck and I start talking about how I'd like to move off the grid, to escape the chaos and hustle of city life. When we talked about it earlier, he said, "But there is no escape," his eyes burning into mine. "We have to fix this situation right fucking now, or there's going to be nuclear wars and mass death, and it's not going to be very interesting. There's not going to be a United States in five years, OK?"

In the other room, his daughter is afraid -- a bunch of hyenas are bounding across the TV screen, chasing the little lion.

"This is the scary part," she cries.

Pinchbeck comforts her. "You're right," he says. "This is the scary part."

She grabs hold of the hem of her nightgown and pulls it over her face.

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