

Seconds...Minutes...Hours...One by one they ticked by...folding into one another, times perpetual origami. They began to blend together with the confined surrounding that presently made up his reality. Working against time, this entrapment was forcing the free willing trio to stop and be still. Be examined. Frozen. This solitary confinement that he was currently trapped in, had completely eroded their meaning. His only means of time telling were the rays of light coming through his window. The window...the window. It represented hope and the proof of an existence beyond these four walls — the four walls that worked his sanity like a master carpenter. Carving, shaving and chipping away, molding his mind into the shape and form 'it' chose.

He lay back onto his cot, it and three hots were dependable..even now. As he stared up at the ceiling he danced his fingertips across the beams of sun; they taunted him with their freedom — with their fun, fun, sweet freedom. Free to shine and brighten any place they went. Knowing nothing but going; nothing but riding the lightspeed course of excitement that they are set on by that giant ball of fire and life. They burned to complete their missions. As he thought of the sun rays, he began to feel pity for them.

How sad it was for them to journey all this way only to end up trapped in this prison with him. Perhaps he should reflect them back out of the window; maybe they would find a plant to nourish or a fire flies butt to charge.

He needed to find a reflector. Maybe this sheet? He thought it over, but decided that it would look too strange if someone by chance to look up at his window and see the sheet there. No, he couldn't do that. It would be a bad idea. He pondered some time about how he was full of bad ideas lately.

Filling his mind with the dark thoughts of past mistakes wasn't exactly helping the time to go by. He dropped his hand from the light stream and sat up. The book, on the floor, by his bed could help flush his mind of the ill thoughts he decided. It was a mystery book, one he already knew the solution to, one he'd solved four and a quarter times already. He opened it up where he had left off and began to drone over the words.

Peripheral vision started to betray him, every time he looked down on the pages, he could've sworn he saw movement around the empty room. Nothing but bare walls when he looked up to catch 'it'.

"It's not like you don't know what happens next...", said a mocking voice from the corner.

The detained clasped his book shut in excitement, "What?!". A reactionary, irrelevant question. Fear started to creep in as his brain calculated the addition of a voice, that was not his own with the emptiness around him. "Who's there?"

There was no answer. Only the silent realization that his mind was tired of being cramped in this room and so was making its move to escape.

"I've gotta get outta here...", he said to himself.

"Yeah we do!" The voice from nowhere responded, "What's the plan?"

Searching frantically. His head turning every which way, eyes darting to every single inch in the room. This must be a joke — a hidden microphone somewhere. He looked under the cot.

"What're you looking for?"

Bang.

His head hit the hard frame as shock sprang him up too soon to react to the voice. "Where are you?" He called.

"I'm here." The voice called from behind. "No, no stop moving!" It ordered.

"Don't play around with me! I'll hurt you! Whoever you are!" The captive earned the intruder. Could confinement be intruded...or just interrupted?

"Turn around!"

Ready to swing he wheeled around quickly. Nothing. Nothing until he saw it, it took a moment of concentration to convince his eyes what they saw was real. That the actual reality in front of them was his shadow, on the wall, waving.

"Hi!"

He fell back, scrambling away until his back pressed against the wall. The monster only grew with each inch he tried to escape.

"Well this is awkward." The lightless one began to rub his head, "I'm usually the one looking up at you, huh?"

"Help!! Heeelp!!!" He yelled.

"What's going on in there boy?!" The warden called from the other side of the door.

"I need to get out of here!"

"No!", the Warden scolded before laughing and walking away, "You need to think about what you've done."

"No...no...nooo," he cried out, "you can't leave me in here!!!"

“You’re gonna need to stop that or they’ll never let us outta here.” The shadow advised.

“What are you?” He tried to calm himself down, “Why’re you here?!?”

“Now that I don’t know...” the shadow thought out loud rubbing it’s own chin. “Why are you here?”

He stood up, testing his theory. “You...yo—you’re my shadow??”

“Yeah...suppose I am.”

He held up his arm, the shadow copied. Lifted a leg, the shadow copied. Jumped up, copied. Flexed, copied. “I’m going crazy...”

The shadow broke the charade to respond, “Nah I’m just good at my job.”

“Your job?”

“Yeah we shadows, we work a different person everyday! I got you t’day...” the shadow looked down and kicked. “It sucks.”

“Well everyday ain’t like this.”

“Oh yeah —”, the Shadow perked up “wad’ya usually do?”

“Uh...well.” The detained stuttered, “I go out in the yard, hang out with my brothers. We play basketball a lot. But we just moved here, so...I don’t really do anything yet.”

“I see...”, the Shadow looked up, “Well, I think that’s why I’m here.”

“Why?”

The Shadow pointed towards the window, “There’s not much time, so you have to listen well...”

He followed the wall-tattooing arm with his eyes and saw that the shadow was referring to the setting sun. “Oh...I get it. What is it?”

“I think we’re supposed to switch...you know you’ve been getting in trouble a lot...” The shadow informed, attempting persuasion.

“Switch?!?” The detained one exclaimed, “I can’t be a shadow! I have skin, bones and all this...stuff” he said patting himself down.

"People do it all the time, that stuff doesn't matter." The shadow explained. "Shadows can go anywhere, you wouldn't be stuck here if you didn't want to be."

"Anywhere?!"

"Anywhere!" The shadow confirmed excitedly, "We have to do it quick though..." the shadow motioned towards the window once again.

"Okay...uh...how do we do it?"

"You just ask to see my eyes..."

"Your eyes?"

"Yeah...that's it."

"Okay...can I see your eyes?"

"No!" The Shadow shouted, his voice now aggravated, aggressive even. It was a sharp, short exclamation of the desperate. It happened so fast and receded so quickly the detained hadn't noticed the difference when the shadow began to speak kindly again. "In Latin, you gotta say it in Latin." The shadow laughed out.

"I don't know Latin."

"Okay just say this: 'Volo videre quae videtis'"

He did. The shadows eyes appeared. They were glowing white and orange orbs that were so bright and calling that they seemed to drown him in their essence. He supposed that's exactly what happened, because not a moment later he was looking up at....himself. Was he a shadow?

Suddenly his arm jerked up independent of his control. He saw and realized that his other self was in control of his limbs; this other self stood over him, seemingly checking himself out.

A moment later he heard the voice of the Warden, "Dinner!! Deon you can come out of your room now!"

Freedom! His punishment was over.

The warden opened the door. There was darkness for a moment, then he could see again. The warden and his other self were walking down the brand new halls, she had hung some of their pictures on the wall since he'd been banished to his room.

“After dinner we can setup your room, your Dad just got back with the Uhaul.” The warden said.

His other self responded to her, “Sounds good Mom. And I’m sorry about your table, I won’t spray paint an—“

Darkness and silence encapsulated his vision. When he could see and hear again he could only see out of a small sliver of light. His brothers, dad, mom and his other self were laughing and joking at the dinner table.

His other self looked down at him and winked sadistically. “Look at sunset mom, isn’t it beau—“

DARKNESS.