

## CHAPTER 16

Marvin would sometimes forget things. This didn't tend to bother him unless it was something important that he was forgetting.

Once in a while he would forget his favorite color, but this came back to him momentarily. His favorite color was difficult to forget.

Sometimes he even forgot his name, but that never lasted for longer than twenty minutes. He had several haunting memories, but a few key ones came up more than once every hour - one of which was a memory of a man calling out his name. Marvin didn't like remembering that, but otherwise he most certainly wouldn't have known his name anymore.

This time, though, he didn't forget his name. He forgot something else.

Upon hearing the door, staring face to face with the pure, physical manifestation of hunger, he came upon a sudden realization. For over fifty years, Marvin had forgotten what he liked.

But suddenly he knew.

The memories were, fortunately, coming back. Not that they were ever gone or anything - in fact, the fascination still remained, even if he wasn't aware of it.

Marvin always had this kind of fascination. Every day was exciting - there were opportunities, and discoveries to make. And he wasn't alone, as he was at this point. That was the important part.

The system was always interesting. The way that everything sort worked together seamlessly, like it had always been perfect, and it had always existed. The idea that such a thing had once not existed, and that there was a building process, just didn't seem to register in his mind at the time. If just one piece went missing, the entire thing would fall apart.

Sometimes he took everything apart, to see what would happen. This never ended very well, but Marvin loved it anyway. It was a learning experience, almost - one that couldn't be taken away from him.

Those days were quite different. He certainly wasn't being forced to do anything, as he was now.

Of course, it was inevitable that somebody was going to be forced. It's not like this was a new thing.

The more Marvin tried not to think about it, the more it grew in his mind. It felt almost as if his brain was growing with it, like there was a possibility that it would explode into millions of pieces, and the thoughts would escape. And the hungry would be happy for the rest of their lives.

That was the worst senario. The best one would be for him to take revenge on the hungry in some way.

And there it was, right in front of him. The first opportunity after years of imprisonment. There was a chance, but it was a little riskier than he would have liked.

That wasn't much of a problem at this point. He had already taken an equal risk eariler on.

"Person," Marvin said, holding a square piece the size of a marshmellow. "Who are you, person?"

I stood up straight, ready to engage in a polite conversation. This is what I was prepared for - or, rather, what I hoped would take place. But only after realizing that this man was, in fact, not Hil at all. Before that, I was prepared to destroy.

"Hello there, sir," I said, faking a smile. I scanned the room in a matter of seconds, looking for a particular object. "You don't happen to have a, uhâ€¦ circle here?"

Marvin tried his very best to act naturally. He was never good at doing that, though, and like always he came off awkwardly.

"Oh, noâ€¦!" said Marvin. "Couldn't be. I don't remember such a thing at all!" He slowly walked forward, grabbing on to a pole and breaking it off of his machine.

"Heh," I began, feeling quite uncomfortable. "Okay. Well, I apologize for intruding."

He continued to walk forward slowly, with his large pole, staring into my eyes.

"But, I *would* like to, uhâ€¦!" I began, looking back at Care. "â€¦y'know, take this girl here. Home with me, 'cause she belongs to me."

Marvin didn't listen. I stepped back.

"Okay, so, as l-long as you understand meâ€¦!" I said, now walking backwards at a rather steady pace. I grabbed on to Care's hand. "I'll be leaving now."

"No," Marvin said. He retained his tight grip on the pole, now walking faster than before.

"Well, yes," I said.

"No."

Care whined for a brief moment.

There was an awkward silence. I took a quick dash up the stairs, pulling Care with me. Marvin swung the pole forward, nearly hitting both of us. It flew from his hands and broke the closet door.

Marvin said nothing. He didn't even appear frustrated. He simply ran up the stairs, after us

Care pulled in the opposite direction.

"Care, quit it," I said, opening the door to the hallway.

"How do you know myâ€¦!" she began.

Marvin tripped on the stairs the second he began walking up, hitting his head. He nearly screamed. We both looked down briefly as he lied there, motionless.

"That was pretty hilarious," I said, holding up my camera and filming this priceless event. "Now let's get out of here."

It felt kind of strange. Like, this was easier than it should have been. Hil was nowhere to be found, and his replacement was a fragile old man. Nothing about that felt right to me, and surely enough I was on my toes as we made our way through the hallway and out of the building.

I was expecting a fight. I was expecting murder! Everything about the situation was frustrating - I knew that Hil was going to come back eventually, and I needed to be ready for that. At the same time, though, I didn't want to be "ready" for the rest of my life, spending every minute preparing for the fight. It just didn't feel like the correct thing to do.

Regardless, there was nothing that I could do about it. I didn't want to seem angry; this was supposed to be a *good* moment for me. I found Care. I was about to take her home.

Care continued to pull, though. I tried to ignore it as I opened the door to my car.

"Taper man," she said. "We need the circle."

"We don't need any stupid circle, Care," I replied, sitting down. "This is important business, here."

"Oh, butâ€¦!"

"Get inside," I said.

Clearly, there were problems. And they weren't going to get be solved any time soon. It was possible that I would die. But that wasn't an issue for me.

"Can we get the circle later?" Care asked, sitting down and closing the car door next to her.

"No," I said.

I started the car, and we drove off.

While most of my thoughts up until that point had been fairly negative, there was a positive side to the situation, as well.

My plan was to bring Care home to her mother - that was the obvious thing to do, after all. But it meant something good - it meant that Care's mother would finally be appreciative of me and my excellence. It meant that I could finally fix my life; that everything would fall right back into place, as it had been only a few years ago. That's what I wanted. Hil was pretty much irrelevant to that goal.

But even then, Hil was watching. And he was waiting for the perfect moment. It suddenly occurred to me that he could have been anywhere. Even in the back seat of the car.

That was quite a scary thought.

"Care," I said. She had almost fallen asleep.

"What?" she asked.

"Check the back seats."