

There is something behind me.

By G.D. Goya

You probably won't believe me, but if I don't put it in words, no one will understand. It first started a couple weeks after the robbery. Eugene tried his best to warn me; A cryptic message from him asked if I had been followed at all. I assumed that he was being paranoid and I wrote it off, but the next morning Eugene was found dead in his apartment from a self-inflicted gun wound. Or at least that is what the police said. I found this hard to believe until I heard that his body was discovered with twenty thousand dollars in cash. No assailant would leave that sum of money behind after committing such a crime. Furthering my confusion, I knew that Eugene wasn't the type of man to kill himself, and he seemed to have a multitude of ideas on how to spend his share of the booty after we went our separate ways. I couldn't imagine what would make a man like that pull the trigger. Until it happened to me.

It started one night while I was walking home from the bar. No drunker than usual, but still feeling no pain. I said goodbye to my friend Jermaine, and we went our separate ways. I barely made it more than several yards before I felt like I was being followed. Silly me, I thought, saying goodbye to Jermaine only to walk the same path as him home. I turned around to ratify my anti-social mistake, but my good ol' bar buddy was not there. Instead, I saw him at the end of the street, shuffling in the other direction. Deciding to ignore this slight premonition, I retreated home, and with a good night's sleep, I brushed the moment off.

It wasn't until the next morning when I was reminded of it. On the way to the corner store it happened again. The same shaky feeling you get when you are being watched. The feeling of someone looking over your shoulder, barely hidden from sight. I spun around to find an elderly woman matching my lethargic pace while she lurched down the street in gaudy church clothes. I stepped aside and let the woman pass with a nod, but once I resumed my daily trek, the funny feeling returned. I swung around again, but there was no one to be seen. Shaken, I stopped for a moment and scanned in all directions. It looked as though the same paranoia that had possessed Eugene had found its way into my head. It was natural, after all. Through his crazy sentiment, and bizarre death, he had passed on the same disturbed thoughts to me. I decided to ignore it and resumed my day.

That feeling never did leave. Despite all my efforts to kill it with various combinations of drugs and alcohol, the sense that someone was behind me lingered, and day after day, it grew stronger. At first, I considered the thought that someone was actually watching me, but I found no such evidence of any tails. Decidedly, I kept to myself and choose to retreat to my dreary residence, but this did not help. Even while isolated in my lonesome condo, I could feel the sensation crawling up my spine. With each day it grew closer until it seemed like the thing was breathing down my back. I would jump at certain times fully knowing that when I turned around, I would not find whatever was stalking me. Ever since, in its horrid presence, I am never truly alone. In the back of my mind, there is always someone in the shadows. Forever being watched, and terrorized by some unseen force.

I never knew what it was until I heard it speak. It happened in the wee hours of the morning. I was trying to sleep, but per usual, I was unable to rest because there was something in my bed. I couldn't see it, and I couldn't feel it, but I swear the thing was leering at me from the other side of the mattress. On this particular night, it was closer than usual. It was as if I could feel its breath tickling the hairs on my neck. I refused to acknowledge it, and curled further into a ball, but I could not escape. To my horror, as it drew to the point of touching, I could hear its chilly voice. The sound was as drifty as the presence itself, and it flowed into my ear with such faintness, I could hardly ascertain what it said. With a slight breeze, the

voice whispered into my ear, "The safe is under the rug. Take the money." Upon hearing this, my heart froze, and I knew what the thing wanted.

My mind snapped back to the robbery. Eugene and I had managed to find the stash spot of a local loan shark. With the two of us, it wasn't too hard to stick the place up. We broke in when he wasn't home, and waited for him to return. After a few bashes to the head from my pistol, we got him to submit. With a few amputated fingers (Eugene's idea), we got him to tell us the combination to the safe. "The safe is under the rug. Take the money!" he quipped as he spurted out mouthfuls of congealed blood and words. In the end, it was my idea to kill him. It isn't advisable to leave a witness in this kind of situation. I made the right decision, and I would make that again, but I am still haunted by the image of that frightened man as he sat in a pool of his own blood and fingers, screaming at us to take his money and go.

I hear his voice sometimes, and his presence never leaves my side. He is constant reminder of what I have done, and the pain I have caused. An unnatural thought brought to life. Always behind my shoulder. Always peering into my soul. I care not to look anymore, refusing to believe the fact that I cannot see him, and resigning to the knowledge that I have a lurching monstrosity crawling at my back. I can't believe it has taken me this long. Eugene had it right. He clocked out before it got worse. I have only delayed the inevitable, and my atonement has been long overdue. By now, the metal from the barrel of my pistol has become a familiar taste. Suicide has been on my mind for the last six days, but this is it. I am going to pull the trigger.

The reaper is calling, so this is my letter to whoever it may concern, or perhaps the very thing that is watching me. Sorry if I disappointed, but this was my only way out. To whoever finds this, the safe is under the sink. Please take the money.