

Shadow

It was another day just like the rest throughout my existence, I left the safe confines of my room and regretted it. If I did not leave I would have suffered as well, but at least all the emotional turmoil would not be running through my mind, all the anger, all the stress, all the anxiety. But I guess all these negatives are a part of everyday life...well, at least for me. I get up every morning and repeat the process: shower, dress, brush my teeth, and head out to class. The standard morning of a college student. The fatigue from a near sleepless night and the fear of what is to come in class can be sensed in everyone. I keep counting down the minutes and going from class to class.

“One down two to go.” I told myself, sleepily in an attempt to bring some happiness in my day, but words bring me little encouragement anymore.

My next class, math, to be honest I do not understand why I had to take this class as the level I was placed in is too advanced for me, but I still must do it. This class is a battle and takes the most out of me as I have to try more than anyone else to understand the gibberish that makes up the language that is math. Eventually we got dismissed from class and I left the building, I headed back to my room for the rest of the day. I had no friends to meet up with aside from one, no relationship to partake in, nothing to keep me outside other than heading to classes. I am the man that everyone remembers but no one ever seems to know my name. They remember me because I am always smiling, I always look so happy and carefree, like I am full of life; but in reality, it is all a mask, a facade I keep up so people do not feel bad for me. I try to keep up this mask because when I don't, it seems that people can sense the shift in my facial expressions and will ask me if I am okay. I honestly hate when people do this because I know they simply do this for themselves, to make them feel better for asking.

“Yeah, I’m good, just a little tired.” I tell them and it always seems to work. If they were truly concerned, they would see past the lie and know something was wrong.

Then again it is not a complete lie, I mean I am tired, just not the tired they believe. Instead I am just plain tired of how my life is going, I am in my junior year of college, do not have anyone outside of my family who contact me, I have no friend group, and never knew what it is like to be in a relationship. I am just sick and tired of being alone and isolated.

“Ha.” I chuckled as I made my way closer to my dorm, “Story of my life.”

Ever since middle school I have been isolated by my peers to the point where I began doing it to myself. Never belonging, I grew up awkward and antisocial and I eventually just grew tired of trying to change something which has and will likely remain constant through my life.

Eventually, I make it to my single dorm room and throw my backpack on my bed, luckily it was a Friday so I did not have to do any homework. It was not long before I could see the real me through my mirror, the shell of a person who is just tired. Looking at the face in front of me brought me no comfort. It’s lively eyes now dead, and the smile now blank. This was my reflection, the reflection of pain and loneliness. Now I was not ugly by any means, far from it, I even worked out frequently in order to improve my self image, but it honestly did not help much. I turned away from the visage staring at me and flicked on my lights. This action actually did bring me comfort as it woke up my only friend.

He and I moved here together and are sharing this single room. He is the only person I could ever truly turn to, the one one that would never leave my side and would always be there for me. I would tell him my secrets and he would listen, I would travel and he would always accompany me, I would get lonely and he would always be there, and no matter what I did, he would still be there by my side. This person, my best friend, it was my shadow. My shadow is a

true friend, and despite never responding to me outright, I always feel more comfortable when I could see it.

I tell him about my day and how hard math is and I imagine his thoughts on the matter. Now I know that this was my shadow, an inanimate thing, I am not crazy, or maybe I am, but at the end of the day, no human aside from my family has every really given me the time of day so I had to make do with what I had, and what I had was my shadow.

I was about to continue talking to my shadow when I heard a knock at my door, a bit peeved, I got up and walked to my door. But not before returning to the mirror and flashing myself that fake million dollar smile. I opened the door and was greeted by my neighbor Evan. Internally I was rolling my eyes as I knew what was gonna come out of his mouth.

“Hey Bryan, my friends and I are gonna throw a little party tonight and.” I cut him off.

“You need alcohol right?” I asked.

“You know me too well man.” He said as he handed me fifty bucks. “Can you get me two twenty four packs of beer, I don’t really care what.” He said. I took the money and pocketed it, I knew I could get in trouble for purchasing alcohol for some sophomores but hey, despite not being a happy individual, I did enjoy making other people happy. Plus...I don’t know, it might give me an excuse to join his party. He always invites me after all. Never really as a friend though, mainly because they want to return the favor to their beer supplier. I tell him I’ll grab it in a few hours as it was only five and he nodded.

A voice in the back of my head said I should not be doing this, but I simply ignored it, after all, people supplied me with alcohol while I was underage. With that, I closed the door and jumped onto my cozy comforter, I just laid there and continued to talk with my shadow about

random stuff as if we were two people having a normal conversation. If it was not for the lights being on, I think I would have fell asleep.

Eventually, it reached eight and I decided to leave. I grabbed my ID, my campus ID, my room keys, and walked off campus to the beer store right off campus. I bought two twenty four packs of beer and paid using the money Evan gave me. Luckily the store clerk gave me a box so it would be easier to carry the two boxes of beer and with that, I walked back to campus and was getting a good workout in with how heavy the boxes were. Eventually I arrived back on campus and headed up the stairs to my floor. I walked over to Evan's room and could already hear the music blasting from down the hallway. It took a while for them to hear my knocking on the door but eventually they opened the door.

I extended my hands holding the box like it was an offering.

"Awesome man, thanks so much." He says with sincerity.

I try to enter saying "Pretty nice party." But am stopped.

"So...I'm sorry to do this man but...well. You see there are a bunch of girls here who are probably gonna end up making bad decisions and..." I cut him off by leaving, I knew where he was going with this. He was gonna say "It's not my kind of party, I wouldn't have fun, etc."

Same old story, same old excuse. I just wish someone would have the balls to tell me the truth. That they think I will just make things awkward or I'll probably kill the mood, or that I am not really friends with them, etc. Each of these excuses were bull to begin with as they did not know me well enough to even know that it would happen. I took a deep breath through gritted teeth, I have been rejected my entire life and still, rejection hurts. I am at my door and I hear him yell, "Next time, I promise." I roll my eyes as my anger builds, yeah right, next time.

I make it back to my room and drop the mask the second I hear the lock set in place. Immediately, all the anger releases and I just wail on my mattress. I would punch the wall but despite my anger, I am still a logical person and knew I would have to pay for damages.

“Why the fuck do I keep getting my hopes and do things for others even when I know I will receive nothing in return!?” I yelled to no one in particular.

“It’s because you are a good person.” A voice whispers, its voice was demonic but his words were angelic. All the hairs on my body stood up on end and a shiver entered my body, the room turned cold and I turned around frantically to see who broke into my room and said that. But there was no one.

“Who said that!?” I yelled out.

“Down here.” The voice replied and I looked down to see it was just my shadow.

I stand there confused, until my shadow does something impossible. Despite the fact that I am standing still, my shadow is growing and shrinking, as if it’s breathing, then, I notice that a small portion of the blackness which made up its head began to disappear. Two dots and a large half circle break through the shadow. No, those were eyes and a rictus grin!

I am nearly shitting myself in terror now and opt to run to the bathroom and slam and lock the door the second I am inside. I see myself in the mirror, eyes wide and full of fright, I am hyperventilating and am fairly certain my heart was about to jump out of my chest. Trying to calm down, I splash water on my face.

“Okay Bryan, you finally did it, you finally went off the deep end. Get a grip, I mean, there is no way that shadow was smiling at you and actually spoke.” I said between gasps in an attempt to reassure myself. But this was short lived when I heard,

“That hurts my feelings Bryan, I thought we were friends?” The voice claimed in a hurt expression. I slowly turn to the wall behind me and see that face again. I nearly jumped out of my skin, but can’t, I am frozen in place. They say that there are actually three responses to danger: Fight, Flight, and freeze. The terror is overwhelming me and I am 45% sure I’m about to be possessed, 45% of me is certain I’m about to be killed by this thing mimicking my shadow, something I once trusted. All while the remaining 10% of me is telling me that I am definitely going crazy. I then felt a tingling around my lips, and within a few seconds, there was a large grin on my face; this is a nervous tick of mine but I bet if someone could see me now, sweating, panicking, but with a big grin on my face, they too would think I am crazy.

I was frozen in place but the shadow moved, it moved into a spot on the floor, it became a puddle of darkness, then, this nightmare entered a whole new level of terrifying; this shadow creature, it started to become three dimensional. What I mean is that it started to lift itself from the floor. It looked like the top of a person’s head was raising from a black puddle. The head rose, then the neck, and from what I could see, this thing appeared to be a humanoid of utter darkness. It had the physique and body of a person, but it was composed of complete blackness. Imagine someone is wearing a black morph-suit with the shine of obsidian, a detailed face, and having a completely white mouth and eyes.

It felt like hours of this thing slowly rising but in reality was likely around 15 seconds before it was completely out of the ground and the puddle disappeared. This thing was not just black, but it was blacker than black, like a blackness that consumed everything, including light. I was paralyzed in place, standing, shivering, and observing this thing with wide eyes. It takes a step and my brain is telling me to run. But I cannot move. It takes another step, then another, and then it is right in front of me.

I close my eyes fearing the worst but this thing did something I would never have expected, it...it hugged me. I felt warmth from this being and its embrace actually comforted me and put me at ease. I don't know why but I felt now that I could trust this thing, that it would never even think of hurting me. I reached out my own hands and returned the hug. I expected them to fall through this being but, instead I made contact, contact with what felt like skin. I then looked up and saw black hair, and noticed that it looked remarkably similar to the way I style my own hair. It let me go and I look at this being up and down and notice other similarities like physique and height. It is like a clone of me comprised of absolute darkness. This is my twin, my dark reflection, my shadow, my friend.

I woke up, sleepy and exhausted, and instantly what happened the previous night came to mind. Every detail was clear in my head, but I eventually dismissed the night as a dream. I sighed accepting that there was no way for that to have actually happened, I was destined to continue living this life alone and without catching a break. I got out of bed realizing that I was still in the clothes I was wearing last night. This is weird as I was wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, two things that I could never fall asleep in because it would be too hot wearing under my heavy comforter. I guess I must have drank a little too much last night as I had a pretty nasty hangover. I checked my clock and saw it was nearly one in the afternoon. I sighed but came to the conclusion that I would just stay in my room for the remainder of the day. I had nothing better to do after all.

The headache only seemed to grow the longer I was awake so I decided to enter my bathroom and shower in an attempt to hydrate. I must have spent like fifteen minutes in that shower soaking up the hot water and pondering life. I left the shower and stood in front of the

mirror drying off. I stared into the fogged up mirror and through the fog, I saw a blackness behind me which startled me causing me to whip around only to see it was my shadow. It was...normal and with no smile. I let out an even bigger sigh, but not one out of relief, instead it was a sigh of disappointment, I wish that what happened last night could have actually happened, but now I have to completely disregard it. But despite that fact that I decided to ride it off, something kept bugging me about it, like there was more to the dream and I should not simply dismiss it.

I stare at my black reflection on the room and slowly get closer to it, its size shrinking with each step. And...and I unconsciously extend my hand to touch it. I realized what I was doing and retracted the hand and rolled my eyes at myself.

"Get ahold of yourself dude, you're going off the deep end." I say to myself with my hands clasped on my head.

"I wouldn't say that." A voice rang out from in front of me causing me to jump out of my skin. I look right at the shadow after I get a few steps back

I woke up like any other Saturday morning, groggy and wanting to stay in bed. I set my alarm by habit again and woke up at nine in the morning

How did you do that

I have no Idea what you are talking about (suppressing a grin)

Midway through the class he notices that everyone is staring at him.

What

They look away

Eventually he just focused on the movie

Soon I got bored and turned, closed my eyes, and when I opened them they all freaked out and a lot of the kids ran out of the classroom. The person operating the projector just looked at me in confusion now that my eyes were once again normal and I just shrug making it appear that I knew nothing. The people who saw that did not run away were quivering in their seats and breathing heavily like they were standing naked in a blizzard.

I'm going off the deep end now.

No I'm secretly a super scientist who discovered a way to temporarily transform myself into a shadow through the use of this watch.

His voice was demonic but his words were angelic

For some reason, today I made the decision to refrain from placing on the mask which is my smile, I just didn't care anymore. After all, it has provided me with nothing in life. I have lived for so long posing as that happy, optimistic kid and I am finally sick of it. I am no longer going to get my hopes up only to have my effort blow up in my face. Maybe if I were a different person, I would try my damndest to hide my powers but as I previously stated, I don't care anymore.

I left my room soon after, backpack on and decently dressed. I was heading for the dining hall for breakfast. I had a descent hour before class began and hadn't eaten anything the previous night. I entered the cafeteria doors and there were barely any other students inside.

"Good, less noise for me to take in." I said to myself as I grabbed a plate, some scrambled eggs, bacon, and a chocolate muffin. I know its a bit generic but I honestly was not being picky.

I took my time as I ate as I was in no rush to leave. I actually managed to get some studying in before they showed up. Almost like a flick of a switch, the once quiet and peaceful cafeteria became a loud annoying place with people pooling in through the doors. I sighed, placed my books back into my backpack, and placed my plate on the conveyer belt. I left the dining hall and decided to head over to my first period class. I checked my watch and class was now in fifteen minutes. Time flies I guess.

So I was walking up the brick sidewalk to the building where my first period class was located in when I noticed a group of people walking down that path and I immediately felt my mouth contort. I was trying to smile out of habit and this just made me angry. I decided that I should keep my head down in hopes that without visual contact, my smile would dissipate. It began working and I decided to walk slightly off the path so that they could pass. Little did I know, in doing so, I was headed straight for a light pole.

“Hey watch out ma-“ He tried to say but stopped suddenly. I then realized that I must’ve phased through the pole.

“Shit.” I muttered. I may not want to hide them but even I must admit that this was a stupid move.

“W...wha...What just happened?” I heard the guy say in shock and I simply turned my head around, still slowly walking mind you.

“You’re not crazy, that being said, I am not in the best of moods today so leave my alone.” I said this without any emotion and I expected that to be that. Oh how wrong I was, almost immediately after I gave him that verification and warning, I hear footsteps approach me.

“Wait! How did you-“ He tried to ask as he attempted to stop me by placing his hand on my shoulder. However, his hand phased through my shoulder and that pissed me off. He was

shocked out of his mind and I simply stopped walking and rapidly turned my head around to face him.

I looked at him straight in the eyes and yelled, "I said leave me alone!"

He took a step back and his face was frozen in fear, so were his friends. I actually think I made the guy piss himself. But I did not intend to scare them, all I wanted was to be left alone.

"Look, I am sorry for scaring you. But I am seriously not in the mood to explain all of this." I apologized before continuing my walk to class.

As I continued walking, I felt even worse for yelling at him but also, I couldn't help but feel a strange sense of happiness in the way they reacted to me using my powers. It felt good to actually get attention for once.

Eventually, I made it to the building and climbed up the stairs to my classroom and, like any other day, there were a few kids waiting for class to begin despite there still being ten minutes before the door would even unlock. I decided that maybe I will once again receive some satisfaction from scaring the absolute crap out of people so I decided to just continue walking even when the door was right in front of me. I phased through the door and opened the door from the inside to the total and utter shock of the students next to me.

"How did you do that?" A girl questioned while the other students beside her had their mouths to the floor.

"Don't worry about it." I replied blankly.

Once class ended, I headed back to my room to remove my backpack and once that was done, I decided to go over to the dining hall for lunch. Right before I entered, I could hear nervous voices plaguing the room. I looked through the glass doors and found that nearly everyone was having a conversation. It didn't take a genius to determine what they were all

talking about, rumors were being spread, no doubt rumors about me. I honestly debated going back to my room but ended up deciding that I might as well get it over with. I enter and almost immediately, the room goes silent. This silence made me more uncomfortable than the noise did and I just kept my head down and tried my hardest to ignore the stares people were giving me. The whispers resumed shortly after I began placing food on my plate. If it were just a few people whispering, I have no doubt that I wouldn't hear it but since everyone was whispering, the room became filled with loud incomprehensible chatter. Still having my head facing the floor, I headed to a small booth in the corner of the cafeteria which no one was occupying. I sat down and tried to just eat my lunch but apparently, I cannot even have that.

A group of people soon began to approach me, some were nervous, some curious, and some eager judging from their wide smiles. I was just about to take a bite of my meal when they were right next to me. A few of them even scooted into the booth seats across from me.

"What do you want?" I asked in a low, tired and agitated voice, just wanting to be left alone to eat.

"We heard some wild claims about you. People claiming that you can walk through walls." One said.

"Ridiculous right. After all, we all know that's impossible." Another person inferred.

"And yet so many people are claiming that you have done it." A third person chimed in.

"Your point?" I question in a restless tone, my anger slowly building as I do not like interrogations.

"Well we just were curious on how accurate the claims were." The first guy answered.

"Yes, they are all true, can I eat now." I reply. The majority of their faces immediately turned to expressions of fear and wariness as my voice had no indication of me lying. But the

people who were talking to me, their smiles only grew. I knew what was going to happen next. They were going to suddenly become all friendly to gain my trust and eventually manipulate me into doing what they want. They want to use me for my powers.

“How cliché.” I thought. Being someone who is no stranger to being used by others, I knew that that was what they were thinking.

Just as another one of them attempted to talk, I spoke up again, “I ain’t buying what you’re gonna try to sell me so please just leave me alone. I’ve had a long night and cannot deal with anyone’s crap today” My voice was as calm and collected as possible but also got my point straight across.

The people who were smiling looked slightly mad for a second before they each regained their composure. “We’re not trying to sell anything. We just wanted to confirm the rumors.” One said.

“Yeah, sure you are. Next thing you’re gonna say is “You know, we should hang out” and a whole bunch of BS like that.” I respond with clear anger in my voice now as the people I hate most are people who lie and people who deny.

“No we are not” One of them responded. A clear lie I might add.

“Look, I’m hungry, I’m pissed, and you guys are making me very uncomfortable. I answered your questions now please leave me alone.” I replied in a now blatantly tired tone.

“Hey we were just curious. And you just began accusing us of doing something completely untrue.” The first guy stated as if I hurt his feelings but I could tell he wasn’t sincere.

Ah manipulation, if kindness doesn’t give you the results you wish, then play the hurt feelings card, act like the victim and your target will likely buy into your BS.

“I said leave me alone. I honestly don’t care if I hurt your feelings or not. You guys obviously would not be all chummy if I didn’t have powers so go! I asked you nicely twice already and I won’t ask again.” I say in a very serious tone that made it obvious that I wasn’t going to fall for their tricks.

“Listen here you little shit!” The leader of their group yelled as he grabbed my collar. I let him grab the collar of my shirt so that he could seem like he was in power before I blew his mind. He maybe held my shirt for two seconds and then I phased. His hand went through my body and he quickly withdrew it. His hand was shaking as if he had just placed it in snow without a glove on and he looked terrified that I actually did have a superpower. I guess a part of them actually thought that I didn’t really have powers but now they know.

“I hope you’re satisfied.” I say through gritted teeth, “Because you just made a huuuge mistake!” I turned my eyes black. I was going to ensure that they knew who they just messed with. I am a pacifist but even I have my limits. I turned back to face them, their leader now getting over the initial shock and his face was once again angry and full of determination. Good, have him expect a win only to make him realize he had no chance. He slowly began approaching me and I turned my scowl into a wide smile.

“What are you smiling at?!” He yelled.

“Maybe the fact that you are just proving my “accusations” as valid. But more so, I’m smiling at the fact that you think you can still get what you came for.” I say almost holding in my laughter as I looked around and saw that nearly everyone’s phones were trained on us.

“This is going to be fun. After this, everyone is going to know who I am.” I thought.
“Everyone will know my name. Whether it’s in fame or infamy I don’t care anymore, I will have the recognition that has been absent my entire life.”

He was maybe a foot away from me when I slowly backed up to the wall. Once my back made contact, I merged my body to it essentially turning me into a sentient shadow. I was able to see my reflection on a mirror conveniently placed on the opposite side of the room and noticed that my body was turning black and warping into a non proportional likeness of my body. It still retained the general appearance or outline of my body, just taller and slightly distorted. I then extended my body out so I looked massive. Then, my shadow spoke to me and told me the perfect words for me to say.

“This is what you wanted right? To see for yourselves if the rumors were true? To verify that person you all overlooked on a daily basis has a power beyond comprehension. Go ahead and call me a monster, I dare you. Call me a freak, a demon, a devil, nothing you say can even compare to the torture, to the hell that I have been through. I might be a monster to you, but you’re the people who turned me into one. What does that say about you.” I yell with tears now flowing from where my eyes were on the wall. It actually felt satisfying to finally let it out, it felt good to finally admit my pain which I had kept dormant for too long.

I then looked down at the group of people in front of me and all the color was drained from their faces. That bravery their leader had was now shattered and he actually did piss himself.

I then shifted and thinned my appearance out until I resembled myself once more and I was able to walk out of the wall like it was an opened door. Everyone was paralyzed in fear, a few were crying, and I just booked it out of there.

I realized what I had just done and that terrified me.

“I’m sorry!” I yelled out as I was leaving the building. My eyes were clouded with tears and I without my clarity of mind, I began to get pulled into the ground, turning once again into a shadow.

I simply glided across the concrete until I reached my dorm and simply slid underneath the door to my room.

I was just moving around in shadow form, looking for trouble, little did I know that trouble would soon find me. I was traveling fast and suddenly, it felt like something crashed into me. I was thrown backwards and left my shadow. It was like a wall ran into me.

That is weird. I said to myself confused as nothing has ever been able to make contact with me while I was inside my shadow. I then looked at the spot where whatever made contact with me must’ve been. I was shocked to see another shadow, it was swirling around maybe ten feet away from me when it suddenly shot right towards me and stopped like five inches from me. I was frozen in place, I was so used to being the one stalking prey that this role reversal was very worrying and uncomfortable. The shadow just stood there until something jumped out of it like a rocket. Imagine a diver diving into a pool but reversed, so instead of going into the pool from aboveground, they instead start in the pool and somehow dive onto land. Bad comparison I know but its the best I got. The figure landed in front of me and stood up straight, the figure was female, thin, about 6 feet tall, ghostly pale, had sunken eyes like that of an insomniac, and had shoulder length black hair which was all over the place. She was wearing an extremely wrinkled collared shirt and khakis to match. She looked like someone who wants to care about her appearance but just cannot.

“Why do you look so fuckin scared hero?” She asked in a British accent.

“Uh uh uh?” Was all I could say, I was shocked that there was another person like me, and the suddenness of this meeting.

“Uh uh what, cat got yer fuckin tongue?” She mocked.

“What are you?” I asked slowly.

“What does it look like genius? I’m a shadow like you.” She said in a calmer voice but the insult still stuck.

“Like me.” I said under my breath.

“Yep, names Cara, but you can just call me C.” She said as if the two of us were long friends. She was obviously not all there which made me more afraid.

“Nice to meet you C, I’m Bryan. Just Bryan.” I replied trying to be nice but still coming to terms with what is going on.

“Yeah I know who you are hero. Why do you think I came for you.” She said with a tired look in her eyes, like she hasn’t slept in days.

“How did you know where to find me?” I asked with genuine confusion.

“Wasn’t hard, knew the city you were in, and just kept looking until you and I made contact.” She said as if it was obvious.

“I’m sorry but I’m finding it hard to process all of this, I thought I was the only one and now I find out there is another.” I say with a bit of panic at the realization that people like me could be all over the place.

“There is a lot more than just us love, take my hand and I’ll show ya.” She said with calm authority.

I grabbed it and she began to descent into her shadow so I did the same. Before I knew it, I was racing faster than I have ever gone before now that I was connected to C and in what felt

like a minute, we just abruptly stopped. I exited my shadow and saw we were in front of a seemingly abandoned warehouse.

“Well I’m fucked.” I thought. Given my circumstances, a sketchy situation like this would not scare me as people cannot hurt me. But if there were people inside this sketchy ass place with powers like mine and C’s, I would be fucked if I were to get into a fight.

She must have sensed my tension because she said as she got out of her shadow, “Don’t worry hero, we just wanna talk. We like dark and abandoned places as it fits with our powers. Trust me, you’re safe and with friends.” She said offering me her hand once more.

“Yeah, trust, safe, and friends, three things which are absolutely impossible at this point. I mean I just met you, you clearly are not right in the head, and you bring me to the creepiest place possible and telling me others like us are in there, yeah I don’t think we are friends, that I can trust you, and I absolutely do not feel safe. But then again, it’s not like I have a choice.” I respond internally, but with my hands basically tied, I take her hand once more and we phase through the door. I closed my eyes expecting to see weapons, torture, savagery, basically I was imagining a living nightmare to await me when I opened them but after she nudged me on my shoulder, I reluctantly opened my eyes to see what looked like a college party set up. There were couches all around, lights changing colors, a bunch of food on the table, and like three coolers of full of beer. This was the opposite of what I expected. Throughout this place was maybe 40 people besides C and I and they all looked happy to see me. A nervous grin spread across my face because I am not used to this sort of scene, and they all seem happy. There are people of many different ages, ethnicities, heights, weights, etc, but they all seemed happy, and when they noticed we were inside, the party seemed to start as the main lights went out, flashing multicolored lights were turned on, and party music started to play.

“I found our new friend.” C said happily and they all cheered, cheered for me. This party, it was for me.

“Welcome Bryan, welcome to The Underworld.” She said as if it were the coolest name for a party spot ever. I simply laughed and she joined in. The tension was now gone and I wanted to meet these people now.

“Hey man, welcome.” I guy said as he approached me. He was African American, about my height, and looked like he was ready to party.

“Thanks.” I said with an actual smile on my face. I do not know why but despite being surrounded by strangers in an abandoned warehouse, a part of me feels like I am meant to be here.

“So you’re a shadow too?” I asked.

“I prefer demon but yeah.” He remarked.

“Demon?” I asked

“Yeah, there are two general clans for those who walk into the shadows: The Demons and The Ghosts.” He explained, not begrudgingly though, he said this because he actually thought I should know, like I should be in the loop.

“Tell me more.” I said intrigued.

“Well...I guess you could say we all are tricksters of some sort. The Demons use intimidation and fear on people, mostly criminals. The Ghosts mess with people by playing tricks such as appearing and disappearing. I guess you could consider us paranormals. We also like to ‘haunt’ people by manipulating the darkness and playing pranks on the people we haunt. In their homes” He said with a smile.

“So wait, you’re saying stories of haunted houses are real?” I asked surprised.

“Yep.” He said proudly and with a bit of a chuckle.

“Wait but I listen to supposedly true scary stories and some cases of paranormal encounters end up really dangerous.” I say getting a bit concerned.

“That’s not us, I mean we scare people, do our whole black eyed trick to priests, but we only mess with their stuff on occasion, we make it a point to not actually make physical contact with the people. If those stories are true, I assume it is a more violent group of shadows.” He said this in such a genuine tone that and with a lot of gentleness that I could just tell he was not lying about them refusing to physically harm others.

“Yeah, we might get out of hand sometimes, but we never harm the people we mess with. It is just like your crime fighting, you freak them out but at the end of the day you merely utilize scare tactics rather than violence.”

“So does this mean I am a Demon?” I asked with a smirk.

“If you enjoy raising a little hell and having fun, then yeah.” He said laughing and extending his hand up high. I high fives him and he tells me that his name is Jonah.

“Like I said hero, you’re with friends. We get your situation more than anyone else could ever. We’ve all been in your shoes at some point, but then we found each other.

Tears flowed down my eyes as I could feel her genuineness as well as the joy of everyone in the room, I was no longer alone anymore, for the first time in my life, I found my people. We’re the demons, and we’re the shadow people.