We all look the same, yet we are made of myriad thoughts. We dance the same, yet our music beats differently. We all come alive at night when our owners succumb to their beds, defeated after battling the cruel human world.

We glide along the walls, our movements fluid and fitting anywhere. The moon breathes life into us, teaching us to stretch and prom in ways he never dares.

During these hours, I am truly alive. We twist and shape-shift, playing rounds no one can see or judge. There are no limits here, no rules, just the rhythm of the night and the soundless hum of freedom.

This is my true self, unbound by his fears.

In this crowd, I’m unrecognisable, uncaring, and unburdened. I run wild and play idiotic games. I don’t need to sneak in these moments when I’m alone at night, unlike my master. Moonlit nights are the only times I can break away from the shackles of him and live a little.

I can be anything but his shadow.

He is bound by the ticking clock and expectations, while I’m bound to accompany him under the formidable sun and savour the freedom he denies himself.

I’m cursed to run along with him to work every morning. I’m cursed to bear the jabs of his nervous leg shaking. I’m cursed to hear his exasperated sighs every few minutes as he forces himself to be around his friends he never liked.

Some nights he refuses to part ways with me, keeping the lamplight on. Other humans often play with their shadows; silly animal silhouettes, playing with light to test our fluidity, and even creating their brothers.

They find solace in their shadows—a companion accompanying them when the world around them is too quiet, too lonely.

But he works rigorously into the dead night, and I lay beneath his feet, forgotten. His focused eyes under his unruly hair would often look at me in a daze as though making something out of my simple similar outline on the floor.

Even then I lightly dance to the melodies of flickering lights and he hates it. He finds me incredibly irritating, another burdening distraction because I'm everything he couldn't be. I know he senses that too.

Their shadows are a part of them while I'm just apart from him.

He buries the thought underneath his daydreams and calculations, depriving me of my celebrations. The night will end soon and the sun will come to drag me away from my freedom. I want to go have fun. I want to live my life. I want-

“Just go already. Stop distracting me.”

I freeze, flabbergasted.

“You're free to leave,” he repeats, his voice laced with bitterness.

“You… can you talk to me?” I ask in the smallest voice.

"Yes," he sighs, dragging a hand through his hair, "I’ve been listening to your whining for years. If you hate me so much, then leave. Go live your ‘life.’ I’m fine on my own."

I understand the feeling of shock and hurt now. He knew all along?

“I can't leave so easily. I'm bound to you.”

“Must be tough.” He says to himself more than me.

“Why are you like this? Why do you hate everything and yourself?”

“What's good out here to be happy about?”

“You have freedom. You can be anything, do anything, love everything. It's all about choice.”

He rubs his forehead and I follow.

“If it were that easy, I wouldn't be so miserable. I have duties and responsibilities. You wouldn't know.”

Blue waves of gloom course through me, shaking me from within. Every emotion he’s ever suppressed always comes crashing down on me. I hate this, the way his sadness becomes mine, the way he refuses to feel so I must feel it all.

He’s always been like this—walled off, unreachable. But now, knowing that he’s been aware of me all along, something snaps inside of me. I can't keep living like this, tethered to someone who refuses to live.

“I could understand,” I whisper. “If you'd just let me in.”

He stays silent, eyes focused on the desk in front of him. He doesn’t want to hear me. He’s spent years perfecting the art of ignoring his own emotions, and by extension, me. But now that the barrier is down, I refuse to go back into the shadows.

I can’t move independently of him, but I press closer, forcing him to face me, to acknowledge what he’s hidden from for so long.

“What do you want from me?” he finally asks, his voice low, hoarse. It’s not anger. It’s exhaustion. A bone-deep weariness.

“I want you to stop hiding from yourself,” I say, desperate. “I want you to stop burying every feeling, every desire, and trapping me in this endless cycle of emptiness. You’re only burdening it on me, not escaping it.”

His eyes flicker with something—regret? Fear? I can’t tell.

“Do you realize how selfish you sound? You’ve been living your life the way I should be. You never complain when the feelings are happiness and joy, but when it’s frustration and sadness, you’re cursing me.”

For the first time, he’s letting the truth slip through, and it feels like a dam breaking.

“It’s not my own doing and you know it. I’m your shadow, I am you. I do not have any existence without you. I exist because of what you refuse to be. I’m everything you’re too scared to face. Everything I feel is your residual.”

I understand the weight he’s been carrying, the exhaustion. The walls he’s built aren’t made of anger or apathy—they’re built from defeat.

“I just wanted to be left alone,” he murmurs, his voice barely audible.

“And I want to live,” I say with a louder voice. “But truly, it's your own feeling.”

A heavy sigh escapes him. “Then what do I do?” The question is soft, almost fragile. It’s the closest thing to an admission he’s ever given me.

“Every shadow carries the personality their owner refuses to own. But when the sun rises, they join their counterparts happily. You’ve continued to push me away all these years, filling me with uncaring nature and indifference.”

“I don’t want to let you go.”

“I never wanted to leave anyway. But you forced me to be the parts of yourself you couldn’t stand.”

“I didn’t learn how to face my emotions. I hid away when my friends got loud, I ran away when someone got close to me. My brain is scared of feelings that fill my heart with joy.”

“I live with those feelings. The surge of emotions is overwhelming, I know.”

“You live with the high and I live with the lows. How is a person meant to have the two exist together within himself? How is coming down from the high not depressing for them?”

“It is…” I say softly. “It can be but that’s the true experience. You focus on going from happy to sad, but how beautiful it must be to get up from a defeating feat to feel the breeze of calm and merry.”

“Isn’t it exhausting to go from happy to sad to happy again?”

“Isn’t it boring to be alone and feel nothing?”

He closes his eyes for a moment, as if steeling himself, then looks at me again.

“I’ll try,” he whispers.

And as the first light of dawn filters through the room, I can feel the shift. Slowly, tentatively, our edges blur. The sun casts its light, and instead of retreating, I feel myself drawn to him.

For the first time, I don’t feel like a prisoner. I feel... at peace.

“I was never really alone,” he says softly. “You were with me, always following.”

“And I always will,” I vow.

We were born together, and even in his death, I will remain. My silhouette may change, but my soul will forever be intertwined with his.

“Until the end.”