

The Siren Sounding

It's a place everybody's been and a door we're all drawn to. It's part of our life that we know to avoid and yet, it grabs us. You never want to go back to it; and yet there's something familiar, something comforting, coming from within. You don't know why – none of us do – but for some reason, it never seems as bad as you remember. And it's much easier to sit and wait for life to come back to you than to go out and chase it, forever up and up...

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I walk in to find him asleep on the floor, lying in the grease and filth of a many-days unwashed body. His clothes are old and too small, moth-eaten and ripped. Dirty dishes and bottles of cheap whisky congregate about him. The t.v. is on, yet strangely silent. A voice in the back of my mind begins to shout a warning, and I grab the door just before it closes. I dash out and, in the relative safety of the hallway, pause. Oddly, I can now hear the t.v. A choir sings, brilliantly. Nonplussed, I begin walking back to the hospital where my wife lies, struggling, on life support.

See, before I met my wife, I practically lived at the pharmacy. (We called it the pharmacy so people wouldn't catch on). It wasn't like I worked there or anything; just that, once I grew bored of the life I had been handed, that's where I was drawn. Shooting late, sleeping late, waking occasionally, it was a hard loop to get out of. To get a job I needed money. And to get money, I needed a job. But then, one day, almost like a dream, she came and saw me in a different light; she saw I could persevere, and hold a job. So I went out on a limb and began to live as she did.

But something wasn't right. She was real - of course she was real - but sometimes I'd wake up, and she'd be gone. One time I got up and her clothes weren't in her drawers. Once I even woke up, in a single bed, in a single room apartment with only one door. I don't know where I was, but I ran and ran till I made it back home. Later, someone told me my wife was in the hospital, but when I asked, they said nobody by her name was staying there. So I snuck in, running from room to room till I found her, all alone, in the last room. Later that night, she had died.

I walk in again, weeks later, to find him asleep, again, but this time he's lying on his stomach, his face hidden. This time he looks different somehow; he's taller, scrawnier. It seems like he has been there much less time. I stare at him, and this time the door closes. In the back of my mind a voice begins to shout, but this time I don't listen.

Stepping over him I glance at the mirror – very briefly – but something isn't right. Slowly, I turn to the mirror only to see him staring back, smiling. Suddenly, the air is too thick to breathe and the silence becomes unbearable. I watch him, and his smile grows. He turns to leave out of a second door – a door I've never seen before, a door only in the reflection. Turning, he throws back his head and, shattering the silence, begins to laugh. Suddenly, everything goes black..

Later, much later, I wake up and can't remember anything. Well, almost anything. I remember there was a funeral, and leaving. And then I was walking, just walking, until I ended up here. I remember opening the door, seeing him lying there, and then, later, waking up in that very place. But he had been on his back, and I was on my stomach. And this time he was gone, nowhere to be seen, no evidence that anyone else had been here. The last thing I remember was the laughter in my ears.