

Harmonic Sanctums

Bright colors. Purple. Pink. Red. Orange. All pulsating. Sending waves of flashing, visible light from around the room to the rods and cones in my eyes until the signals are transferred to my brain and interpreted into the visions in front of me.

Is it the rods and cones that pick up light? I think. I don't remember. I never studied in psychology. That class just wasn't difficult. I mean, most of it was common sense really. No, wait. Stop. I need to focus. First of all, where am I.

I start to look around the room and my senses begin to return. Blurred vestiges of light snap back into reality. What was once a fading colorful array of art becomes a dark room lit only by the neon bracelets and accessories worn by what I think are people. But the image starts to drift off again and my head falls back onto--onto what? It's soft. Cushiony. Not unlike a pillow, yet, different. Colder.

Barely managing to turn my head, my neck rotates so that my eyes are met with--oh no. No. No no no no no no no. This is what happens. A quiet voice that is not my own now whispers in my head, giving off a cackle like one of those phony laughs villains always have on kid's cartoon shows. This is what happens when you give in! Ahaha!

Sitting up, I press my hands to my ears. "Shut up," I whisper, not loud enough for anyone to hear, "shut up right now."

The body, and the stomach I had been using as a pillow, begin to stir.

"Drew? Drew, where are you going?" The soft, dreamy, and tired voice of a girl asks from behind me, "Drew, please come back to me. Its been so long." I turn to face her.

Her eyes are barely open, and I can tell it's taking quite a lot of effort for her not to drift off again. The glazed over, spacey expression on her face only highlights her pearly white teeth, hidden behind inviting soft red lips. A siren's song appealing to desire. I begin to crawl back to her. Onto what I've now noticed to be a replica violet couch. The kind that only snobby wannabe rich people own to give off the impression that they're living a luxurious life. That, or really old people.

But that doesn't matter. Because she is the one laying down on it, and she's begging me to join her. Overcome with lust, I rest my body on top of her. Staring into those big, beautiful eyes. Those big, green, hauntingly gorgeous eyes... Until the life fades out of them, and I'm left lying on the couch by myself. Staring into the tassels of one of those stupid satin, violet colored

pillows.

God, you're weak. The voice's insults continue on again. You know she's gone. She's not coming back. Don't you understand that? I did understand. The lights around me faded back out. Up until this point I hadn't noticed the deafening music playing the same repetitive beat. Thump thump, thump thump, thump thump. Now, everything is taking shape.

The room comes into focus. It isn't very big. But outlines of people fill in most of the space surrounding the couch and the coffee table in front of it. They stand in rings around the only furniture occupying the room. Cups and trash litter the shaggy purple carpet. Band posters hang sporadically from the black painted walls, the only one I recognize is Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon cover and a few obscure rock bands. Besides the couch and table, nothing else decorates the room, aside from the small ceiling fan with beads dangling off of it.

Looking around, the only familiar thing that stands out about this place is the staircase leading up to the main floor. I vaguely recall walking down it at some point. At least I think I did. Bright light shines through the crack under the black door at the top. What are you waiting for?

Standing up proves more difficult than I initially thought. The disuse of my legs for-- wait, how long have I been asleep down here? A couple minutes? A couple hours? It could've been years for all I know. Whatever, they're working now so that doesn't matter.

My unsteady steps bring me closer to the door. But, oblivious to my weak presence, a barricade of bodies blocks my path to the exit. Flailing arms and screams of enjoyment permeate the vicinity and I can't get through.

"Excuse me. Please, I have to go up. No, really. I have to. Come on. Seriously I have to go! Let me out! Let me out!"

Finally managing to break through the crowd of depraved souls, I stumble up the stairs, turning back only to momentarily watch the shadowy figures shift through the darkness. Two faint red lights are all that's left watching after I turn away to open the weightless door to another level.

Thump thump, thump thump, thump thu-- the music subsides at the click of the door shutting. A bright light momentarily blinds me, forcing me to close my eyes as my rods and cones adjust to new aurora of sunshine. I don't know if rods and cones deal with brightness. Actually I think they do. Wait, maybe. Oh forget it. My own thoughts were back. This time I

don't mind though, I keep myself entertained.

I open my eyes to a slight squint. A warm breeze ruffles my hair and I can barely make out a silhouette against the wall. Finally able to open my eyes, rushes of images fill my vision at once and it takes a moment to process what I'm seeing. All white. Everything. And in very similar design to the room downstairs. A white couch sits at the center of the room with a white coffee table in front of it. But instead of a ceiling fan, just a plain white ceiling. And no posters hung against the wall. Only a single decorative mirror. Trickling water can be heard, but upon inspection I found no source for it.

"Do you not like it?" The silhouette spoke.

Shocked, I whipped my head around, expecting someone to be standing behind me. But it was empty. The only things in this room are me, some furniture, and a talking shadow.

"Is something wrong? I was only asking a question," It asked. Its mouth even moved when it spoke.

"Umm, w-well. I guess it's al-alright," I stuttered. Swallowing hard, I managed to get out, "It's pleasant really."

"Pleasant? Huh. You spend years and years scrutinizing over every exact detail, trying to craft the perfect room and it's just--pleasant?" The figure seemed upset. Almost devastated. It turned its, well, head away.

"Well no. I didn't mean that in a bad way. I just mean, it's nice. You know? I'm just a bit confused as to where I am. I meant no offense really. Are you, okay? Mr. Shadow?"

The figure, slowly turning around, begins to grow. No, transform? Its body shifting into a beast like shape. Claws as long as my arm grow out of its hands. The figure stands as tall as the room, a hunch in its back and snarling teeth clamoring down on--the wall? Yes, the wall. Its teeth bite and tear bits and chunks out of the bleeding wall. Those vicious claws shred the only thing separating me and this malignant creature. The room turns a dark crimson color as if the sun was eclipsed by the moon. The ground begins to shake while the claws continue to puncture the wall of the room.

"Stop! No! I love the room! It's fantastic! I don't want you to ruin it! It's perfect as it is! It's amazing really, is what it is! Just calm down, and we can talk this out! Honestly though! It's a spectacle really. A marvelous flat!" The figure begins to shrink back down to its initial size. The beast withdraws back into the wall, leaving only the original silhouette. Light replace the dark

crimson shade throughout the room once again.

"Do you really like it?" Whimpers the silhouette through a quiet sob.

"I truly do. It's so peaceful in here. Or at least it was..."

"Oh yeah, sorry about that." The wall mends itself, healing the holes left by the claws when they broke through. Not even a scratch remained.

"Wow. That's incredible." Once again, the room looked just as it had when I first walked in.

"Thanks," the shadow shrugged. But I knew that it had a slight embarrassed smile across its face.

I smiled too. For a moment. Until I realized what I had just witnessed, "So, if you don't mind me asking, where exactly am I?"

It laughed, "What do you mean, where are you? Why, you're here of course! In my room!"

"Well I know that I'm in this room. I mean, are there other rooms I--"

"Of course there are other rooms! Everyone has them! Well, I mean all the lucky ones anyways. I've heard of some who practically only have one, because the other was so small!" He was quite talkative once he got going, "But you know how it is, you have to deal with what you're given and the only thing you can do is maintain it. Why am I telling you this anyways, you should know. You've got your own rooms too."

"Okay, but I just meant how do I get out of your rooms? Where's the door?"

"Behind you?" It seemed puzzled by my apparently dumb question.

"No I mean, how do I get out? Because I was down there already and there wasn't another door to leave. I just want to go home. You know, home. Like where my own rooms are."

Perplexed, the shadow asked, "Out?"

"Yes, out. Outside of these rooms." Beginning to panic, I looked around the room. Searching for a way out, anything. But I saw no windows. Only four walls and the door behind me.

"But, you can't get out. You're apart of these rooms. Just like they're apart of you." The silhouette disappeared, a choking hysteria took ahold of my body. My throat tightened. Trouble breathing? Ahaha! No. Oh god.

I fall to the ground. My legs aren't useful anymore. The room is once again turning that crimson red color. The door swings open. Trampling feet rush up the stairs and bodies bleed into the room, the crimson red walls becoming increasingly darker until all that is left is a blackness. Think about it though. It could be worse. The voice lied. You just lost control, that's all. It wasn't

destined to be. That wasn't a lie.

I lay on the floor, unable to move. At least the music has stopped. It offered. And that was true. It even brought a slight smile to my face. That repetitive thumping had brought me pain.

"How selfish humans are," the silhouette whispered to himself as he watched a dying young boy, "even if they have a perfect room, working music, and beautiful memories, they just want to escape it all. What a waste of life."