

Gazing into the Abyss

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IT WAS ODD. All he could see was the dark abyss of a tunnel, yawning wider than should be possible, threatening to engulf him in its gaping maw. He looked closer into those depths, mesmerized by the utter lack of light, a dark so absolute that he knew he was looking at perfection. The type of perfection seen only when one was about to die.

Fear began to grow, twisting his stomach into an ugly knot. Not a fear of death, for he had accepted his mortality long ago. This was a different fear, a fear built from confusion and uncertainty. He feared that his mind had broken, that insanity was running rampant through a consciousness he could no longer control. He could not pull his eyes away from that perfect darkness, straining to pierce its depths. He felt the darkness pulling him in, its maw growing out, wobbly and undulating, the circle of the tunnel losing its strict form, turning malleable, bending and twisting and stretching. Greater and greater it grew, the depths in its center expanding as well, a black hole drawing in everything around, until he could see nothing but utter black.

Slowly, from the depths of that maddening perfection, he perceived something. It started as a slight shift in darkness, a grey among the black. As he watched, the grey lightened more and more, growing almost imperceptibility. Stronger and brighter it grew, but slowly, a snail crawling, and he could not look away. His world was dark, and the small speck of white called to him. Was this the light at the end of the tunnel, that end of existence fable to which he never gave any credence? Fascinated, he gazed on in a rapture of impending insanity as the white grew stronger. Pain began to claw at his eyes, but he could not look away as the white became

angry, streaks of red seeping out of razor-like wounds, explosions of orange consuming both, only for itself to once again be swallowed by the pure, bitter white. It was an image of chaos and violence juxtaposed with a leisurely and peaceful pace. And he could not look away. The raging colors anchored his eyes while stabbing at his mind. The pain grew to agony, but he could not close his eyes, for his mind, so engrossed in the vision he saw, would not let him.

The colors continued to grow, expanding, fighting against the surrounding darkness. The two opposites battled as he looked on, enthralled. It was almost a ballet between the colors and the dark, a violent dance of surges and retreats, feints in one direction, attacks in another, only to be driven back by the overwhelming black. Slowly but surely, the colors gained purchase, grasping ground and expanding their chaotic existence. Incessantly on it grew, the colors continuing their internal struggle as well as the external, its brightness an opposition to the darkness. And pain assaulted his eyes voraciously, tearing into his mind and attacking his soul. Ultimately, for a brief moment that seemed to last an eternity, the darkness gave way, and the raging colors consumed him utterly.

Suddenly, abruptly, the raging colors evaporated, disappearing back into the resurgent dark, only to be replaced by a roaring sound, a scream of rage and anger, primal to its core. The man, blind again, choked back a sob as his head pounded in pain, the roar enveloping him, wrapping his body in an embrace of sound and a blanket of pain. His mind raced in a maddened panic, unable to comprehend both the abrupt loss of light and the sudden onslaught of sound. Through it all, time continued to drag, to crawl, and he spent an eon drowning in fear and pain.

Finally, all of the uncertainty, fear, pain, and confusion that tore through his body and assaulted his senses coalesced into a single object of despair that carried with it the weight of his entire existence. The roar in the darkness called to the object, propelling it to ricochet around in his stricken mind, destroying what little remained of his sanity. The last vestiges of understanding and life wisped away with a whimper that was lost into the perfect dark of the roaring abyss.



In the solitary confines of a cold house, empty and alone, a man slumped backward in his chair, a gaping wound where his eye used to be. An old, tattered picture of a family, faces forever frozen in time, was clenched tightly to his sunken chest. His other hand fell, and an ancient revolver hit the floor, smoke wafting from its dark, indifferent barrel.