

Adam.

*I bet I look like a starfish.*

It's three in the morning. Maybe that explains that ridiculously stupid thought.

But there's probably some truth to it. I'm a starfish sticking to the ocean floor as I lay there, sprawled out on the carpet of my bedroom floor.

My face feels hot, my hair's sticking to my face, and my shirt's glued to my skin.

That familiar feeling, like every pore in my body's crying and so I slowly start to drown in it, is how I know I'm sweating.

Gross.

Then I notice how empty my ears feel as they're still buzzing. My earbuds aren't in them. They probably flew right out of my ears. I realize I'm going to have to find them. I need them for studying. And they cost too much money to be lost and—

Before I can start panicking, allowing the oddly peaceful simplicity of being disoriented to slip through shaky, fumbling fingers, I breathe. I focus on the way my slow, shallow breaths make no effort to chase after my racing heart.

*Deep breath in.*

*Deep breath out.*

I'll find them later.

My last breath has lost its shakiness. It still blows my mind how well that works. I've released myself from the suffocating pressure of having to fix every problem as soon as it comes up.

I never knew how easy it was to just *breathe*.

I guess I learned that from tonight.

*Tonight.*

And then I start to remember.

I start to remember what tonight *was*.

It was a night that made me feel alive as I danced; a night that had taken me to another world, even though I'd barely left the confines of my room.

A night that had left me sprawled out on my carpet floor, heart racing, head spinning. I'm still living in it, yet it feels so far away.

I find myself staring up at the ceiling, as if it could somehow tell me what just happened.

My memory helps me out a little with that.

It takes over my mind with the music, practically assaulting my ears. The weightlessness of my limbs as I let go of well, *everything*. The adrenaline as I invited the ridiculousness of it all with open arms as I danced my brain cells out. Brain cells that I'm going to need for my *test*.

The boy who danced freely with his companions, not caring in the slightest about how he'd feel the next morning to stop; He was the furthest person from me. It's like I'm imagining a stranger.

Who *was* he?

He was me.

I couldn't tell if I hated or admired last night's me.

I shake my head, still in disbelief.

Turns out a simple shake would be all it'd take for me to hear the words of my teacher instead of the music.

I'm in the walls of my classroom, no longer in the bending walls of my bedroom.. My head's not practically spinning from excitement, it's in a dull ache. I'm not seeing stars, I'm seeing words on a whiteboard at the front of the classroom. And it's not lyrics that fill my mind, but the realization that my teacher's doing some review before our test on literary devices.

*Today.*

And before I can dive back into last night's ocean and let myself drown in it all over again in my mind, the teacher's voice cuts me off from meeting the stranger from last night. I know she's about to call on me.

Because this morning's me is still a teacher's pet.

Though her call only made a second of a difference, because though I'd never left the classroom, I was now back at last night, and all I heard was music and more music.

"So what does that make our answer, Adam?"

"Adam?"

*An antithesis is a phrase which contains two contrasting ideas.*

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I've lost count of how many times I've tried and failed to process a single word of that sentence. I decided that maybe I could try it again.

I don't know which of my brain cells had been stupid enough to tell the others that trying it *again* would work.

*An antithesis is a phrase which contains two contrasting ideas.*

It was so simple, and yet it had my brain frying.

*An antithesis is a phrase which contains two contrasting ideas.*

I could almost feel my individual brain cells fizzing out and disintegrating into thin air.

The longer I tried, the heavier the cloud of dread hanging over me became.

It spread over the ceiling of my room and crawled down the walls to perch over the edge of my chair, lurking over me as if mockingly asking if I was going to try reading that stupid sentence again.

The answer was no.

I slammed my laptop shut.

My feet, planted down with the force of an exhausted anger, flew off the carpet. It pushed my desk chair backwards away from my desk, and for those few seconds where my feet were off the ground, almost like I'd been flying, I felt light.

Until my feet were back on the ground again.

I was now farther away from my desk, where my laptop sat amidst the mess of my notebook and the coloured sticky notes that littered it, an island of nothing but mess. I stared it down, like I thought that if I stared at it hard enough, it'd burst into flames right then and there. I stared so hard it was like my eyes were ablaze instead.

And so I looked away, but I never made any move to close the distance between my desk and I. If anything, I swore I sensed my feet tiptoeing backwards to push me farther away.

I felt worlds away from my studying.

And I couldn't not notice how much I didn't want to go back.

But I knew it couldn't work this way.

As I seemed to stare at something that I wasn't sure was even there, my mind finally put to rest, I became hyper aware of everything around me. My ragged breathing. The ruffled sound of my feet that were now anxiously rubbing against the floor. The mocking blinking of the neon numbers on my digital clock.

A guy sitting on my bed.

Wait, *what?*

I'd seen him while I had been absentmindedly spinning around in my chair.

Now I whirled around, fully alert, to stare at a face with dark brown skin and a head full of wild, curly hair, with eyes that were somehow more wide than mine.

Wide eyes, yet warm smile, the guy looked reminded me of fire.

A campfire. Comforting when you were careful, but if not, *dangerous*.

And if the fact that there was a stranger sitting on my bed wasn't weird enough, there was something else about him.

Even though I could see him clearly, everything about him looked faded.

Except for his wide, bright eyes.

He looked like a ghost.

There were about a million thoughts running around wildly through my head.

*There's a ghost sitting on my bed.*

*Am I losing it?*

*Did I pour a bottle of alcohol into my cereal instead of milk this morning?*

*There's a ghost sitting on my bed-*

"So you really can see me, huh?"

*And now he's talking. I've officially gone insane.*

"I *told* you he'd be able to."

And now my bewildered expression was directed back around to my desk.

The feather-like voice that gave that response belonged to a girl, practically a human raven, with jet black hair that fell on her shoulders and swayed a little as she shook her head in mild annoyance at the guy on my bed.

As she leaned against my desk, I couldn't help but notice how her skin was so pale it almost looked white.

But that was probably because she had the same faded look to her as the guy.

I had two people that might as well have been *ghosts* in my room.

I had so many questions, very few answers, and no time.

My digital clock with its blinking numbers seemed to mock the whole ridiculous situation as it stared at me with the time.

12:54 A.M.

I'd probably accidentally gotten myself on drugs, it was nearly one in the morning, and I had school tomorrow.

I had to wake up for school in *five* hours.

I could barely function on seven.

And I could still hear them talking. "He's been starin' at us for a while. 'Think a part of my face is missin'?"

An amused sigh was her response. “We’re *ghosts*, not the offspring of Voldemort.”

Ghost guy and ghost girl were having a normal conversation in my bedroom, as if this were an everyday thing.

I guess I was calling them ghost guy and ghost girl, huh. It wasn’t like I knew their names. What else was I supposed to call them? Ghost A and ghost B?

Whatever this was —whether it was me hallucinating or actual ghosts —it couldn’t have gotten any weirder.

Until it did.

“Hey, Adam. Do I have a nose?”

*He knows my name?*, I thought, shocked at how real this was starting to become.

I was barely able to utter the first thing I’d said to the ghosts since they swiftly invaded my room.

“How? How do you know my *name*?”

Ghost guy narrowed his wide eyes at me.

“I thought you were makin’ all those weird faces ‘cause you were scared of us. But you don’t even remember who we are?”

*Remember?*

Ghost girl seemed much more unbothered by my accidental betrayal as she looked down at her nails. “He’ll figure it out by the end of our night.”

*Our night?*

She continued through my internal confusion. “Adam. Time is ticking, and you’re gonna have to decide the fate of this night.”

*She knows my name, too?*

“Don’t talk all ominous like that,” Ghost guy warns. “You’re gonna scare him.”

Ghost girl only rolls her eyes at him. “Yeah, because the two strangers in his room that look fifty shades too pale weren’t scary enough.”

I couldn’t hear anything else they said, I could only stare at their definitely “fifty shades too pale” faces.

I could only stare at them as I tried to accept the fact that whether this was real or not, there were *ghosts* in my bedroom.

And I could only wonder why ghost girl’s soft freckles and ghost guy’s wild hair felt oddly familiar, and why their presence only felt *strange* when it should’ve felt threatening, and why I had to keep reminding myself that they were strangers.

My train of thought was stopped in its tracks by ghost guy, looking right at me once again with wide, excited eyes.

“So, Adam. Buddy boy. What’s it gonna be?”

Ghost girl scoffs, not hiding her judgment in the slightest. “*Buddy boy?* God, never say that again.”

“I’m trying to be *friendly*.”

“And I thought your social skills couldn’t get any worse.”

“Shut up! We don’t talk about my social skills.” Is ghost guy’s reply, as he looks flustered.

*How does a ghost look flustered?*

“Back to the point. How are you gonna spend this night?”

So two ghosts had silently barged into my room and *they* were the ones asking questions?

But it wasn’t like those questions were nearly as ridiculous as the situation.

Ironically, two people with such a confusing presence were asking *logical* questions.

Because it was true.

I *would* have to make a decision.

Would I do what anyone else would probably do, and go to bed?

Or would I do what a perfect maniac would, and continue to study through these ungodly hours?

I looked at my bed, in all its way too comfortable-looking glory. Lazy smile and all, ghost guy was lying on it looking even more comfortable, like a king sat on his throne.

And then my gaze shifted to my desk, drowning in sticky notes, littered in eraser shavings, yet anchored by ghost girl leaning against it nonchalantly.

My eyes flicked between my bed and ghost guy's relaxed smile, and my desk and ghost girl's patient expression, a small smile on her face, as if she already knew what I was going to choose.

And I couldn't help but notice something.

It wasn't that I was losing it.

But it was that neither the idea of studying *nor* sleeping seemed to satisfy me.

I had two options. Sleep or study.

But confusion wasn't the only thing the ghosts brought along with them.

Under the options A and B on this multiple choice test, they wrote a C with a poorly drawn circle around it.

A third option. It was risky; a gamble.

Except all I had to lose was sleep.

"So, Adam," Ghost guy calls to me, wide eyes excited once more. "Are you gonna sleep?"

I wasn't. "Um, no."

"Then are you gonna study?" Ghost girl chimes in.

"No."

And suddenly ghost guy's up off my bed and ghost girl's abandoned my desk, now unlocking my phone.

*How did she-?*

"Then let the music begin."

My third option had been to simply not make a choice.

And now I was awkwardly dancing with two ghosts.

They weren't awkward.

It was just me.

"You need to loosen up, Adam." Ghost girl says softly. "So you didn't finish studying. You *know* you've studied well. You don't have to tackle every responsibility right away. You can worry about those later. You chose it yourself; to have a moment where you can not *care* for once."

I nodded slowly, just trying to process that idea.

"Right. So *dance*." said ghost guy, voice in an excited whisper. "Dance out those brain cells that make you overthink. Dance until you feel weightless. And enjoy every second of it."

As I'm trying to work out how I'm going to do any of that (as amazing as it sounds), it happens.

I don't know how.

But as I stared at the eager faces of the ghosts in my room, the music became quiet.

And it clicked; what caused the strangely friendly presents of the ghosts.

Because suddenly, ghost guy had a name. *Elijah*

And so did ghost girl. *Myla*.

My *friends*.

“You guys are...” I could barely say it. I couldn’t believe it took me the entirety of the night to figure it out.

But maybe the night was only beginning.

“So... Adam. What’s it gonna be?”

The faces of my ghost friends were now warm, their soft gazes directed at me, both smiling brightly, and I couldn’t help but notice that they looked a little less pale.

A little less like ghosts.

And yet again, I was faced with another decision: either put an end to all this because I really didn’t know what I was doing, or force myself to dance, but still feel so awkward I could have regretted the entire thing.

But like what brought me into this world where I could see ghosts of my old friends in the first place, a third option presented itself. And that option was to simply let loose, dance with my ghost friends and welcome the ridiculousness of it all with open arms.

I reached for my earbuds.

And for the second time that night, I chose option C.