

1

He heard a quiet knock on the door, barely audible over the sound of the Entertainment Box. "Come in!" he called. The knock came again. Annoyed, he stood up to get the door. Weaving around the many stacks of newspapers, books, Entertainment Disks, and all manners of things, as well as just plain garbage, he opened the door. It was gone. Everything beyond his porch was gone, just an endless, inky-black void. It wasn't so much black as it was nothing, no color. Hesitantly, he reached his hand where his lawn should have been. Surprisingly, it was a thick liquid, that clung to his fingers, like glue. He tentatively smelled it. Ashes.

Starting to freak out now, he went inside to wash his hands. He turned the faucet, now water. He wiped the substance off his hands the best he could with a towel, leaving it stained black. Glancing up, he noticed the kitchen window had light shining through it. He walked towards it, and he could see the sun shining over his garden, and his neighbors. Over his fence, he could see the neighbor's boy on his trampoline again, and his new puppy. He opened the window, and he could see nothing but the inky black. How could this be? Where was he? How did he get here? *Why me?*

He paused his thoughts for a moment. Faintly, he thought he could hear a man, with a gravelly voice indicative of age, narrating his every movement, his every thought. Hearing his thoughts once more, he started freaking out. Scrambling, he searched for the source of the sound. It was coming from the radio, in the corner of the living room, underneath the pair of socks. No, not that one! Other corner. Yep, that's it.

Moving aside the socks, he slowly picked up the radio, listening to the radio saying he was picking up the radio. It was tuned to his favorite station, 127.2, and it was turned OFF. Yet sound was still emanating from it. *Hello?* he thought tentatively. *Hello?* he thought with more resolution. Frustrated by the radio's inability to respond, he turned it on, then off again, neither changing the type or quality of the sound produced.

Oh David, don't you remember what your old man said those many years ago. He thought and remembered: When he was about seventeen, his father had told him to "Never lose your way, son. Stay true to yourself and your family, and you will go far in life. Stray from the path, however, and you may find yourself in a metaphorical and literal void, with no one but your "own primitive thoughts and a metaphorical and literal radio for company." At the time, he had found it oddly specific and unnerving, and immediately forgot it.

What was he to do now?

2

He was glad that he had developed a habit of hoarding. He had saved ample amounts of food and water in his basement, which he was slowly working through. There were plenty of magazines and newspapers for reading. Suddenly, he heard the radio upstairs kick on, narrating his thoughts once more. Quickly, he ran up the stairs into the living room, where he had left the radio last week. It stood on a small pile of newspapers, upright. “Hello?” he asked out loud, “I know you can hear me.” No response, except for the parroting—‘parroting?’ Really? I do a *little* more than that... “Yes, yes! Who are you? Where are you?? Where am I?.... Hey!... Yoohoo!... Anyone, please?!” He sat down, defeated. He was utterly alone.

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