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Breathe, Count, Repeat

One, two, three, four, five.

Fingers criss-cross over each other, under and over through the loops as if playing a game. I'm bored of this game. It's grown tired, a nagging in the back of my head that has bloomed into this inescapable, dreadful feeling. Repeat.

One, two, three, four, five. Fingers criss-cross over each other...

I feel as though this daily regimen is preparing me to play the piano for a silhouette so beautiful; it's called a ballet. I can hear the music in my head, soft and powerful in its verse. The notes wiggle their way through the tips of my toes, travel through me entirely until lost in the maze of my brain. Perhaps I'm there.

I'm in the crowd watching the performance; I'm in the chair pressing each finger to the fragile keys - so delicate that the lightest touch is like a heavy stomp -, or the silhouette floating up on my toes. Light floods my eyes; heat burns at my skin like fresh sweat. Still, I drift so graciously across the stage it's like a faraway dream the morning eyes are trying to hold onto.

I'm in my kitchen.

Pearly tiles are ice beneath my bare feet, numbing, so numbing that it grounds me just for a moment. Only a moment because I still cannot seem to help myself from waltzing with it, the coolness of the air. Like I'm a figure skater I glide across the ground. What's stopping me from, I can almost feel the wet melting ice spread around my feet. Why isn't the floor beneath me bare of all friction?

It could be so simple for me to change it, to imagine the tiles as something they're not.

Anything imaginable can exist; one way or another, it would be constructed—an entirely new universe or dimension for a single thought, vision. Like a God, I have become a creator.

We are all God then. Every night we dream and give birth to new life and ideas, even if we cannot remember the next day, they've already been born.

I've let my mind slip away again, let it wander into questions that can never be answered. More questions to drive me mad. Perhaps I am confused because I come from an imagination, a dream.

Perhaps I am not real beyond another person's mind.

I'm in my kitchen.

No, I'm not. I'm dreaming; I can feel it, the cushioned bed under me, the warmth of the blanket now too hot, an uncomfortable heat. Nothing else feels real anymore; it all must be fake, every bit of it. My body tingles in its numbness. I can't feel anything, can't hear anything, my mind is stuck in a place where my body isn't. I'm paralyzed, stuck in this zombie, like a soul left behind in its dead body.

Panic courses through my body, nails pick at my skin, looking for a sign of life anywhere, but I'm trapped. Imprisoned in my own mind, what a sweet dream this was at first, a perfectly still moment, but one that I was living in for too long. People are supposed to keep moving through points in time, forwards, backward, whichever way, as long as we keep moving. But I can't escape this moment. This second follows me, I walk, but it stays here by my side, a shadow I can't seem to shake.

The worst part is I don't remember when I went to sleep. I don't know how much is real or fake. I don't know if I'm alive anymore. I don't know where I am, maybe it's my bed or perhaps a bridge.

Quiet.

That's all I hear, not the kind that screams at you, but the one that can whisk you away thoughtlessly, - I must know the answer fast before it's too late - complete emptiness. One small slip and I'm away. I wonder... *Would I know I'm asleep then?*

I'm in my kitchen.

I must anchor myself before I slip away, once again into the mystical universe that is my mind. This kitchen is familiar, the table a bumpy wood that slithers in the spines, a sharp metallic tea kettle that beams out every light it can get a hold of. Some pots dangle from the ceiling, mismatched tree branches swaying in the wind.

The walls are old with character but alive in laughter and song. Its beauty marked in the stories it could tell, the scratches and dents only there to add character. The room is alive, and it's hungry. It feels like a movie or a distant memory that I, from time to time, find myself daydreaming of, smiling about.

I'm more grounded but still plucking at my skin the way a child picks at a scab, only there's nothing there, no hardened place to protect and heal, no metaphor, just skin.

I'm asleep, I can feel it, I know for sure with this inevitable truth that I am trapped far off in a dream, an endless maze this is. Everything is wrong and disorienting. It's a false perspective on the world. Things that I once thought true and certain can no longer be trusted.

Count my fingers. This daily regime I've grown tired of should remind me of the day, the time, of what's real or not, is no longer testimony enough. Start with the thumb and end with the pinky, five of them. One, two, three, but this doesn't seem right or like my hands at all. It's alien and new to me. Keep counting. One, two, they look older, more wrinkled - no - more callused. That's it, hands of hard work, it builds character, like these walls.

Keep counting.

One, two, three, four, but no matter which way I go, which finger goes first, the way they criss-cross over each other, it still doesn't seem right. This doesn't feel real.

Breathe, slowly in and out.

Count, one, two, three, four, five.

Repeat.