

## Zeroth Wall

I yawned, holding my bedsheets to my chest before sitting up. Sunlight beamed through the window, illuminating the room with a raw feeling of rebirth. It felt as though the wisps of another life had taken hold of my own. I swung my legs over the edge of the bed, sliding the sheets off my body. As I patted the mattress, restoring its smooth surface, a sudden gust of wind entered the room.

Batting the light away, I faced the massive opening in my wall. The wall behind my bed was gone! A square of radiance replaced it, blinding me. I stumbled against my bed, collapsing back onto the sheets I had just fixed. My mouth fell open as I faced the missing wall, squinting to avoid the intensity of the gleaming white light. I clutched my chest, mustering the strength to stand. A sharp, stinging sensation gushed over me. Still, I remained frozen and eerily calm. Step by step, I backed toward the door, fumbled for the knob behind me, flung it open, and fled.

After stepping out, I pulled the door shut and leaned against the hallway wall, catching my breath. I shut my eyes, trying to recall a nice memory that would divert my attention away from the missing wall. My mind drifted back to my 14th birthday. I remembered sitting down alone on the floor with a cupcake in my lap. It was my favorite type of cupcake, but I wasn't excited to eat it. I vividly remember counting down the seconds. It really wasn't that good. Oh well. A tear trickled down my face and I swatted it away as I entered the bathroom.

I turned on the lights to start my daily morning routine. Perhaps a smile would lighten up my day. Maybe it would finally make me happy. So, I forced a grin in the mirror and smeared lotion all over my face. The sweaty grime dissipated and my eyes sparkled again. I could sense my heart deflating a little. I carefully washed the dirt off my face, leaving it glowing like a watery auburn leaf.

Nothing was wrong! So, I smiled wider and wider, until I felt confident enough to leave the bathroom.

I entered my bedroom. The walls were gone. All but a grainy line of dust and flakes was left. I held my breath, staring out into the sunlight. My eyelids barely held up as I avoided collapsing. My chest tightened, sinking in as my breaths came out deeper and faster. My dry eyes burned, watering up, ready to stream tears down my buoyant cheeks. Except, none came. I guess even my tears were gone.

My home had sunk. My walls abandoned me. They weren't mine anymore.

Actually, were they ever mine? They were waiting, I tell you. I don't know what. But definitely they never wanted to be here. It's because of me, isn't it? Yet, I can't pity myself, can I? Even if I was alone, I had everything I had asked for.

My cabinet and wardrobe remained, filled with my belongings. At least they were still here. I checked for my bathroom and saw that it had disappeared too.

Why? Who cares about some stupid, insignificant bathtub?

Damnit. I do. Because that was my safe haven. It was the perfect retreat from reality.

I do. I did. I still do.

Right, just think positive.

I opened my cabinet, reaching inside for the image of my grandparents on the top shelf. With the photo in one hand, I opened the wardrobe, pulling out old handwritten letters from my mother, sister, and brother. I held the photo and letters side by side against the wardrobe mirror, observing each piece of frayed cloth on their youthful bodies. The image was shabby, but the essence was there.

Then, I traced each string of hair, hanging from their plentiful heads. I smiled, placing the image down to read the letters.

*“We’re coming home, son. You’ve done well.” - Love, Mom.*

*“You’re a dirtbag, I know you are, but I still miss you.” - Your Sis.*

*“Hey, I’m watching. Don’t worry, I’ll be there soon to humble you.” - Brother.* Even after so long. Classic.

The edges of the papers and frame glistened. The rust and dirt transformed into solid diamond. The objects crystallized, starting from the corners. My fingers tingled against the cunningly rough edges. Goosebumps sprouted across my arms, making the hairs stand. However, I didn’t bother putting it all back. It felt right.

The wardrobe, cabinet, and ground all disappeared one by one.

It’s about time.

In no rush at all, I slowly kissed the photo and letters, watching them dematerialize. Tears ran down my face. It felt strange being stripped of the world, just to be thrown back deeper into it like this.

The now distant and invisible world embraced me.

I’m fine, I’m home.