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Ego Liminality

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EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS, DAY

PROTAG, over the shoulder, walks through a small crowd. Muffled conversation and sounds of life can be heard, the conversation fades as music rises.

[CUT]

PROTAG, profile, continues a set pace. They do not stop to chat, they don't turn their head at anyone as they walk by, they simply continue their path. Others do not seem to take note of them beyond moving to accommodate their trajectory.

INT. CLASSROOM, DAY

PROTAG sits at the side of the room, not necessarily in the back, but certainly near the exit. They take notes in their notebook- no, no those are certainly doodles.

PROFESSOR delivers a lesson at the front of the class, they do not note PROTAG any more or less than any other student there. Physically, PROTAG, is there, but mentally? Couldn't be further away.

Sound begins to muffle slowly, there still is sound, but it has ceased to be intelligible.

PROTAG begins to nod, eyes heavy, the weight of their lids dragging their head closer to the desk each time.

PROTAG's head nearly hits the desk.

Their head lifts. The room is empty.

PROTAG glances around frantically.

PROTAG
(still looking around, gathering
their belongings)
Shit, shit.

PROTAG stands up and shoves everything they can into their bag.

INT. HALLWAY

PROTAG emerges from doorway, still fussing about with their belongings. They glance one way, then the other.

Hallway is empty, lights on, but otherwise no sign of the presence of any other person. No music, no footsteps.

PROTAG

How long...

(pulls out their phone, out of battery.)

Yeah- yep, that's about right.

PROTAG wanders to the exit doors and goes to shoulder it open. It won't budge. Tries again, still the same. They try the partnered door to no avail.

PROTAG

(sighs)

PROTAG turns to move to the next set of doors, revealing FIGURE standing beyond the hallway in the distance. A faint ringing can be nondiegetically heard.

PROTAG walks down the hallway. A sound behind them makes them turn around, to find nothing behind them. They continue their path, trying doors all locked.

Ringling. PROTAG notices the sound and glances up at the overhead light, shrugging, florescent lights always make strange noises.

The next door they try opens without problem. They make their way out into the darkening world. They walk down the stairs, pausing for a second and glancing behind them. A puzzled expression consumes their countenance for a beat, they shake it off and go about their night.

INT. LIBRARY, EVENING

PROTAG sits behind a computer, hunched and exhausted, though no more than any other college student, notes strewn about the table. Students mutter quietly about their own matters around them.

A student walks past, PROTAG flinches and stares as they walk away. PROTAG sighs to themselves and keeps going with their task, their face resting in one hand, the other scrolling through assorted internet pages.

Eyelids become heavy, eyes close briefly.

PROTAGs head lifts up again, the computer screen is off, the other students absent. They tap their keyboard, hoping to awaken the screen, to no avail.

A clatter is heard in the distance. PROTAG freezes in their seat. After a beat they grab their bag and start towards the elevator, they press the button, then again, then start to press it repeatedly. Impatient and uneasy, they move toward the stairs.

FIGURE appears in their path, some odd meters away. An ever so slight ringing sound can be heard.

PROTAG

JESUS- Sorry, I didn't see you there.
(laughs half nervously)

The FIGURE tilts their head and starts walking toward PROTAG.

The ringing sound increases lightly with each step. PROTAG stiffens noticeably, taking a few steps backward.

PROTAG

Right, well, if you'll excuse me, I
really should be going.

PROTAG picks a direction and walks there, whether it is the direction of the stairs or not, it isn't toward the FIGURE.

FIGURE crosses their path (ringing in toe), causing PROTAG to hide behind the nearest shelf. They pull out their phone, clicking the screen several times, no battery. They scuttle to the side, quietly moving to the other side of the aisle. They spot the FIGURE going around the corner. Pausing for a moment, PROTAG closes their eyes takes a deep breath. They sprint past where the FIGURE was, turning the corner, they nearly slam into FIGURE, but do not make contact.

PROTAG falls back onto the ground, shuffling back as the FIGURE slowly walks toward them. A distant *ding* makes them both pause. A silent beat of "eye contact" fills the pause.

PROTAG scuttles to their feet and makes a break for the elevator. They make it inside, press a random button, and mash the "door closed" button, staring out the doors. As they close, the FIGURE can be seen afar, just staring, as the doors finally close. PROTAG huddled in the corner. They reach into their pocket and fish out their phone, which clicks on right away.

EXT. BENEATH A TREE, DAY.

PROTAG sits alone, laptop on their lap. Their eyes sport heavy bags beneath them, how long has it been since they've slept? An energy drink and an open notebook sits beside them on one side, a spray bottle of water on the other.

They tap away slowly at their computer, writing with complete intent but no energy. Their typing pauses and their head begins to nod, they shake their head and lightly spray their face, eyes scrunched closed. They grab a cloth from beside them and dab at their face, unamused.

We follow the cloth as they set it aside their notebook. The book is filled with notes on PROTAGs experiences. PROTAG swaps the cloth for the notebook, glancing over it aimlessly before setting it on their chest/lap and leaning against the tree.

They gaze up between the branches to see the spots of sky visible. Their eyelids grow heavy once more.

INT. ???, ???

PROTAG opens their eyes, they stand alone in an old, empty room. Their laptop, bag, and other belongings are missing, except their notebook, which they startlingly find in their hand.

PROTAG

(under their breath, panicked)

No, no, this isn't right.

(flipping through notebook pages)

Its always the same place, I'm always
in the same place as I started!

A noise makes PROTAG pause. They frantically glance around. NO FIGURE, but many closed wooden doors and a staircase. It could be anywhere, or no where. No, they wouldn't be so lucky.

PROTAG
(deep breath)
Exit, I just need to find the exit.
(glances around.)
Stairs, stairs are good.

PROTAG walks down the stairs, only to appear in the same place. They pause, confused and try again. Same result. They groan. Going for one of the doors, unlocked. They enter, only to quickly emerge from another door.

PROTAG
Oh, COME ON.

PROTAG trudges the only way they haven't travelled yet- up the stairs. At the top, they find themselves in a strange, small ballroom of sorts, a view of the sky out the window. They allow themselves to take a breath for a second.

Ringing. Their face drops. It's behind them, maybe if they don't turn around it won't be real. Ringing gets louder. Their hands ball into fists on the windowsill. Louder. PROTAG spins around, FIGURE is barely a few feet away, stationary. PROTAG sprints past them and flies down the stairs, putting as much distance between them as possible.

They run down the second set of stairs again, the same ones that have caused nothing but an infuriating cycle. They make it to the bottom and fling the door open, running out.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS, SUNSET

PROTAG finds themselves outside the same building their class (SCENE 1) was in, the tree with their belongings only a few yards away.

They glance back at the building, yep same building as it always has been, certainly not a creepy old space.

MONTAGE

INT. ???, ???

PROTAG appears in the main room.

PROTAG encounters FIGURE.

PROTAG flees.

x3-ish.

INT. OFFICE

PROTAG sits at their laptop once more, expression blank, tired as ever. They rest their head in their hands, briefly rubbing their face before leaning back in their chair. Their gaze shifts around, falling on their notebook, sighing, they grab it and flip through the pages.

Their eyebrow furrows as they stare at a specific page, contemplating its contents. Frustrated, they stare at their now darkened computer screen, seeing only themselves staring back. Their face relaxes and they stare up and out the window, the sun is setting and they know what they need to do.

PROTAG stands up and closes their laptop, leaving their notebook behind, open. The open page reads "what is it?" crossed out, followed by "who are they?"

INT. ???, ???

PROTAG slowly makes their way through ???, running their fingers along the peeling wallpaper. They make it to the stairs, taking each step with leisure, only one at a time.

They make it to the darkened room. Standing in the doorway, the room is entirely empty, FIGURE nowhere in sight.

INT. DARKENED ROOM, SUNSET

PROTAG, profile, stares into the sunset, its light projecting on their face. They're tired, not physically, but existentially.

[CUT] PROTAG, from behind. There is a distant creak, like footsteps on the rotted floor. The ringing appears. They turn their head, their expression does not change, they expected this, they knew this, was this their intention?

[PAN] Camera follows PROTAG's gaze, FIGURE stands on the remnants of the platform, 10? 20 feet away? FIGURE stares silently, unmoving, their prey is cornered. PROTAG begins to move.

[CUT] PROTAG finds their footing. The two stare at each other from across the room, silence for one beat, two. PROTAG approaches the platform, FIGURE remains stationary.

PROTAG

(earnest)

I'm tired. Tired of all of this.

(gestures vaguely)

The running, hiding, the not knowing.
We never get anywhere, nothing ever changes, its always the same, I run, you follow. Maybe... maybe that's because no matter what, I'll always be stuck with you, you'll always be stuck with me. Can't seem to deny that anymore.

PROTAG reaches the platform, gazing up at FIGURE. PROTAG extends their hand, slow, but intentional.

PROTAG

(soft smile)

Aren't you tired?

A beat. No ringing.

CUT TO BLACK

CREDITS