

Figment

Episode 1

A man in a white lab coat calmly walked down the glistening white and gray hallway of the Northeastern Medical Institution. In his right hand was a syringe, half-full of a light blue liquid. In his left was a small stick no more than twelve inches long. It was smooth and the gloss black finish gleamed with every passing pair of florescent lights.

The hallway was not very wide, only eight laminate tiles wide. Actually it was eight and a half, but the last half was split into quarter strips and placed at both side of the door-lined walls so everything was centered. The whole idea was to bring a common “center” to these people’s living. Frankly, Dr. Robert Sheipe was annoyed that they could not make the halls six inches wider so they would not have to cut any tiles into quarter strips. But Sheipe was a psychiatric specialist, not an architectural engineer.

This was Sheipe’s third trip to this room just this week. The poor bastard that resided in room 302 had some serious issues; a convicted killer who did not remember doing any of it. He kept screaming all day and night that he was innocent and he was the only one who knew the real killer. He even tried to bargain with the judge during his hearing to let him go so he could find this “other killer” and clear his name. He kept ranting on and on about how he was the only one able to locate the real killer.

Sheipe knocked on the steel door, just below the three inch tall gap that served as a window. “Yo, Jonny boy!” he called through the gap, “you still alive in there?”

From behind the door came muffled screams and the banging one could easily associate with having their hands tied to the bed posts. That is, if one had the experience. Sheipe had never had this experience. His sex life was more fantasized than realized. For him, a certain redhead from the female ward held his most recent dreams ever since two weeks ago she was found streaking in the courtyard and it was Sheipe who got to her first. After pulling her down to the ground she ground her hips into his and gave him a taunting laugh. Sheipe did not understand why women did not like him. He thought he was an attractive man and he knew that he had a great sense of humor. Thus far, his dates have been fewer and fewer, but as long as the redhead in room 174 resided in this institution he had his dreams.

As soon as the thrashing stopped and all that could be heard was the raspy, gagged breathing of the patient, Dr. Sheipe unlocked the door and stepped into the small room. It only had one window, placed ten feet from the floor and was only eight inches tall by fourteen inches wide. It let a single column of yellow sunlight into the center of the bland, tranquil room.

There was only one piece of furniture, a bland white bed that resembled an ordinary twin-sized shape. Around the posts at both the head and foot of the bed were tan leather straps, each one with a silver buckle and notched holes. To Sheipe the corner posts of the bed looked metal, but he knew they were something else. The patient would be able to bend and break it too easily then use it as a weapon. They had a similar

problem with the institution was first founded. The wooden beds broke very easily. The beds of today were new technology. It was some sort of polycarbonate plastic that was so strong it would take a focused laser to cut. Sheipe always laughed a little to himself when he heard or thought about it. To him it sounded too far-fetched to be real. It was like something out of a science-fiction comic book, but Sheipe would remember back to his basic chemistry classes. Carbon pairs were the easiest to make and some of the strongest element chains on Earth. Enough carbon chains pressed together with enough heat would produce a hard plastic that would seem virtually indestructible to anyone trying to cut or break it using conventional methods.

On this particular bed was a young man, barely beginning his twenties. One could tell that he had been here a while. His hair, usually kept clean-cut and gelled into place, laid ragged and grown abroad his white pillow. A dark beard had grown on the once baby-soft chin and cheeks. His eyes, as brown and dark as his hair, were worn; as if they had seen conflict and war, death and murder. They had, once, but not by the owner's hands. Inside his eyes was also a faint familiar glow, the glow that you see in the eyes of a hero. The glow, faded by drugs and anger, was evidence that the hero inside Jonathan Geise was dormant.

Sheipe stepped forward slowly, making sure that Jonathan clearly saw the needle. All that Sheipe was able to hear was the raspy breathing of Jonathan and the soft steps of white sneakers. He raised the needle close to his face and gently pressed the air out of the cylinder. Jonathan rolled slightly to his right, the straps holding his arms and legs giving just enough to expose his back side. The medical garment fell open exposing the white skin of Jonathan's right buttocks. Sheipe lifted the other side of the garment. Small red dots encompassed by yellowing bruises indicated several pin-sized pricks, all of them from a similar needle as that in Sheipe's hand. It was known that a patient's ass was the best spot to transmit the sedatives; the blood flowed more freely, distributing the fluid through the body faster.

Sheipe placed his black baton against the back of Jonathan's neck, pressing lightly to let Jonathan know not to move. There was only a pillow-muffled cry as Sheipe stuck the needle into the pale skin. The blue liquid slowly drained into Jonathan's blood stream. Once all the sedative was emptied, Sheipe threw the syringe behind him. This was a method he developed himself a year ago after an inmate had freed himself from the bonds and used the needle to threaten Sheipe's life. It was much safer to have it on the far side of the room. By the time somebody could get to the syringe and back to Sheipe the guards outside would already be in the room. However, this time there was no metallic clink against the hard floor, only a dull thud sound. Sheipe released his grip on Jonathan and turned around to see where the needle had landed. He walked across the room and bent over to look at the needle, stuck in the padding of the wall.

"Cool," Sheipe exclaimed softly to himself as he stood back up, turning around to face Jonathan. Something made him stop dead in his tracks. It was those eyes. His eyes. Dark brown and haunting in their own fashion. Jonathan and rolled back onto his back side and turned his head to face see why Sheipe had walked away. Sheipe had never walked away before. Jonathan liked Sheipe more than the others that came to get him out of his cell. Sheipe was gentle and never mistreated him. The other doctors would take it upon themselves to punish Jonathan for the sins he did not commit. Sheipe was different. To Jonathan it felt like Sheipe almost believed Jonathan's story of a different killer, still

out on the loose and actually felt a little sorry for Jonathan's case. However, for that to be true it would mean that Sheipe would have to show compassion to Jonathan. To Sheipe that was what actually separates him from the rest of the killers, murderers, and just plain crazies that resides at Northeastern. He found it easier to just treat them like the animals they were. Jonathan was different though. He actually did feel some compassion for the poor soul.

Before he could realize it, Sheipe had walked all the way across the room, mesmerized by Jonathan's eyes. He was now standing next to the bed. Sheipe found it compelling and mysterious that Jonathan's eyes had enticed him almost to a hypnotic state. He wondered what other secrets were hidden deep inside those brown eyes. He slowly unbuckled each strap and tossed it aside, freeing Jonathan from his plastic pin. Small red lines traced along the pale skin of Jonathan's legs and arms where the straps had rested and pulled against him during his most recent thrashing. Sheipe pulled Jonathan's legs over the side of the bed and helped him stand up. Jonathan staggered a bit then steadied himself, taking brace on one of Sheipe's boney shoulders. Once Sheipe was convinced that Jonathan could walk, he slowly walked Jonathan toward the steel door with the small service window.

In the hall, Jonathan could tell that things were worse than he originally thought. He could hear the tortured screams of those living in the same wing. His room must have been sound proofed to keep anybody from hearing him scream about the killer on the loose. He stumbled slightly, Dr. Sheipe catching his arm to keep him from falling. The drugs were to keep him under control during the transport to Dr. Tompkins's office. He doubted that he really needed them any more. He knew the routine. However, they did seem to have a smaller reaction on him more recently. He first thought that he was building a slow immunity to their effectiveness but traded that idea for the simple one of lower dosages. At least this time he was able to keep coherent thoughts within his head. He could think, see, and feel clearly. It was only the function of his limbs that felt like a cloud inside his head. He knew he was walking, but he had no thoughts of moving his legs, and when he would think of stopping or even raising his hand so it wouldn't continuously bump into his leg, nothing would happen. He was transfixed on the thought of Dr. Sheipe earlier. The look on his face, the way he was walking towards Jonathan after looking at the needle he had stuck in the wall, the way he had just stood for a minute, staring into Jonathan's eyes before removing the straps all seems odd to Jonathan. Then there was the thought of the needle. Jonathan knew he couldn't have seen it, even without the drugs. How did he know that it had become stuck in the wall, needle point first?

Dr. Sheipe took a hold of Jonathan's arm and pulled him to the left. It seemed that although Jonathan knew the way to Tompkins's office by heart, the thoughts of what transpired in the cell just moments earlier distracted him from where he was going.

A large wooden door, covered with decorative work of vines and naked imps dancing through fig leaves, marked the entrance to Tompkins's office. A brass plaque was hung slightly off-center at eye level on the door. DR. D. TOMPKINS, PH.D. stamped the face of the plate. A brass knob jutted out from the door. Dr. Sheipe reached in front of Jonathan and turned it, pushing open the door as he did. Jonathan made his own way into the office. He had regained a little control of his own legs, but his arms

still felt like jell-o. Dr. Sheipe helped him to a chair in front of a large redwood desk. Behind the desk sat a man, average height with blonde hair, combed back to hide the receding hairline. Jonathan always thought it pronounced it more, but never mentioned this to Dr. Tompkins. The last thing he wanted was to insult the single man who held his future in their hands.

Dr. Sheipe nodded towards Tompkins and left the room, closing the large door behind him with a large dull thud. The sound reminded Jonathan that the door was solid oak. It would be hard to break down along, but if you had a group of men or a battering ram it wouldn't hold for long. Still, Tompkins was a fan of the great arts. His office walls were littered with certificates and diplomas among the large portraits of psychiatrists and famous paints from people with single names. Dr. Tompkins leaned forward and rested his hand on the desk in front of him. He spoke clearly and calmly.

"How are you feeling today Jonathan?" he asked. It was always the same question to start the conversation. It was never something like "What did you dream of last night?" or "Bang any good chicks over the weekend?" The latter of those two would have been a joke since Jonathan is not permitted to leave his room except for his visits to Dr. Tompkins, but it still would have been better than the same damn thing every time.

"G—good," Jonathan stuttered out, quickly finding that his speech was slightly more slurred this time around. He doesn't remember what he said last time he was in here, although it was only a few days ago, but apparently it wasn't anything nice. "When...when do I get to leave?"

"Oh Jonathan," Tompkins started, "We have this talk every time you are here. You're here for a long time."

"Why? I want to go. I want to go home."

"We can't let you go. You are a murder Jonathan."

"No," Jonathan said softly, then more abruptly. "NO!" He tried to throw his hand up in protest and give Tompkins the finger only to have it slide off the arm rest and onto his lap.

"You killed all those people Jonathan," Dr. Tompkins said solemnly. "Why did you do it? What made you do it?"

"I didn't do it."

"They had a witness Jonathan. If you would just tell me why you did it I can help you. I can fix you."

"There's nothing wrong with me!" Jonathan shouted, finding his voice finally and realizing that he could twitch his fingers.

Dr. Tompkins relaxed back in his chair, still staring at Jonathan in a miserable attempt to intimidate him. "Did you get a thrill from killing those people Jonathan?"

"I didn't kill them. It wasn't me." Jonathan knew where this was going. Dr. Tompkins was right. They had this fight every time he was in here. It was pointless. He let out a large sigh and slumped down in the chair. Dr. Tompkins once again rested against his elbows on his desk.

"Who was this other killer Jonathan?" Dr. Tompkins asked after almost a minute of looking Jonathan in the face. "Tell me what he was like if you were the only one who ever saw him."

Jonathan looked up from the floor at Dr. Tompkins. Was this correct? Was the famed doctor from Northeastern actually giving Jonathan a chance to explain himself?

This had never happened in earlier conversations. Dr. Tompkins always dismissed Jonathan's attempts to tell the truth. Of course Tompkins did not consider it the truth, just merely a fictional story thought up by a delusional mind in a state of desperation. Jonathan didn't think that it would be worth explaining the story to Dr. Tompkins. He wouldn't believe it. There was too much that nobody with the right mind could believe.

"Tell me Jonathan," Dr. Tompkins continued. "Tell me why you think there was another killer. Was it to try and protect yourself so you could get away with murder?"

"I DIDN'T KILL THOSE PEOPLE!" Jonathan yelled leaping forward. He had full control of his arms and legs now and his speed was uncanny. He was on the other side of the desk pulling Dr. Tompkins out of the large high-back leather chair before Dr. Tompkins could even make a noise. The crash of the chair to the floor brought the attention of the guards outside the door. They came rushing in almost as fast as Jonathan had initially moved, pulling him off of Dr. Tompkins. As Jonathan thrashed, trying to get away he felt a familiar thud against the back of his head. The world around him went black. The last thing he felt was the gentle pricks of the carpet against his face. Darkness filled his head. He was powerless to its calling. He fell headfirst into unconsciousness.