

Stuck

by Sam Steele

I can't remember

I woke up in the hotel room lying on the double bed staring at the ceiling. The room was painted white with one window, overlooking a brick wall, shut tight so I couldn't open it. The door leading to the outside looked appealing so I got up out of bed and opened it. The world outside was nothing but blank white space. The constant buzzing pitch of white noise played through my mind as I stared at it. What had happened to the world I knew. I can't remember.

The room had a television, so I turned it on. The picture that came on at first was black so I hit the side of the television. It came to life. I stood staring at the picture in front of me and it wasn't pretty. It was a man in his mid-thirties staring blankly back at me. I moved my hand to scratch my face and the man on the TV, who was me, followed through with the same action. I promptly turned the television off.

There was a shower in the room next to me so I thought I would take one. I walked inside the room and realised that I had no need of a shower. Why would I need one? The walls in the bathroom had not been painted in a while, they had that peculiar white/yellow tinge which indicated the undercoat was seeping through. I think that's what happening to me. The underlying imagination I have pinned down for so long has made a coup-de-tat. What is this hotel?

There wasn't much to explore in the room except for a mini-bar. I opened the fridge and inside I saw a picture of myself on a birthday card. The face I saw on it was me, but much older. The card read, 'Welcome to the past'. I opened the card.

'You have reached the nexus of creative thought and absurd reality.

Enjoy your break asshole.'

The absurdity of the moment caught me by surprise as did the simultaneous revelation that I was trapped inside a psychic prison. I smiled. Just like me to trap myself in the past projection of my own mind. But how does one escape a past projective?

I thought about my circumstances and looked at the door again remembering a quote I had heard from Stephen King.

'Why does everything have to have an ending?'

I walked up to the door and turned the handle because that was the most obvious thing to do. It was locked. Every idea I had was circumvented by the logic of my future self's mind. I had successfully created a world that I had built as a trap for myself at some point in the future. I returned again to the television and turned it on.

I was there staring back at myself. At least that hadn't changed. I saw for a moment something that might make sense. It a dead pixel in the centre of the screen. I stared closely at it. I smiled. Then I was staring back at a hotel room with myself inside of it looking back at myself in the television set.

I turned to walk away from the television set to see another room exactly like the one I was but changed slightly. The room was arranged with the same boring pattern except this time there was no door. I was now trapped inside a reflection of the psychic prison built by my future older self. I stood watching the screen for clues then the television turned off. I waited.

I felt like somebody was watching me. Standing on the outside looking in. Who was it? I hadn't created the psychic prison I was in, somebody else had. I couldn't remember how I got here because up

until that moment I didn't exist. How long does this story have to be?

I turned and looked upward the ceiling was the same. I felt that at any moment I would cease to exist then I realised. As soon as this sentence finishes, you will know I don't exist.

