

BETWEEN THE CORRIDORS

By **Sharkchild**

My life started to deteriorate in the absence of sensible things. I was a child, and so to me such remedies against the imaginative should never have been necessary. But when the world crashed and became the inferno of death, it could not be associated, however so sadistically, with youthful reveries. Even under the attempted corrections, I never escaped in those ways expected—that was probably the one thing that ever did make sense after my first evening with the midnight apothecary.

If I could have been able to leave for but a second, I might have had the opportunity to depart myself from the frothing insanity. Yet, that incorporeal devil of existence's undergrowth had crawled its way deep into the vestiges of my waking consciousness, where only very rarely such a thing came to play. I was manipulated and taunted with images upon my mind that opened and closed without approval or submission. I lost those very roots that built the foundations of my memory.

Some have said that it was possession—a word that I heard through those few fractions of life I experienced—and others said that it was a mental impediment, but only I knew its true derivative. There were reasons that most dreams were left to the nothingness of unremembered timelines, but there were even greater reasons why those entities that inhabited them should not overstep their boundaries. I, on the other hand, had the carnal fortune of trapping one such beast in the horrific folly of a simple awakening, and I never slept since. I called this incident—when something came to a place where it should not have been—falling between the corridors.

On the close of my seventh winter, a strange haze came over my eyes as I struggled to see clearly in the semi-moonlit darkness of my room. I sat up straight on the top bunk of a bunk bed which only one slept. Piercing the malevolent darkness with my sight, there was nothing I could see other than the consuming pit of my open closet and the thick spot of a doorknob within the containment of a door's thin border. I felt no urge to fall back asleep. Instead, I felt nauseous. This was my last opportunity to free myself, and it was gone before I knew it began.

Under a strange and incoherent longing, I loomed toward the bedroom door with my hand, absently, making no effort to exit my bed as I reached. Without reason, my hand thudded harshly against the door and the small knob upon it brushed between my fingers. I gasped in disbelief, yanking quickly back my hand from the strange and chaotic reckoning. The perception of the distant side of my room somehow became false—or, in the more peculiar sense of things, true—to the standards of its proportions within my discerning sight. As with any perceiving eye, the hand would be a monstrous thing against the contrasting proportions of a distant platform. Under my circumstances, those very proportions became the reality of my position.

I reached out and grabbed hold of one of my closet's sliding doors. I dragged it closed. I touched the ceiling, the carpet, and the small television resting on its stand against the wall adjacent to my bed. My hand roamed

inside my room like a giant's, molesting those devices of fragility amongst it while I solemnly remained atop my bed.

There was no doubt in my mind that I was awake. From the sensations of touch to the boundaries of vivid awareness, I was in no state of sleeping oblivion. Breath, mobility, control—they were each my own; I was the master. But, even in accepting the outrageous state of my being, I would not get myself to leave the sanctity of my covers. I did not want to step into the deranged setting and fall victim to its unsteady dimension. What I did do was reach for the door once more, this time turning the knob delicately and opening it.

More darkness greeted me.

Having to stretch, I slowly lengthened my arm into the blackness of the space connecting to my room. My hand disappeared into the emptiness of the open doorway. By the time the thickness beyond the door had reached my wrist, a sudden startle of absolute terror from within the darkness cut through the silence of my actions. My breathing became shallow and my heart raced awfully and unwillingly.

As if existing on two different planes, a different me, who sat up in the same bed and in the same bedroom, witnessed an enormous hand intrude through the door on the other side. I saw it with my own eyes, but it was not me; it was the same bedroom—the same boy—but it was not me. And that other boy folded in fear at the nightmarish sight. Though our knowledge was not joined, our experience was. The horror felt by that replication of myself became my own.

I ripped my hand back from within the mirrored chamber, holding it close to my chest, hoping it truly had not entered such a place. I pulled my covers tightly around me and left my mouth at the opening so its sound could clearly leave the vicinity of my location.

"Mom! Dad!" I screamed. "Mom! Dad! Please come!"

A voice just as my own, calling out the same requests, echoed in the room next to me. Covering my ears, I shrieked out for the other voice to stop, but it mimicked me the same in return. My heart beat fiercer and my body began to tremble.

In my last pleas for salvation—though they could never be answered—I looked to the window to catch a glimpse of the world I knew outside, and it was there, but I would never attain it. The window rested on the wall next to my feet with blinds sparing enough opening to allow the path of the moon's light. I tore the blinds from the window, unlocked it, opened it, and leapt from it.

I arrived at a place I came to call home—a scenario or fragment of a disposed memory that the midnight apothecary chose to fully reside in. Why this particular place was chosen, I did not know, but it was the only location that I ever returned to time and again.

This location was an ice cream shop. It had a pale light that filled it and its walls were of a very light orange, which were covered in posters of cleverly taken and altered photographs of beaches. Inside of the front display, there were never any less than twenty ice cream flavors. My vision was clear there and the oddness of proportions was gone.

There was always an employee working behind the counter and she always greeted me.

"What can I get you?" she would ask.

As dumbfounded as I would be every time, I would reply, “I don’t have any money.”

“That’s alright,” the employee would say, “it’ll be on me tonight.”

Then, while I would peer over all of the different flavors of ice cream, I would notice that there were kids playing outside on the street. I would lose my focus and become fixated on them. There were always three boys kicking a ball to each other. One of the boys would stop kicking and look in my direction. He would put his hand around his mouth and yell at me to hurry up and get back outside. He would do this twice before the midnight apothecary would show up to meet me.

It would come down from the sky, attaching itself to the boy communicating to me. It would wrap its thick, rough body around him and caress his head. With a body as long as it pleased, the boy’s arms and legs would be hidden beneath the coiling entity until his face would change color as he suffocated and fall lifelessly with the rest of his head. The other two boys would run away, but I would always remain, frozen in agonizing dread against the ice cream display, curled upon the ground as low and as small as I could be, feeling all of the pain and the agony that the boy within its grasp should have felt.

The midnight apothecary had no recollection of what it had done. It performed its acts over and over again like an insect attempting escape through an impenetrable force. And I, in the same way, suffered through them as if it was the first time, every time. Our memories were lost and our purpose was dismembered. I was the victim and it was the prey, and that never changed. I thought I would eventually die and leave the creature, but there were powers beyond what I could grasp keeping me alive—feeding me and bathing me. What I was to them was most certainly detesting.

Had I been able to fall asleep, it all would have been over. Those pathways traveled by the midnight apothecary would have been opened and it would have left, not only for my sake, but also for its own sake. As much as a prisoner I was to it, it also was to me.

I grew weary in my state of abysmal consciousness. My physical body took a toll and my mind slowly withered away. The years that went by were uncounted, but I had no grasp on such things. To simply state it, since sleep was not an option I ever had to choose or comply with, I made a different choice. I chose, whether willingly or not, to let the midnight apothecary unite with my body and every action that went with it. Instead of a continued feud between two opposing forces, we became one. With this agreement, there were no further needs for resolution, atonement, or revenge in any manner or method.

Of our future, we made the most of what was left. I knew of my world with a seven-year-old mind and the midnight apothecary knew of its domain with an infinite-old intellect. Because of this, my understanding was only secondary and but a minor opinion to that of my companion, and so I was left as a spectator to the remaining experiences of my life—which entailed the exercising of a powerful authority. I performed strange signs and great miracles. I formed a government and controlled the nations. I never slept and I had a name—that name was Abaddon.