

Pages

His eyes flutter trying to pry themselves open as a dim light covers his face, they open and he blinks. Once, twice, three times trying to understand what he has been staring at, it's a wall. Wait, a ceiling. It's bare and darkness nips at its corners a musty smell flows through the air. Trying to take over the few amounts of light it gives off by a dim light in the middle, doesn't feel right, not whole. Something tells him this place hasn't been whole for a long time. Few stains cover the surface of the ceiling and walls. He thinks it must have once been white, but that was a long time ago. Cobwebs fill every corner of the room, squeaks of rats and creaks on floorboards fill the air. The cold air that has been blowing on him ever so slightly this entire time. The room seems so much colder now and a shiver runs down his spine.

An urge tugs at the corners of his mind, urging him to sit up. He sits up by pure will or something else. He looks down to find a bed, broken filthy and gross but still a bed nonetheless. His eye's glance over his surroundings trying to fill in every detail in his head. It's a room, well he thinks it is, everything is bare in this small room. Everything was gone, everything, besides the rotting bed and a small page laying ever so neatly on the floor. The page which seems odd doesn't fit, or belong here. This room seems odd, yet familiar like he's been here before. He stops and racks his brain for any previous details that may come to mind, nothing comes up, nothing at all.

He quickly moves to the other side of the bed and stands. It felt wrong to stand, like it wasn't allowed, by who he didn't know. The urge to go back to bed was stronger now but he had to see what the page was. He needed to know, he wanted to know. He began to make his way to the page with each step, the feeling of regret and the thought of turning back crossed

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his mind but it was too late now. Creaking came from under him with every step the noise seemed to be louder alerting anyone near him. This worried him but he didn't know why. He was alone, well so he thought.

He shrugged it off and picked up the page, flipping it over. It was full of drawing's, not the drawing's a kid gives to their parents. These felt wrong, more sinister. Word's covered the page *A crooked man sat upon a cliff*. Were the only words that were readable. He thought to himself, why is this writing here. He had the page which he had wanted, but with this discovery had only come with more questions. He shook his head no use going back to bed now, he needed to know. He looked around the empty room for another page, instead found a hallway. He swore that hadn't been there before, he must have missed it the last time he scanned the room. But there was no way, a hallway could just appear. He was uncertain but he wanted to continue, to find more pages. He was eager to uncover their secrets and meanings but he also felt the urge to ignore the page. He shook his head there was no way he could do that now, he had to know. He looked towards the hallway which faded into darkness. Had it always been that dark? He sighed, thoughts racing towards his mind. He continued to leave the light of his little room, the room which protected him. The room where he felt safe, alone with just him and his thoughts. The hallway somehow managed to be filthier than the room. The walls, dark grey covered in dirt and grime that he could see, he could smell and almost taste the foul stench in the back of his throat. He saw something glimmer at the end of the hallway and it seemed like it was glowing. The closer he got to it, the more it seemed to glow, and the more the light behind him started to fade. His breathing slowed as he had the urge to glance behind him. He ignored it, as it would only slow him down.

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He continued down the hall and stared at the object that had caught his attention. Another page. As soon as he touched it the light began to die, the glow faded and he was left alone. He picked up the page and turned it over to see its wonderfully broken sides. It was filled with a drawing, it wasn't good and his eyesight was poor. But he could make out a man leaning down. Words below the drawing, helped it come to life in his mind *A crooked man leaned over a bit*. Thoughts ran through his head, were they his thoughts, it seemed familiar and like the last page they seemed to match. He stopped looking at the page, the light had gone. All the light had gone, he turned around expecting to see a room. The room which he had woken in. He didn't expect to see a longer hallway, pitch black you couldn't see ten steps in front of you.

Fear shot through him and his breath became shaky, his time was limited. His hand gripped the paper with enough force to crumple the thin sheets he was holding. Now he didn't have a choice, he couldn't turn back. This time there was no light, nowhere to go, but forward and hope it was the end. He felt regret like he shouldn't have ever left that room. Shouldn't have gone near that cliff, never opened his eyes, and never picked up that page. But he still had his questions, thoughts and his will to continue.

He walked down the dark hallway trying to be as quiet as possible but with each step came a groan from the floor under him. Each noise only made him go faster picking up the pace. He didn't know how long he had been walking, it didn't seem like any time had passed at all. His legs burned, his bones cracked and his breath grew weaker with every step. The curiosity had now become an obsession. It was pure will begging him to continue and keep going.

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The darkness seemed to get darker with every passing second. Laughing and footsteps danced just around his vision. He swore there was something there, like he was being chased, followed. He knew he had to find more pages. He ran as fast as his feeble legs could take him, he knew if he ran they could not catch him. Down the hall he went sighing as a sliver of light came from beyond. Was it the exit. It was narrow, slim, small and glowing, it was another page. He didn't care about the noise he was making as long as he could get away. A small beep came from the back of his mind, it rang through his ears. He didn't know the sound. He picked up the page and closed his eyes, his legs were too tired to move, too sore to take another step. He stopped, the noises slowed down, he didn't feel panicked. His heart beat slowed and his eyes slowly opened. He was in the room, on the bed he had woken up in at the very start. The three pages which he had collected were in his hand and he took this time to read the page he had just collected. It again had another drawing of a cliff. An empty cliff with no one else, nothing else. Some words were scribbled along the page and added to the story the pages were building and telling him *A crooked man looked down, his face went red, the crooked man knew he shouldn't.* The words ran across his mind and they confused him. He must have been missing one more page.

Taking a large breath, he Sighed aloud, he looked around the room for another one of these pages. There it was, right where the first one had been. He didn't give it a second thought he picked it up and started to read all the pages together.

A crooked man sat upon a cliff,

A crooked man leaned over a bit,

A crooked man looked down, his face went red,

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The crooked man knew he shouldn't,

The crooked man fell and ended up dead.

The moment he read these words the lights blew. He knew he was alone, his legs still ached, his breath slowed down and his heart stopped. He finally found all the pages and his story was shared. He laid back on the bed and closed his tired eyes, his heart beat dropped and sadly this man died. His eyes didn't flutter and he didn't need more, his curiosity had been filled. Sometimes when you keep searching you forget about why you started. Curiosity can be the beast within, which beckons the call to finish what was started.