

A blink. A nod. Anything. I just want to know that you're alive. There's no point in me wasting my valuable time if you're bereft of life.

I've started to question everything. My essential nature, my interpretation of reality. The sheer fabrics of matter have unfolded for me before, so I think I've seen worse than you.

Hello.

I'm dead.

I've never shared my story before because it makes me question my existence.

My last breath felt good. It tickled. As I inhaled, the thick musty air plummeted to my throat. But there was no exhale. I was gone. I could feel my consciousness slowly lift up and crawl towards the sky. It's a complicated feeling. The pain that was inflicted in my body began to withdraw.

It was 7:04.

6:58

I didn't know I could run so fast. *How long could my adrenaline last?* I thought. The answer was six minutes. I ran through the thick layer of snow that had piled up throughout the day. My legs were aching, and I was hungry and tired. I wanted to sleep. But I knew if I stopped, even for a breath, it would be over. There was little point in trying. When he cornered me, I briefed myself.

Okay. I'm going to die.

I held up the book, and I flipped to the last page.

6:47

Hiding wouldn't help me.

Nevertheless, there I was behind a car. I could feel the light whispers of the snowflakes nesting on my neck. I looked at the book. It was beginning to freeze. The pages stiffened.

I heard footsteps approaching. Could it be him? My heart began to pound. My stomach came up to my throat. A man wearing a proper suit looked down at me, and he said,

"What are you doing behind my car?" I sighed, my heart still pounding. I responded, my voice faint and weak: "Sorry."

I crawled out farther into the street, and I made my move. I needed to get out of the city. I have a psychopath searching for me, and my hands are cold. People flooded the crosswalk next to me, and I caught a glimpse. His hunched face crept into my soul.

I ran.

6:31

I couldn't see him when I made it to the front door. I thought that was a good sign. I bolted through the streets, not stopping for anything. I peered behind me to see where I was at, and I couldn't see him. I decided to keep running for a few more minutes, and then I'd stop and hide. So I kept running until I reached a street I barely recognized. At the end of the block, I hid behind a gray car. I adjusted my position so I could see what was in front of me. I didn't sit down, otherwise it would be hard to get up if I had to.

I was hiding in plain sight.

6:29

Just as I started the last page, the door shook. The banging escalated, and I turned toward the door. The pale face, weary eyes, and a discrete crooked nose. I remembered now. It all made sense. I corrected my posture, which was crouched from reading, and made my way towards the back exit. The banging continued. I couldn't let him see me. I'd be dead. So I made a plan. I would walk towards the back door, and just as I made it, I book it for the front door to confuse him. Then, I'll sprint as far as I can get, and hide. I ran towards the back door.

So far, everything was going according to plan.

6:06

A snowstorm. It was November. The sight of cars began to slow, and people started to disappear. They all had somewhere to go. I had somewhere to leave. This city. I felt like a wanted criminal. I was wanted, but I wasn't a criminal. I started to head to the only place that I could be safe. I walked inside. There wasn't anyone there. I called out, "Hello?" Where were they? Not even a snowstorm would stop my parents from working. I browsed the antique store, even though I knew every single object in stock. I wanted to find something new. That's when I saw a book I'd never seen

before. It was very peculiar. My parents always told me when a new product arrived. So I flipped through the pages.

12 Years Earlier

The antique store. That's where I spent most of my time. I didn't have very many friends. I hadn't felt the need to make any when I was younger. Now, all I knew was regret. Things at home were hard. My dad had just sold his old storage company, his new passion was antiques. This wasn't a surprise. My dad always found new passions. Getting into the groove of his new business was hard, and he offered storage services as well. We had boxes and boxes of people's things in the back room of the store. I never knew what they were, but I liked to imagine. Slowly, his storage service slowed down, and the boxes of people's stuff in the back began to disappear. He was fully in antique-mode.

But there was still one box.

13 Years Earlier

A man walked into the store. He had a physique unlike anything I'd seen before. He flashed his crooked teeth in what seemed to be an attempt of a smile. He handed my parents a small container, and said,

"I need somewhere simple to store this. I'll need it back on an exact date. Late november in thirteen years." My dad was thrilled to have a long term customer. He rang the man up. It ended up costing \$7,468. He gave special instructions. "When I come, there will **not** be anyone here. And if I don't get it, I will be using this." He flashed a knife from his pocket.