

The Bored Room

By Jeremy Zhang

I've been trapped in a soft white room for longer than I can remember. The walls are covered in some pillow-like material, that for whatever reason won't tear no matter how much I rip at it. I've lost a fingernail to that wall. There's a little red mark there now, it's a nice splash of colour. The lights stay on all of the time. I'm glad that they aren't unbearably bright. They're almost pleasing to look at, as if they were designed for being stared at. The effect dims though when you've been forced to look at them for forever. Food comes every now and then in a tube through a mail slot-like thing in the wall, though it is physically impossible for me to open the slot from my side. The mail slot stays open long enough for me to then return an empty tube. It will close eventually if I don't, however. I counted the time between feedings once. It is exactly once every twenty-four hours. It's some sort of goo. I assume it contains every vitamin, mineral, protein, and whatever other nutrients I need because I haven't felt ill or starved on this diet since I appeared here. Ship captains probably would have loved this stuff. Compact, nutritious, and calorie dense. The goo even tastes like some random flavour too. Sometimes it's artificial grape, artificial banana, or basically any flavour you could find on a fruit candy. Sometimes, I hold on to a tube until the next day just to mix them together. Blueberry and watermelon are a decent combo. Do not recommend banana and orange, however. So, all in all, life isn't bad. It's just boring. Mind-numbingly boring. I wish there was something to do, but wishing never got me anywhere. I entertain myself with mental games. I once counted as long I can without losing track. I got to nine thousand six hundred and twenty-seven. So close to ten thousand. I tried making art with my food, but gray sludge does not offer a ton of variety in my palette. I tried not eating to see what would happen but could not continue after a week.

I feel watched. I don't know if it's the isolation, or some human instinct ingrained in me from evolution, but I always feel something tracking my movement. There are things underneath my skin too. Something metallic and not meant to be found. I noticed it when, one time, I was trying to learn how to juggle using food tubes. The juggling is unrelated to how I found it. It's just what I happened to be doing at the time when I suddenly felt itchy in my left forearm.

I'm humming to myself, trying to remember a song, when sound rocks me out of my torpor. It is a pop, a pop like a balloon exploding, just lower pitched. Muffled of course. These damn walls. I still can't remember that song, I think I'm just making random noise. In any case, the pop startles me. I haven't heard anything like it in ages. It sounds like it comes from below me. The floor is of the same material as the wall, so it must be extremely loud. Still, I cannot fathom what it is. I put my ear to the floor. Nothing. That must have been another hallucination. Wait no, there is another, and more and more. A cacophony of popping erupts

from below me. It grows sparser, but it moves up. Then a few pops come through the sides of my walls. I had labelled my walls in the cardinal directions. North being where my food comes out from. The little red mark I had left on the wall, now oxidized into brown, is on the East. A few pops move from my East, then travels Southeast and reaches my South. The popping then goes above my head. I can barely make out any other noise. Nothing else is loud enough to penetrate the soundproof room. The popping stops, and silence fills the room once more.

I wait. Nothing happens. More than the nothingness I am accustomed to, that is, the food tubes stop rolling in. That is terribly wrong. I base my entire sense of time on those tubes, so I am very acutely aware of my trouble, when they do not drop onto my soft white floor. I have half a tube of chocolate flavour sludge, which isn't bad honestly, it almost tastes like chocolate, left over from the previous day when all the ruckus happened. I look at that tube with more worry. Surely another will roll out soon.

Apparently not. I sit for another five hours, and nothing comes out of the wall. My desperation is rising. Starving in a small white room seems quite an inadequate way to die. I need to find a way out. These walls have been tested by thousands of tackles, punches, kicks, anything. Maybe a thousand more would have knocked it down, but I don't have the calories to spare for that. Scanning across the room, I look for any feasible weak spot. The food hole? No, it aligns itself perfectly with the wall. I know exactly where it is and have tried to bust it open before. Well, besides that, there is really nothing else. The lights dim, then they flicker. I hear booms outside. Explosions, that's what they sound like. I haven't heard anything like them for so long. The booms coalesce into one continued rumble. A rumble that seems to grow closer every second. As it goes over my room, the lights go completely out, and for the first time in forever, I am covered in darkness. I don't have time to celebrate though, as my room crumbles around me and walls encase me in a padded coffin.