



Inner DEMONS

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The golden glow from the circular lamp that hung from the ceiling dimmed to a murky yellow. Estel stared at the comb with a few missing teeth on her hands and up at the flickering light and then around the room.

A crowd of pale skinned creatures occupied the space within the four filthy walls; their eyes were pitch black and the corner of their mouths scarred. They all wore the same pale blue-and-white checkered pyjamas and had one part of their greasy, black hair tied into a braid and the other part fell loosely down to their waists.

In their hands were similar combs and as they laughed and talked, their faces distorted further and Estel realised she couldn't hear any of their voices, or any other sound in the room except for a constant drone. She glanced to her sides and noticed the blood stained sheets that covered the chairs and swung up to her feet. For a while, the droning stopped and she looked ahead at the ghastly crowd to find a man, at least six feet tall in a pure white suit, making his way towards her.

"Take a seat, Estel," his voice sounded like music and Estel wondered how he knew her name.

"Where am I?" She asked, her voice trembling. Sweat trickled down her neck, making the collar of her shirt stick dis-

gustingly against her skin.

"You're at a party. Sit down now."

He placed a hand on her shoulder and gently pushed her. As she fell back into the seat, he smiled and sat next to her.

"What party? Who are these...what are these things?" She inquired.

"Don't you know?" The man chuckled. Estel stared at him bewildered, her eyes brimming with fear.

"Calm down. Take a good look at each of them. You know them all. You host them every day." The man spoke slowly and gestured towards the crowd. For a reason unknown to her, Estel found herself listening to his instructions.

Lamps similar to the one above them illuminated the whole room. However, as soon as the man had stopped talking, most of them dimmed except for one, which seemed to shine as brightly as all the others combined.

Estel stared at the figure that lay curled up underneath it on the floor. It hid its face behind two bony hands and every now and then, it would lower them to reveal only its eyes and then cover them again. For a moment, Estel thought it was looking directly at her and it chilled her to her bones.

"Who is she?" she whispered.

"She's called Shame," the man replied.

Noticing the confusion in her face, he pointed towards another figure as the lights around the room subdued, apart

from the one above it.

It stared at the comb for a few moments before bringing it up to the unmade part of its hair and suddenly stopped mid-air. It then brought the comb back down in front of it and examined it with a frown on its face. It kept repeating this routine for as long as Estel observed until the man spoke again.

"Her name's Anxiety."

Estel had started shaking again. As the spotlight shifted from figure to figure, she recognised these creatures- they were the same demons that never let her sleep in peace.

"Melancholy." The man said, pointing towards another that wailed and thrashed and writhed on the floor as if it was in excruciating agony.

"Self-harm." He whispered and one of them started bashing its head against the wall again and again and Estel curled up into a ball, hugging her knees and pulling them close to her chest, as tears started rolling down her cheeks and the demon's forehead began to bleed.

"Anger." Estel shot up and backed towards the wall as the demon rushed towards her, its face a sinister red and its nostrils flared. It stood inches away from Estel's face, and drawing in a deep breath, it screamed at an ear-splitting decibel.

"Make it stop! Please make it stop!" Estel yelled and bawled her eyes out. The man leaned against the wall with a cool expression on his face. He clicked his

fingers and the screaming ceased; the demon disappeared in the crowd.

Estel collapsed on the floor. Her body shook uncontrollably as she rocked back and forth, crying hysterically. The man in the white suit knelt down next to her and gently stroked her hair. "It's all in your head," he spoke softly and repeated these words until Estel calmed down.

"Who are you?" she asked, looking up at him with bloodshot eyes.

The man smiled again. There was something comforting in his smile that gave Estel a feeling of safety.

The drone returned and Estel's vision went blurry as the floor beneath her began to sway. She closed her eyes and buried her head in her hands and stayed like that for what seemed like hours. When she opened her eyes, she found herself on the floor in front of the dressing table in her bedroom, dressed in pale blue and white checkered pyjamas with one part of her hair tied into a braid and the other part let loose. She stared at the comb in her hands and then back at her reflection and tried to recall her visions from the last few minutes but in vain.

All she remembered was a man's voice that sounded a lot like music and he said, "They call me Wishful Thinking."

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