

The Other Me

by Shaurya Arya-Kanojia

The metamorphosis, if I can call this phenomenon, starts in the dead of the night, when I have a difficult time sleeping; when I have a storm of thoughts swirling in my head, and I'm too excited and keyed up for sleep to consume me in its dark, tantalizing embrace.

On nights like these, that other part of me – let's call him, for the lack of a better phrase, Other Me – wakes up. I would say he is the Mr. Hyde to my Dr. Jekyll, because I wouldn't be wrong in characterising the Other Me as wicked. He is crude, unrefined, blunt, and maybe even sinister. He would lead me into those dark, compelling alleyways the regular me – let's call him Regular Me – will be afraid to enter.

There is only a small window where I can avoid confronting the Other Me. It is the time between when the Regular Me calls it a day and the Other Me starts to rise. If I am able to fall asleep before then, the Other Me remains buried in my subconscious. If, however, sleep can't take over me on time, that ghastly vampire appears. Oh, and he is strong. Strong as a bull. Don't you think I haven't tried to push him out of my mind. I would lie on my bed, my eyes shut, concentrating all my efforts in trying to not let his creepy self enter the door to my consciousness, but he would always find a way. At times, I wonder if he is a shapeshifter.

Or maybe a form shifter. Sneaking under the door as smoke and then materialising into himself when he is finally there.

When he does materialise, though, things get... nasty. Because he doesn't just show up. If that were so, I would be able to live with it. I'm nothing if not flexible. But he... takes hold of the steering of the vehicle that is my consciousness. And then zooms around recklessly. Into my past, the memories the Regular Me had been able to stow away, if not bury completely. And these memories the Other Me retrieves from the darkest corners of the shelves. Then, like a sick joke, he brandishes them. Waves them in the air. And no matter that there is no one else around to see them.

It is still... embarrassing.

The Regular Me is ashamed of him, but isn't powerful enough to keep him within bounds. As the night slips into its darkest hours, the Regular Me craves for some rest, having spent the entire day in its cycle of routine – wake up, go to work, come back, find time to unwind (which regrettably doesn't happen often), sleep (if it blesses him with it) and repeat the next day.

I would love to see the Regular Me and the Other Me meet; like the clash of the titans. On one side, there is the self-righteous, playing by the rules, conventional Regular Me. And, on the other, the one who disregards any rule he is asked to live with, laughs at conventions, and is absurdly passionate about anarchy, the Other Me.

Who wouldn't want front row tickets for this epic encounter?

Even though you may feel I'm giving the impression I loathe the Other Me, a part of me is fond of it. In an awful, desperate way. Despite the wickedness of the Other Me, or the dread he is able to instil in me simply by showing up, there is a deep desire that calls out to me to embrace him. To let him consume me. Make me his own. Because, despite his frustratingly tormenting self, he is what I – heck, everyone – craves to be.

He is free. Unfettered.

Fearless.

He isn't afraid of plunging head first into the mess that is my past, and dig out dirt only to have me confront it. Make me make peace with it. He doesn't regard my attempts to make amends with my long-lost friends as, in Regular Me's words, "sissy" or "vulnerable," or – this is the worst the Regular Me has ever gotten – "bending over." He isn't insecure to admit BTS' Dynamite is the best song he has ever heard; no matter how much the Regular Me would claim, most times obsessively so, of being a "diehard fan of Guns n Roses." And, on a trivial but pertinent note, he can finish off two entire pizzas without so much as a regret, while the Regular Me, always concerned for his health and the "diabetes that runs in our family," would probably stop after a couple of slices.

The Other Me is not afraid to rid himself off of the black sack the Regularly Me is not able to cast away; the sack that is stuffed with insecurities, pitiful fears, and unnecessary complications. And does he, the Other Me, feel empty without the weight of these complexities, which the Regularly Me uses as a means to define his very existence?

Absolutely not.

After all, in Walt Kelly's words, *We have the enemy and he is us.*

You just need to figure out who the enemy really is.