

FIGHTING IT

Written by

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INT. TRISTAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Pale daylight leaks through closed blinds. The sun isn't out today. An alarm clock BLARES - it reads 6:00 a.m. in bright, neon red.

TRISTAN (late 20's) blinks awake. Even in the soft light, the bags under his eyes are evident.

He doesn't look over as he hits his alarm to turn it off. The BLARING stops. Tristan stares at the ceiling, unmoving. A deep sigh leaves him as his body seems to sink into the bed.

Suddenly, the alarm BLARES again. The clock now reads 7:00. Tristan lets it BLARE a few times before slamming his hand down on the machine.

Another SIGH, this time of resignation. Almost robotically, he removes himself from the bed. It's as if he has a weight tied to every limb.

He finally manages to get up and shuffles away.

INT/EXT. TRISTAN'S CAR/STREET - DAY

Tristan YAWNS. He's hunched over the wheel, driving on a busy residential street. He's wearing a sharp outfit, very put together. The opposite of how he's feeling.

His eyes blink and stay closed for just a little too long. He readjusts himself, sitting up straighter.

But his gaze becomes vacant. He stares out at the road ahead of him, not really paying attention to it. On auto-pilot.

His shoulders hunch and he eventually rests his forehead on the steering wheel. The car starts to veer...

HONK

Tristan snaps out of it, head jerking up, hands re-gripping the wheel and eyes refocused. He's awake now.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Tristan enters his office, a small rented out floor in a business park. There's a vinyl cut out on the glass door that reads "TechGuru."

Inside the 500 foot space is a slightly deflated bean bag chair, two empty desks, and a third desk with ELLIE (early 20's), an impeccably organized individual with an incredibly organized desk, who smiles at Tristan as he enters.

Tristan approaches her with a coffee cup with an over-exaggerated smile.

Tristan puts the coffee down on Ellie's desk.

TRISTAN

Got you your favorite this morning.
Cappuccino with coconut milk and
one packet of sugar in the raw or
whatever its called.

Ellie takes the coffee, a little embarrassed.

ELLIE

You didn't have to...

TRISTAN

It's fine, I wanted to. Also, you
can take that Friday off, but no
need to doc a vacation day.

Ellie visibly brightens at this, pleasantly surprised.

ELLIE

Really? HR is ok with it?

TRISTAN

They're ok with it if I am.

ELLIE

Ok! Thank you, I really appreciate
it.

TRISTAN

Sure thing.

Tristan gives her a tight smile before entering...

INT. TRISTAN'S PERSONAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tristan's personal office is a small, separate room with a door. As soon as he enters, the mask drops.

He closes the door and flips the light switch. The office is pretty bare, only a pair of monitors, a keyboard, and a desk calendar. A dead plant sits on the edge of the desk.

Tristan sits down and puts his head in his hands, rubbing the heels of his palms into his eyes.

EXT. OFFICE PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Tristan walks down the sidewalk towards his car. He starts to walk slower and slower with each step, as if he's trudging through deep mud.

Eventually, he STOPS.

People walk around him and give him looks. His eyes water, he's about to cry.

He steps over to the side and pinches the bridge of his nose, trying to keep the tears from falling.

He exhales through his mouth. He sniffs, AGGRESSIVELY rubs his nose with his sleeve, and resumes walking. He doesn't drag his feet this time.

INT. TRISTAN'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The bathroom door is closed. SNIFFLING is heard from inside.

Then a HISS of pain.

Then another. SCUFFLING is heard, then BANGING, like Tristan is a scared animal trying to escape the bathroom.

A few specks of blood appear on the floor outside the bathroom door.

CUT TO:

THE DAY REWINDS and starts at the beginning.

INT. TRISTAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

The alarm clock BLARES - it reads 6:00 a.m. in bright neon red.

Tristan blinks awake. He doesn't look over as he hits his alarm to turn it off. The BLARING stops.

THE SHADOW lies next to Tristan in bed. It's a dark, demented version of Tristan, as if someone turned down the brightness and desaturated him; a grey, drab being. Shadow sounds like Tristan's own, but it's sotto voce with an eerie echo.

SHADOW
Don't bother.

Tristan stares at the ceiling, unmoving. A deep sigh leaves him as his body sinks into the bed.

Shadow STRETCHES and yawns, getting comfortable.

SHADOW (CONT'D)
Why leave comfort. Stay.

Suddenly, the alarm BLARES again. The clock now reads 7:00. Tristan lets it BLARE a few times before slamming his hand down on the machine.

Shadow jumps on top of him, pinning Tristan's arms and legs to the bed. Shadow turns dark, almost black as opposed to simply grey.

SHADOW (CONT'D)
Stay.

Tristan, another SIGH, this time of frustration (what seemed like resignation to getting up before). Tristan jerks one limb at a time, loosening Shadow's hold until he finally has thrown it off.

Tristan gets out of bed and shuffles away, leaving a grey Voice behind on the bed before it, too, gets up and shuffles after Tristan.

INT/EXT. TRISTAN'S CAR/STREET - DAY

Tristan YAWNS. Shadow sits right behind him, leaning over Tristan's shoulder.

SHADOW
Let your eyes close.

Tristan's eyes blink and stay closed for just a little too long. He readjusts himself, sitting up straighter.

SHADOW (CONT'D)
You shouldn't have gotten out of bed.

Tristan's gaze becomes vacant. He stares out at the road ahead of him, not really paying attention to it.

Shadow, pitch black, reaches over the seat and pushes down on Tristan's shoulders, to the point where Tristan is resting his head on the steering wheel.

SHADOW (CONT'D)
Whatever happens next...Let it.

The car starts to veer...

HONK

Tristan snaps out of it, posture straightening, throwing Shadow into the backseat, hands re-gripping the wheel and eyes refocused. He's awake now.

Shadow sits back, a dark grey.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Tristan approaches Ellie with the cappuccino, Shadow riding on his back, causing him to hunch a little.

SHADOW
Pathetic.

TRISTAN
Got you your favorite this morning.
Cappuccino with coconut milk and
one packet of that brown colored
sugar.

Ellie takes the coffee, a little embarrassed.

ELLIE
You didn't have to...

Shadow leans further onto Tristan's shoulders, darkening. It smiles cruelly. Tristan forces an over-exaggerated smile.

TRISTAN
It's fine, I wanted to. Also, you
can take that Friday off, but no
vacation day required.

ELLIE
Really? HR is ok with it?

TRISTAN
They're ok with it if I am.

ELLIE
Ok! Thank you, I really appreciate
it.

TRISTAN
Sure thing.

Tristan gives her a tight smile.

INT. TRISTAN'S PERSONAL OFFICE - DAY

Shadow sits on Tristan's desk casually, right next to the DEAD PLANT. It's still that darker shade of grey as it plucks the dried, crumpled leaves.

SHADOW
You're so desperate. Pathetic.
Pathetic. Pathetic.

Tristan sits down in his chair and puts his head in his hands, rubbing the heels of his palms into his eyes.

Shadow, black now and somehow larger in stature now than Tristan, leans over to whisper:

SHADOW (CONT'D)
And nobody even cares.

EXT. OFFICE PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Tristan walks down the sidewalk towards his car. Shadow is hanging onto Tristan's ankles, becoming a literal shadow.

SHADOW
How pitiful you've become.
Embarrassing. Pathetic. Loser.

Tristan starts to walk slower and slower with each step, as if he's trudging through deep mud.

SHADOW (CONT'D)
No one will ever care.

Tristan STOPS.

People walk around him and give him looks. His eyes water, he's about to cry. Shadow rises, a black blanket wrapping itself, constricting Tristan. They stand face to face.

SHADOW (CONT'D)
You know it's true.

Tristan steps over to the side and pinches the bridge of his nose, trying to keep the tears from falling. He knows once they start, they won't stop.

Shadow CACKLES.

Tristan exhales through his mouth. He sniffs, then AGGRESSIVELY rubs his nose with his sleeve, PUNCHING Shadow in the face.

Shadow falls away for a moment. Tristan walks to his car, his face drawn and pale, like he might get sick. Shadow follows a few steps behind. Shamed, but seething in dark grey.

INT. TRISTAN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tristan sits on the closed toilet of his bathroom. His head is in one hand and a KITCHEN KNIFE in the other. His sleeves are rolled up. His PHONE is face up on the floor.

Lording over him is Shadow. Black and huge, blocking out most of the light coming from the fixture.

SHADOW

Do it.

Shadow puts its hand over Tristan's with the knife and its other reaches to pull Tristan's opposite arm down and vulnerable.

The knife moves toward the opposite wrist. It's so close, so, so close when...

RING, RING.

Tristan's phone. Surprised, he nicks his skin. He pulls away with a HISS of pain.

SHADOW (CONT'D)

Finish it!

Shadow tightens its grip on Tristan's knife hand and tries to push it toward the wrist again. Tristan is too stunned to choose to do anything.

The phone ringing stops. Tristan looks down at the banner on his phone as Shadow PUSHES the knife closer and closer. Tristan sees that it's from Ellie.

He takes his free hand and stops the one with the knife.

SHADOW (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

TRISTAN

(meekly)

Shut up.

He waits. The silence is oppressive.

The phone PINGS. It's a voicemail from Ellie.

Tristan regains control for a moment, his hand with the knife putting up more resistance to Shadow's force.

Shadow is furious. It can't move suddenly. It starts to shrink...

Tristan picks up his phone and plays the voicemail.

ELLIE V.O.

Hi Tristan, I just wanted to thank you again for the day off, like really thank you. Justin is grateful to get the extra day with me, too. You're a great boss and you've always cared about me. I think that's special and appreciate you for it. And thanks for the coffee! I'll surprise you with one sometime soon, so get excited. Ok, see you tomorrow!

Tristan puts the phone down on his lap, realizing there are now TEARS running down his cheeks.

Shadow has shrunk back to its normal size, but still dark.

SHADOW

She's just saying that because you write her pay check. She's sucking up to the boss.

TRISTAN

I told you to shut up.

Shadow is incensed. It picks up the knife itself and CUTS Tristan's arm.

Tristan gasps and stands from the toilet seat.

Shadow SMIRKS. Tristan LOOKS at this hand sees that he's holding the knife.

Tristan, frustrated at his own lack of control, finally snaps out of it and slices at Shadow with the knife. Shadow SNARLS.

SHADOW

You pathetic -

Tristan slices again. Shadow SCREAMS.

TRISTAN

Shut up!

Tristan slices Shadow's throat.

It SPLATS bodily onto the ground and seeps into Tristan's real shadow. Tristan is crying now, but his eyes are bright and he stands up straight.

He grabs toilet paper and dabs at the cut on his arm.

He leaves the bathroom with a crumb trail of blood behind him. The knife CLATTERS on the floor.

INT. TRISTAN'S BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

The alarm goes off at 6:00 a.m., Tristan wakes up and turns it off. He gets out of bed, then opens the blinds. The sun is rising.

In the reflection of the window, Shadow glares at him, but the flare from the sun makes it disappear. Tristan rolls his shoulders like a weight's been lifted, and turns away to get ready for the day.

INT/EXT. TRISTAN'S CAR/STREET - DAY

Tristan drives in his car, yawning a bit. He looks in the rearview mirror. Shadow sits in the backseat, quiet. It opens its mouth...

Tristan turns on the radio. A song he likes plays. He turns it up and starts singing along. He looks again in the rearview mirror. Shadow is still there.

Tristan ignores it and continues singing, smiling when he gets to the chorus.

Tristan's jovial voice fades out as the forgotten Shadow slithers down in its car seat.

Forgotten, but still there.

FADE OUT.