

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek
Style Emulation
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Quiet

I gently float down the stairs and step carefully onto the wooden floorboards at the landing. They groan and creek softly in welcome of my feet. Listening then, I anticipate the sound of family, having been awoken from their lofty slumber, stirring from their beds. But such a sound fails to arrive.

I enter the kitchen where I must feel for the faucet to fill the kettle. Placing the filled kettle on the stove, I locate the switch. *Click, click*. A burst of blue flame blasts from the burner. I wait. When the steam begins to escape the spout, I pour steaming liquid into the teacup.

I traverse to the dining room, listening in earnest, should I have disturbed the sleepers. I have not. I drop slowly into the sturdy wooden chair beside the kitchen table. My hair falls and lightly grazes my shoulders as I sit.

I lift my gaze to the electric neon of the analog clock placed in front of me. 1:08 am. What awaits me? Another night of restless reflection, I expect. I do not tire. I listen for any sound, any movement, any indication of life in the dark calm. Blackness surrounds me. Silence chills me. Anticipation troubles me.

Outside, a car drives past the house. One is scarcely all alone even in the dead of night. The sound of crushing gravel permeates the silent sphere that had enveloped me. The headlights cast a refracted beam of light into the room through the dining room window. The ray shifts shyly across the opposing wall and then hastily vanishes.

I feel for the form of my teacup in front of me. The heat of the scalding liquid penetrates the skin of my fingertips. From out of the cup rises gently rolling ribbons of steam. I listen again. I slowly stand, rising from the comfort of the chair, and I float over to the window. I part the curtains and my eyes meet a familiar luminous crescent contrasted against the clear night sky.

My steady, rhythmic breathing is the only sound that accompanies me now. *Inhale.* *Exhale.* I develop an acute awareness of my shallow breath as it casts a fog against the pane of glass. I watch this fog carefully as it flows forth and ebbs, like the tender tide of the sea.

I return to the chair, allowing my muscles to contract and constrict, as they must, and then finally to ease. In turn, I wonder at the spectacle of the human body. About its creation and its infinite complexities. How every cell comes together to form a human being, all his systems, all his thoughts, all his actions. Although divided in mind, we are united in body. As humans, we learn and grow from what we see and feel.

My awareness extends then from my head to my hands and feet. I lift my hand so it is outstretched in front of me. The darkness distorts my vision. I can hardly distinguish this peculiar object that light had once revealed and made familiar to me. Now this object is but a stranger, cloaked in shadows and evading my physical perception like a criminal on the run. Yet—I still know what it is, and I still know it is there.

After all, seeing is not always believing, and believing is truly seeing. Day cannot exist without the knowledge and assurance that night will follow at its heels. For no one wakes one morning believing that the night will never return.

We cannot fear the night and rely on day just because we cannot see what lies in our path. There will always be a lamp to light the way, but those who do not trust in it will never find the switch to turn it on. Life is so much more than what your eyes are seeing.

I smile then. The sun had not yet risen, but suddenly the room was no longer the deep black void it once had been. No longer do I feel troubled, or alone, or distant, or afraid. After all, my faith in the sun's return is not measured by what I see. It's measured in what I know. All I know, all I've ever known, is what I have never seen.