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A FINE LINE
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Online Edition

A Fine Line

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There is a fine line between being sane and being crazy. I am like a five-year-old, using that line as a skipping rope for the last three weeks. Leading up to that moment when my life changed, I was having massive headaches that felt like my brain was being split open with an axe. Was I prone to headaches? No, I started having them a year ago. Nothing changed but the first headache it had come on like a wrecking ball, knocked me off my feet for hours. Since then, I have been to see a couple of doctors and had my head and brain scanned every which way from Sunday. Nothing, no tumors, no swelling, no reasons for this to be happening to me. A year ago, I moved into my new apartment, it was my first night in my new place and I got my first major headache. Was it the new apartment? The person who lived here before me didn't have any headaches, so I tracked him down and asked him. Like I said it's a fine line between being normal and crazy. He thinks I'm crazy. I have a restraining order to stay away from him to prove it. To me it didn't make any sense. Should I move out? I stayed in a hotel room for a week, and nothing changed. So, I'm not really sold on the idea that my apartment has anything to do with it. More or less it just seems to be a coincidence.

My therapist whom the courts made me see, seems to think it's just stress from work and upped my meds. It made me sick to my stomach, so I stopped taking them. Citrus seems to help and quiet the headaches as well as dim the visions. I know how it sounds, visions? You were with me up until I mentioned the visions. Not sure what else to call it. It's not really visions. It's my vision; my left eye sees the world that I grew up in. My right eye is stuck in another reality. Crazy right? Yup, I think so too.

Biting into an orange and sucking the juice down. The cold citrus stings sliding down the back of my throat instantly provides relief. My right eye was feeling sore and itchy. For the record, I've been to

the optometrist, and I have perfect vision, there is nothing wrong with my eyes. Nothing, not a single issue, I've also been banned from Dr. Westcott's office and his lovely incompetent staff! A fine line between sane and crazy. I was grasping at straws. That's what happens to a girl that has taken life for granted and all the boring normal shit that goes with it, until one day you wake up and you see the world, or in my case two different worlds at the same time.

Sitting quietly on the bus eating my oranges from the bag, I know he's there behind me. He's always a few feet behind me. Watching me, following me, I don't know who he is or what he wants, he just watches me. He is a middle-aged man, who isn't attractive by any means, he has a sour face and deadpan dark eyes, that almost look black. No mustache or beard, just a dark suit, long dark jacket and a fedora on his bald unimpressive head. It doesn't matter what the weather is like, it's the same jacket and fedora hat, like from one of those black and white gangster movies. He follows me to work and waits outside across the street while I'm working. When I get done, he gets on the bus with me and follows me home, he stands outside across the street in the alley that faces my fourth-floor apartment. I am afraid to confront him because I am worried, he might not be real.

Entering my cheerful apartment, I feel relieved to be home. It's not terribly cheerful, I do have two big windows that the sun shines in and shows off all the dust. However, it's fall, the sun has been missing in action for weeks, and it's cold, raining, and gloomy. I live alone. I kick off my shoes, lock my door and slip out of my jacket hanging it on the hook by the door. I walk over to my sofa and sit down, dropping my bag of groceries beside me that I had picked up on my lunch hour. I picked up the remote and turned the TV on. Closing one eye and getting a taste of that other alternative reality. The news is different, humans are different, and the world is slightly different. Even the air smells different when I close my left eye and soak in that other reality. It's crazy I live in the same apartment in both realities and work at the same job. Maybe it's not so strange? If there were an unlimited number of universes out

there, I would probably live in the same apartment and do the same job in 90% of them. Maybe that's why this is happening to me? Both realities are very similar.

Sitting on the sofa, I hear the traffic from outside. I close my left eye and can hear a bus stopping and a train station in the distance. The train is new, the TV is airing a Christmas movie, Blue Christmas, I don't remember watching this one. Closing my right eye, I hear a firetruck wailing down the street, on the TV the news telling me what holiday toys to buy.

It's like one of those TV movies, where two realities, two different worlds, two different realities collide and the main character, gets to see her life unfolding if she said yes to the man, or no to the man when he proposed. Or got off the bus or didn't get off the bus. Whether she took the job or didn't take the job. Except I didn't have any of those options presented to me. I have been at the same job for ten years, I am single, no one has proposed to me, and the only thing I did was move into this fucking apartment! Which I live in, in both realities! The guy who rented it before me never had any headaches, visions, or split reality crises! He moved out because he was engaged to his fiancé, and she had a bigger and better apartment. Good for them! I hope they get a divorce!

Okay, that was a bit bitter, I don't care! I'm talking to myself and apparently, I am crazy, just a little bit crazy. I say a little bit only because I still have my job, my apartment, and a life of some sort. My friends have been bugging me to go to the bar with them down the street. Meh, it was something that I would have done before, not now. Going out is frustrating because I see both realities in front of me like two different TV screens playing at once. It can be a bit distracting. Add liquor to that and I'll have another restraining order against me. My boss has been decent to me so far, he thinks I'm crazy, but I've been with the company for almost as long as he has been and he's not ready to let me go just yet. Thankfully because finding another job with this condition would be freaking hell. Not something I would want to venture into.

So here I am sitting on my sofa with two bags of oranges, a bag of lemons and a bag of limes next to me. Citrus fruit! Who would have guessed citrus fruit would be the key to my salvation? As a kid growing up, I hated limes and lemons. I wasn't fond of oranges either but now I can't get enough of these things. It calms my head and stomach. The vision in my right eye faded a bit and yesterday for five minutes I was sitting on my sofa in this reality. Just this reality, it was only for five minutes but it was a start. Maybe I'm passing through some kind of phase, like the moon phase. The thought excites me! Why haven't I thought of this before? Could it be? Sighing and biting into a lime, making a face, and sucking it down, savoring every tart and biting drop.

Closing my eyes, I swallow hard and can almost picture my life before all of this, it wasn't amazing or making an impact on the world kind of life. I lived a meager modest life, but it was still a very good life. Now all I do is avoid people as much as I can. Work and live in my apartment, of course, show up for my meetings with my therapist, after all, it is court-ordered. That's the other thing, my whole life I have never had a criminal record or gotten in trouble with the law in any way. Not a big drinker, never done drugs, I am a hard worker, who follows the rules and does the right thing every single time, even if it's not in my favor. Until this happened!

Yesterday's five minutes is what I'm clinging to. I am doing the exact same thing. Bought two bags of oranges, a bag of limes and lemons. Sitting in exactly the same spot. Watching the clock, the big hand ticked so slowly as it hit the twelve. I closed my eyes and then opened them. It happened again! I am only in this reality with both my eyes! Keeping my breathing regulated I don't want to scare it away. I looked around the room and it's just this reality that I grew up in. Blue Christmas isn't playing on the TV, instead, they are talking about the tree-lighting ceremony downtown. Rain hit the window and made random patterns as the raindrops slid down. Lightning lit up the room followed by a crack of thunder rumbling shaking the walls. Swallowing hard, yesterday I didn't dare move. Afraid it would disappear. Tonight, I am feeling a little curious, I get up and cross over to the window to see if my friend is still

downstairs in the alley across the street watching me. Yup! Well, at least I can count on this man, frowning I went back and sat in the same spot on my sofa. Looking around the room, tears filled my eyes, normal. A little slice of normal, I thought I had dreamed it last night when it happened. But it is actually happening! Just one reality. Five minutes flies by when you are trying to savor every second of it. Five minutes passed and 30 seconds, I held my breath. Could it be gone? Could I have my life back? Six minutes and it was like blinking. Nope! Back to the double visions. I leaned back and closed my eyes as the hot tears slid down my cheeks. Much like the rain on my windows. Swallowing hard, I took a couple of deep breaths.

“Six minutes is better than five!” I said out loud to declare it, make it more real. “Six minutes is better than five minutes. Hopefully tomorrow it’s longer.”

Laying down on the sofa I pulled my favorite blanket over me and closed my left eye. Might as well see how Blue Christmas ends. Reaching for an orange, I didn’t even peel it, just bit through the orange peel and all, chewing it slowly.