

Imagine this

By William Muller

Even though it is pitch black outside, I know it is after 5:45 a.m. There is no clock to see, but I can hear my watch ticking somewhere in the dark by my head. I am wide awake now, lying on my back. I usually sleep on my right side.

It is quiet again, so I look down past my feet. As I listen to the watch tick, I wonder how long it's been. I love waiting for this...

Then it begins. I see the blackness change ever so slightly. Not all at once, but like a faint shadow, nothing clear, but visible, nonetheless. I notice today there are two lines, which only happens sometimes. The upper line is horizontal, almost perfect, like it was drawn by a ruler. Above that is still dark, it looks like smoke now, black but not black.

The lower line never changes. I dare not move to ruin it at all. So, I stay still. The line is a series of slightly rounded shadows, one next to the other. Reminds me of swells on the ocean, but these never move at all. These swells grow from left to right, seeming to fold somewhere in the middle. Below this line is also still dark, but more dark gray than black.

In between these two lines is purple, which slowly turns to lighter purple with a hint of dark blue. As the minutes pass, this changes to a dark crimson red, but you cannot see it change. It happens that way.

Now above the top line is dark purple, below is reddish pink. The lower line is hazy, now it is lighter grayish green, like the lichen we saw on the rocks as a kid. Above that is getting lighter and lighter, reddish orange now. Right now, it looks like a painting in a museum.

I still do not move. Sometimes I hear waves crashing on the beach. I hear the seagulls. Sometimes I hear a car horn, or birds chirping. Sometimes I hear coffee cups clanging in the

kitchen, or the cupboard doors closing. Sometimes I hear leaves rustling, either the squirrels are up, or the deer are close. Sometimes I hear someone breathing. Don't know who it is, I am here alone.

The lower line begins to glow. Orange then yellow, so bright sometimes that line looks like it is outlined in white. All at once I see every color imaginable. Purple, blue, red, orange, yellow, even green. It is like a painter's palette that someone threw water on – colors everywhere. It is funny that once the sun is up, all that color goes away. It is either blue or gray. Maybe a white cloud or two. The sad part is that once the sun is up, you see everything else too. The bars on my cell, the bars on the windows. Everything here is white, or gray. The floor is brown. My toilet sits about three feet from my pillow.

If you touch the wall, it is cold. Concrete. Sometimes steel. I pile my clothes and towels on my bed along the walls so that my feet or hands don't feel that coldness. The floor is cold too, so I have two towels on the floor; I pretend it is a carpet. Sometimes, on the weekends, I pull a towel or a shirt over my head and pretend I'm not here.

Somehow, I went off on a tangent that I didn't intend to. Not just in this letter, but in my whole life. I watch the sunrise like that every morning, unless it is raining. For those few moments I am not here – I am somewhere else. I am on a beach, or in my old driveway. Sometimes I am sitting on my back porch, or in the woods like when I used to go hunting with my dad.

You see, even here, in this godforsaken place, the sunrise is still beautiful. It is one thing that looks the same no matter where you are. Those few minutes of beauty, wonder and peace mesmerize me to the point that I am not here. That's why I don't move. I don't want to see anything else.

Those few minutes of delusion, or illusion, or collusion – depending on how you look at it – is what actually keeps me going every day. I know that tomorrow I can be somewhere else for those few minutes. Anywhere I want.

Let me explain the view here. This happened on a Tuesday morning in January. The bottom line is the hills surrounding the jail. Now they are gray, but in summer, so green.

The upper line was a line of clouds. The thermal layer made such a straight line, I had to make sure it wasn't the roof or something. They were so purple. In between the lines was like a window, like a kaleidoscope from when we were kids. You see, if I don't move, I can't see the buildings, only the line of the hills. The reason I knew that it was after 5:45 a.m. is because every day at 5:45 a.m. we all have to get up out of bed, turn our light on and wait for the guard to come by and see that we are here and alive. Sometimes I ask myself as I stand there; "Am I really alive?" This is not living.

This whole charade is redundant because all night long- every hour – the guard comes by and shines a flashlight in our eye to see that we are here and alive. Alive...yeah, right.