

THE APARTMENTALIZED MIND

by Brad Reed

My mind is like an old Craftsman-style home in a college town, haphazard walls thrown up between temporal lobe and cerebellum, between hypothalamus and medulla. Each room let out to a wide array of tenants who beg time from me.

The first to move in was the World War II vet who survived three nights bobbing in the open sea while his comrades were being eaten by sharks all around him, followed by the teenager who suffers from gigantism but dreams of being a world-champion cyclist. Then came all the versions of myself: the eight year old, the fourteen year old, the forty year old. And they were just the beginning.

The house is a bustling, rustling, hustling hive of activity now. They all have stories to tell, these tenants of mine.

They meet me in the halls, block my passage, and share them in hushed tones. They whisper them under the bedroom door at night. They interrupt conversations with my wife, my kids. They write their stories on notes and shove them into the space that was supposed to tell me to brush my teeth in the morning.

When they finally grow tired and head off to their rooms I occasionally sneak down the halls and rouse just one. Whose story should I try to write tonight?

I quietly put pen to paper, but the sound always wakes the whole house. They run screaming from their rooms, stomping down the stairs, clanging pots and pans.

Tell MY story! they scream.

And soon my brain is full of chaos, each character grabbing at my pen, trying to force my fingers.

Yes, I've considered moving. Find a nice little one-bedroom-apartment-brain and leave no forwarding address. But I think I'd miss this strange cadre of roommates. And, who knows, maybe their stories do need to be told.

Maybe I'll try once more. And as pen hits paper, I hear the footsteps in the hall.