SOLE SOLUTION
by
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He brooded in darkness and there was no one else. Not a voice, not a whisper. Not the touch of a hand. Not the warmth of another heart.

Darkness.

Solitude.

Eternal confinement where all was black and silent and nothing stirred. Imprisonment without prior condemnation. Punishment without sin. The unbearable that had to be borne unless some mode of escape could be devised.

No hope of rescue from elsewhere. No sorrow or sympathy or pity in another soul, another mind. No doors to be opened, no locks to be turned, no bars to be sawn apart. Only the thick, deep sable night in which to fumble and find nothing.

Circle a hand to the right and there is nought. Sweep an arm to the left and discover emptiness utter and complete. Walk forward through the darkness like a blind man lost in a vast, forgotten hall and there is no floor, no echo of footsteps, nothing to bar one's path.

He could touch and sense one thing only. And that was self.

Therefore the only available resources with which to overcome his predicament were those secreted within himself. He must be the instrument of his own salvation.

How?

No problem is beyond solution. By that thesis science lives. Without it, science dies. He was the ultimate scientist. As such, he could not refuse this challenge to his capabilities.

His torments were those of boredom, loneliness, mental and physical sterility. They were not to be endured. The easiest escape is via the imagination. One hangs in a strait-jacket and flees the corporeal trap by adventuring in a dreamland of one's own.

But dreams are not enough. They are unreal and all too brief. The freedom to be gained must be genuine and of long duration. That meant he must make a stern reality of dreams, a reality so contrived that it would persist for all time. It must be self-perpetuating. Nothing less would make escape complete.

So he sat in the great dark and battled the problem. There was no clock, no calendar to mark the length of thought. There were no external data upon which to compute. There was nothing, nothing except the workings within his agile mind.

And one thesis: no problem is beyond solution.

He found it eventually. It meant escape from everlasting night. It would provide experience, companionship, adventure, mental exercise, entertainment, warmth, love, the sound of voices, the touch of hands.

The plan was anything but rudimentary. On the contrary it was complicated enough to defy untangling for endless aeons. It had to be like that to have permanence. The unwanted alternative was swift return to silence and the bitter dark.

It took a deal of working out. A million and one aspects had to be considered along with all their diverse effects upon each other. And when that was done he had to cope with the next million. And so on ... on ... on.

He created a mighty dream of his own, a place of infinite complexity schemed in every detail to the last dot and comma. Within this he would live anew. But not as himself. He was going to dissipate his person into numberless parts, a great multitude of variegated shapes and forms each of which would have to battle its own peculiar environment.

And he would toughen the struggle to the limit of endurance by unthinking himself, handicapping his parts with appalling ignorance and forcing them to learn afresh. He would seed enmity between them by dictating the basic rules of the game. Those who observed the rules would be called good. Those who did not would be called bad. Thus there would be endless delaying conflicts within the one great conflict.

When all was ready and prepared he intended to disrupt and become no longer one, but an enormous concourse of entities. Then his parts must fight back to unity and himself.

But first he must make reality of the dream. Ah, that was the test!

The time was now. The experiment must begin.

Leaning forward, *he* gazed into the dark and said, 'Let there be light.'

And there was light.