

# Who Am I

By Xander Stigall

“The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.” -Aristotle

The light from the morning sun sneaks through my blinds and streaks across my face. I lift my hand up to block the aggressive rays and wipe my eyes. *What time is it?*

I glance over at the alarm clock sitting on my nightstand, it reads 1:30 in the afternoon. “Wow, I must have stayed up really late last night,” I mumble to myself as I toss the blue velvet blanket off my legs and move to a sitting position on the edge of the bed.

*Come to think of it, what did I do last night?*

A deep sigh escapes my mouth as I struggle to think of what I could have stayed up so late doing. “Whatever. If I can’t remember, it must not be important,” I say as I lean forward and stand up from the bed. A rush of uneasiness hits me as I teeter in place, trying to keep my balance. *I need to drink more water, I always get lightheaded when I get up too fast.*

The sound of bells chime from outside my open window as a warm summer breeze brushes through. I notice something odd, something weird. Under the mirror hanging on the wall, there is a plush dog toy that I've never seen before. I reach down and pick it up, noticing its fur which is soft and silky like a cloud. *I wonder if my sister left this in my room?* I admire the dog while still pondering where it came from, shifting it around in my hands. The reflection on the mirror in front of me catches my attention.

“What?” I utter as I drop the dog and rub my eyes. I stare back into the mirror, a wave of panic and confusion sets on me. The figure in the mirror is still unrecognizable to me as I walk up and touch it. *What the hell is happening, who is that? The figure in the mirror is me, but it isn't ME. That's not who I am! That's not what I look like!*

I frantically open my door and run into the bathroom, flipping the light switch as I slam the door behind me. The reflection is the same as I gaze into the bathroom mirror. “I don’t believe it, this doesn’t make any sense.” My heart pounds in my head as I feel the blood moving through my body. I turn on the faucet and splash my face with water, attempting to wash away the phony person that is currently looking back into my eyes.

My hand brushes against my cheek, and I feel all of the pores and imperfections. It’s real. *But it can't be, this can't be real.* Faint splotches of blood appear as I begin to claw at my face, running my nails over my forehead down to my chin.

Suddenly, the bathroom door burst open, and a large man wearing light blue scrubs pulls me out into the hallway where two more large men restrain me. One of them sticks me with a long needle and injects its contents into my arm as I flail and kick the air. *Who are these people? Why are they in my house? What are they doing to me?* I feel the strength to fight back leave my body as they lay me on a gurney and strap me down. The vibrations of the wheels rolling over the tile floor travel through my body as they push me down the hallway. I squint at the lights overhead and notice the doors we pass. They all look just like the door to my room. My captors begin to whisper to each other, “What is wrong with this one?”

“He’s schizo.”

“Schizo?”

“Yea, Schizophrenic. He wouldn’t take his meds and started hallucinating, all that crazy shit.”

*What are they talking about? Schizophrenic? Me?* It clicks, I can feel the fog in my mind start to thin. My mind races as memories flood my thoughts. My mom. My family. *Where are they? Why am I here?* I pull against my restraints and squirm, screaming and shouting as I struggle. “He needs another dose. Now.” A second needle pierces my left shoulder, releasing more of that evil liquid into my tender arm. My vision begins to fade as I give up and stop fighting against the restraints. As I go in and out of consciousness, I hear one of the men begin to split from the group and yell back to the others, “Take that one to Psych Ward B. The doctors will give him his meds and put him in solitary confinement.”

I feel a single tear drip down my cheek, off the side of my face, stinging my injuries as it goes. The sounds of bells jingling in the wind once more fills my ears as the loud speaker plays it through the hallways. My eyes are tired and I can’t keep them open anymore. As I succumb to the drugs and fall asleep, I dream about the soft and silky dog. I know it won’t hurt me like everything else.