

# **The Corridor**

Written by Joel H.

2025

## Part One - The Corridor

A bullet. A whizzing sound, sharp yet muddy at the same time, passed my ear. I jerked my head away. I was running. Running from something, someone. I had no weapon, no plan, just the need to *run*. The corridor stretched before me. But no, it didn't. The walls... they shifted, changing, fading. Flickered in and out of existence, as if the walls themselves didn't *want* to be there. The ground felt like it moved beneath my feet. Was I running? Or was the floor moving me? I couldn't tell. I could have sworn the corridor was shrinking, no, growing, was it changing? Another shot. Another bullet, one that shouldn't have missed. But it did. I shouldn't be here, but I was. The walls, the air, nothing was right. Everything was wrong. Everything felt like it wasn't real, it felt like static, like the entire world was out of sync. I squinted. Everything was dark, almost eerily dark. But still, I ran. There was a glow. It flickered, but it was there. Maybe? I had seen it before. In a book? No, a movie? What is a movie? I couldn't remember. I needed- why was I running? I grabbed it. I held it, the Weapon. I had studied it. The air shifted, the metal of the gun feeling cold, yet hot. A laugh sounded. Not my laugh. Was it theirs? The assailant was gone, wasn't it? I couldn't tell anymore. They were there, or maybe not, but I needed to act. I raised the weapon. My mind was empty. I pointed it, and I fired. There was a flash, bright, too bright. Blinding. The sound of the shot echoed. The walls shook, the ground deformed. I was falling, falling fast. I blinked. The walls were gone, filled with the familiar walls of my small apartment. I stumbled backwards, shaking. I looked at my hand. The gun was still there. My fingers burned. I trembled. What had I *done*?

## Part Two - The Coffee Shop

I was in a coffee shop. My coffee shop. Nothing felt right. I was awake though, wasn't I? The walls closed in, the counters turned to liquid. I heard a sound, a scream, maybe. I looked around, I was the only one there. Was it my scream? The room had turned to nothing, everything was black. Something cold and familiar was in my hand. I looked down, it was the Weapon. I screamed. I looked down again, the weapon was changing color, everything just slightly wrong about it. I heard a sound, a voice, and I was back in my coffee shop. The gun was gone. A customer was talking, ordering. Nothing felt right, a slight buzzing sound everywhere. I looked at the man. He spoke, said something. It was cryptic, and I couldn't understand. It was like he was speaking another language. I looked down. The floor was gone. But, no. Maybe not? I couldn't tell. I spoke to the man, but I couldn't hear what I was saying. Was anything real? I couldn't remember *real* anymore. Who am I? I blinked. I glanced at the man. His clothes were different. His face... looked vaguely familiar, like someone I had once known. Or, like me? He was wearing rags now, but no, now a well-tailored suit. Everything was changing. He was talking. I felt like I should know what he was saying, but something was just *off*. The man spoke again. Time changed, he sped up, then slowed down dramatically. I felt strange. He said something again, but his mouth didn't move. Or maybe I hadn't noticed. Sound changed. Everything making noise stopped, and I heard other things, things I shouldn't have heard. A conversation, but nobody was talking. Footsteps, but no one was moving. I looked at my hands, they were holding coffee. I had been making coffee. The cup distorted. The coffee bubbled, changed its color, and turned into something that wasn't a liquid. A drop spilled onto the counter, burning a hole through it. Revealing something underneath. An emptiness, a void. But, no. Something moved deep within it, something *old*. I felt like nothing, yet everything. My mind blanked. My other hand was empty, or I thought it was, but it felt like the Weapon was still there, a familiar weight to it. It was warm, like something was there. But it wasn't, was it? I looked back at the coffee,

and saw a reflection of me. But, I was holding the gun. I quickly looked at my hand, still empty, though it didn't feel empty. I looked around, everything was wrong. Colors turned to sound, sound turned to smell. Everything was very wrong. I took a step back. The floor rippled beneath my feet, like sand. The buzzing in my ear grew louder, too loud, deafening. It changed into... a laugh? A voice, a familiar voice. The customer's maybe, or maybe mine. I couldn't remember. I looked up. The customer was gone. Was he ever there? I couldn't remember. Then everything **snapped**. I was in mid conversation with a coworker, everything was normal. I couldn't remember anything. The customer walked out the door. But no, he was sitting there, at a table, staring at me, smirking at me. Like he knew something I didn't. Relief filled me, though I couldn't remember why. I checked my hand one more time, still empty. But it felt like it remembered something, a warmth, a feel, a *gun*.

### **Part Three - The Reflection**

The trees rustled in the wind. I stood outside, staring at a lake. My hand gripped something. I looked down. My hand was empty. I looked at the lake, stared at it. My mind was empty, I couldn't remember. All I had was a feeling, the feeling of a weapon. I saw my reflection in the lake. But it wasn't moving the way I moved. It was different, like a different version, a different me. And it was holding something, the Weapon, and it was smirking at me. He looked familiar, and the scent of coffee filled my nostrils. His mouth moved, but the sound wasn't sound. It pressed into my thoughts, words without noise. I almost understood, but I couldn't. It raised the weapon, pointed it at me. Something cold, too cold, pressed against my temple. I touched the water. I didn't know why, I didn't even try to do it. It just happened. The lake froze, not ice, not water, something new., something wrong. It crackled, but didn't break. I couldn't think. It wasn't wet, it felt like touching static. My hands buzzed, like a current inside my veins. Something there, but maybe it wasn't. I felt a sensation of pain, but I didn't know where it was coming from. The ice reflected me, countless versions of me. Each one slightly wrong, like a reflection of a reflection. They were staring at me, all holding different objects. I stumbled back, away from the water. I glanced down at my hand. The Weapon was there. It pulsed, like a heartbeat, or whispers in a language I could almost understand. It felt familiar, but wrong. It was heavier than before. It changed, it felt alive. I looked around, but the world was falling apart. Smells, sounds, sights, everything was wrong. Everything turned to nothing, and I was sinking. It was air, but it felt like water. I was drowning, but still living. Was I alive? I couldn't tell. I saw someone, something watching me in the void. Then I was somewhere, something familiar, but wrong. I wasn't supposed to be there. Or maybe, I always had been.

## Part Four - The Truth?

Was it real, any of it? I couldn't tell. Sights, smells, sounds all blended together into one sense. It was all the same, yet different. But most of all, it felt wrong. I couldn't remember what *normal* was, but I knew it wasn't that. I couldn't tell what was real. Sights flickered like an old film, smells lingered as if trapped in the air. Sounds were distant, muffled. I was in the coffee shop again. The same customer was talking. There was no sound, but I could understand. "*You were not supposed to wake up.*" The world pixelated, like I was in a video game. I fell backwards. The world shifted, the walls fell, the ground disappeared. I was in the corridor again. Nobody was chasing me, nothing was there. Only an endless corridor, with doors. A feeling crept up into me. A shadow moved, one that should not have been there. I turned, but it was gone. I felt eyes on me, but there was no one. The doors seemed to be watching me. The walls stretched, curving at the edges, but somehow still straight. My vision shifted. The walls seemed to bend inward, as if the corridor was closing in on me. The ground pulsed, shifting with each step as I walked forward. A realization hit me like a truck. The doors led to other versions of me. I wasn't just one person, was I? I couldn't remember. The air thickened, its taste changing. It tasted like metal, cold and thick. The walls pulsed, soft, alive. It felt like the whole room was breathing. Different pasts filled my mind, yet they felt distant. Like they were mine, but not. I was many, all at once. Was this the truth? Or another illusion? The Weapon was the key. I felt it then, resting in my palm. It throbbed, as though it knew something. Something I didn't. But it didn't feel like an object, it felt like an extension of me. Like it had always been there. A hum passed through my fingers. It wasn't just the key, but the lock. The doors seemed to be infinite. I couldn't count them. I couldn't even remember how to count. Some were shut, some open. I felt something, truly felt something, for the first time I could remember. Fear.

## Part Five - The End... For Now

I was in the void, that deep abyss. Something watched me, something old, dark, alien. I was floating, and time seemed to stop. I wasn't sure how long I'd been floating there. Hours? Maybe years? It could have been seconds, I didn't know. Time felt like an illusion, I could barely remember it. It felt like static, and a buzz filled my body. I had nothing, not even the weapon, nothing except for my thoughts. The weapon... Where had it come from? It seemed to me like this void and reality were both real, together yet apart. The weapon had something, everything to do with it, but I couldn't figure it out. My fingers flexed around the stiff, unyielding air. Was it even air? I couldn't be sure. I wasn't breathing, but I was still alive. Or was I ever alive? Questions raced through my mind. I heard, no, felt a voice calling out to me. *"You've seen the truth, but the truth is not what you see. Not yet."* I jumped at the sound. The voice felt familiar, something I knew a long time ago, like a distant memory. *"I can show you the truth."* A fragmented memory flashed in my mind, like something I should have remembered. Something I needed to remember. But I couldn't. At that moment, I felt myself being pulled to something, an external force, maybe some unknown place. The pull was intense, tugging at me. Fear gripped me. I wanted to go back to my life, if I had ever had one. I couldn't remember. All I knew is that this wasn't right. My heart pounded, as I was pulled closer to that...*thing*. Whatever was watching me was drawing me to it. A familiar, yet distant weight dropped into my hand. It was the Weapon, but it felt different. Angry, maybe sad. It *wanted* me to go... go to that creature in the abyss. I submitted, but I got the feeling my journey had only just started. I couldn't shake the feeling that this thing wasn't only my captor, but a guide. Showing me the next step in a path I hadn't chosen. But I couldn't escape. I wasn't sure if I had ever been free.