

## Imagine

by Erica Kim

Suddenly, Eve was *there*. She could see the lively green fields before her, hear the upbeat chatter and gossip of other children, smell the dewy spring air which always followed the light May rainfalls. *Wait a minute...* Eve felt a sudden chill running down her spine as she gathered her senses. It was a little strange, how this always happened from time to time: one moment, she was stepping out the front door of her shabby home, wishing that she could be at the steps of her quiet, familiar school- the next, she was on the cracking concrete of the school's front steps, with no memory of ever walking there. *Nothing's strange at all!* Eve scolded herself. *You're just at school. Probably, like, short term memory loss or something. That's all there is to it.* Eve tried hard to keep her mind off of the strange happenings, and of course, wound up bashing her head on the side of the school. As she sheepishly looked around and rubbed her bruised forehead, her best friend casually strolled up to her and playfully rolled his eyes.

“You look like a doofus, Eve!” he joked.

That was Silver, Eve's best friend since childhood, who was named after his bright silver eyes. He carried a reputation of being one of the top two students in their junior high- the other being Eve. It was, to be admitted, amusing to constantly be competing against Silver for the highest marks and the most sports teams they were asked to play in. Since the other students sort of...backed up, like they were scared they'd get caught in the crossfire, the two of them were kind of stuck together.

Eve stuck her tongue out through her teeth.

“Says the one with the ridiculously large Hulk hands,”

Silver did have huge hands in comparison to his skinny body. He shrugged and tousled the top of Eve’s head with his Hulk hand, leaving her brown hair disheveled. Eve laughed, straightening her curls just as the bell rang for class. Life was wonderful.

At the Science Department of Unique Phenomena, a cluster of short creatures gathered around one of the many large screens in the room. The light illuminated twelve similarly flat, droopy faces, with large, round ears and disturbingly eager eyes. All of them murmured in nasally croaks.

“What is this? Such an intricate mind! Nothing like the other phenomena we’ve seen...”

“We’ve set up a temporary barrier. It shouldn’t be able to see us, but it won’t be long now.”

“This case is becoming dangerous. It could be a threat!”

“Do not harm it. It is valuable.”

All of the creatures had their eyes fixed on one thing on the screen. One person, to be more exact. Naturally, this person went by the name of Eve.

After class was over, Eve waved to Silver and started her short walk to her home. She averted her bright blue eyes from the brilliant glare of the afternoon sun. As the knob of the old house she had lived in for ages clicked open, Eve could tell immediately that something was out of place. An unsettling sensation sparked in her feet and rapidly shot up her bones. Her breathing came quickly and shakily. Her eyes widened just as she stepped forward and rammed into something rock-hard, leaving her ears ringing and head pounding.

“Ouch!”

Eve clutched her head. For the second time that day! But that was impossible. Eve could have sworn that there was nothing there. Was it really possible to run into nothing? She looked up, and the unsettling feeling washed back over her again. Eve gazed at the web of cracks slowly spreading across the air before her, as if the whole place was a reflection, and mirror was cracking. *What in the world...?* Eve cautiously lifted her hand. She gently placed it first on the ever-spreading crack, then pushed through with all her might. The “wall” shattered like glass, revealing the same environment as always- same couch, same old fashioned TV, everything. Except for one minor detail, that could have been easily missed by a regular eye, but not Eve’s. No, Eve looked and saw the tiniest door she had ever seen.

Back at the Science Department of Unique Phenomena, the flat-faced dwarves scrambled frantically back and forth.

“The barrier has been broken. What are we to do?”

“It will ruin us all if we are not careful. Handle this matter with caution.”

“It’s coming in!”

All of the flat-faced dwarves fell silent as Eve slipped through the short, wooden door and stared back at the odd creatures with a crazed look on her face.

“Wh...What are you unidentifiable creatures doing *in my living room?!?*”

One of the dwarves, Eve noted as the shortest of them all, came and pushed her down onto a chair. Eve squirmed and pushed against it. The gnarled, bumpy fingers only clamped down harder. It cleared its throat and spoke in a strange, raspy voice.

“Ahem. Greetings, dear one. We have been observing you in all ways possible for the past period of... say, two years? We know all about your ‘strange happenings’, as you like to call them, and you’ve piqued our interest to a great extent. We know you experience gaps in your memory, for example, walking to school. May I say to you, dear one, that you are not to worry- you are not

experiencing memory loss- it is just a simple matter of the fact that you were never there in the first place.”

Eve, bewildered, panicked in her head. *What is this thing? A dwarf? I was never there in the first place? These creatures were observing me? Is this thing insane? Am I insane?* The creature continued in that same peculiar tone.

“I understand that you may be panicking, but do not worry. You were never at those places...because, Eve, you are not living. Well, let me rephrase that. You are living in a world of thought. Yes, you have such an intricate mind that you’ve managed to outdo the laws of the universe itself! Everything that happens is merely a wish, a thought, a memory, that your vast imagination has conjured. See, like when you wished to be at your school, your imagination took control and took you there. But the problem is, as I said, you are only living in some part of your consciousness. You must wake, or you will harm all. Do not worry, dear one. We will help you to a better place.”

Something about that ‘help you to a better place’ didn’t feel right to Eve. Her stomach flipped. She pried herself free of the dwarf’s fingers and started to back up towards the small door.

“Honestly, everyone, I really appreciate your help and all, but... I’ll pass...”

Eve took more hurried steps towards the door. The cluster of dwarves blocked her. Eve hadn't noticed before, but each of them had a hungry light twinkling in their awfully eager eyes.

“Oh no, dear one. You mustn't leave. Not yet.”

They began pushing her forward, and for the first time, Eve noticed a glass capsule-like cylinder placed in a corner. The door leading inside the cylinder slid open, and Eve was slowly pushed towards it. She felt strangely limp, as if her senses had been numbed, and it wasn't until she was completely sealed inside the tube that Eve realized that she hadn't fought against the dwarves once. Her eyes widened. Some kind of weird spell? Too late, she remembered the first dwarf's hands clamping over her shoulders. It must have injected something into her! *Shoot*. It must have been temporary, though, as Eve slowly regained feeling in her body and began frantically banging against the doors of the tube, screaming and pushing with all her might. The dwarves shook their heads.

“Do not fear, dear one, for this is what will take you to a better place. You will be free of all of the worries and fears of your imagination! You will not harm anyone this way.”

What did they mean? Through a shameful blur of tears, Eve could only watch as the creatures flipped a switch on the capsule-like cylinder. An intense roar started to drive itself into Eve's skull. She screamed. Hands clutching her head, Eve took a last look back at the room, with the terrible creatures and their fancy TVs. Just then, Eve could have sworn she saw Silver standing

there. Her best friend. But how? As everything slowly faded away, she caught a glimpse of Silver with his hands over his mouth. Tears rolling down his cheeks. *I'm sorry, Eve. I'm really, really sorry.* Then, everything faded completely, leaving Eve alone in an eternal sea of darkness.