

Frayed

by Grace Ferguson

Every so often he gets them. Days like today, when he's split — unsure of his direction, unsure of what causes his heart to not feel the ray of sunshine appearing in the sky. On days like these, Gregory swears its doomsday; that no beam exists at the tunnel's black end. He sees only the abyss.

It's Wednesday, 8:10 a.m. He's supposed to be in the office, his fingers tapping to a familiar rhythm on the computer. But right before his eyes flickered open this morning, light evaded his inner being. And now he's swamped by the fearful discovery that nothing is how it should be. Yesterday, everything was stellar. Today, only the morbid exists. Will today be just another bad day? Or does a deeper reasoning exist for his midnight-colored mood? He sighs, a burdened one, and goes to the bathroom, thinking maybe the mirror can shed clarity on his dilemma. He stares at his reflection, wincing at the face that says he hasn't slept all night.

When he chose to become an accountant, he figured his life would be perfectly pat. He thought accountants were among the most uncomplicated people on Earth, with a notable exception being accountant/serial killer Kenneth Bernardo. But days like today make Gregory susceptible to a gamut of emotions — especially hatred for his boss who wields his superiority at every opportunity, loneliness because at thirty-five he's single without the white picket fence and two non-bratty kids, and discontentment because he's been at the same job for eight years and has had only one promotion.

Gregory runs a fatigued hand through his disheveled hair and scuffles to the bedroom,

glancing at the ruffled king-size bed. He goes to the living room where the furniture is posh. Then he enters the kitchen, where the decor is contemporary. He sighs again in dissatisfaction. Back in the living room, he checks the Victorian circa 1900 wall clock: 8:15 a.m. His boss, Mr. Einstein, would have to understand: no way can he make it in today because today is one of those days. He calls Mr. Einstein, cringing, as the voice he loathes for eight hours each weekday appears.

“Einstein here.”

Mr. Einstein never uses his first name, not even when introducing himself to others. He wears the name “Einstein” with smug pride.

Gregory fakes a snuffle and speaks in a weak voice. “Morning, Mr. Einstein. I have to call out today. I may have caught a bug.”

Then he hears the silence he knew would appear. He feels Mr. Einstein’s scowl searing into him, trying to melt him so he’ll go in today. But he will not be intimidated. Truth be told, there isn’t much Mr. Einstein can do, because Gregory rarely misses a day — only when days like these arrive. And these days are few and far between. Gregory hears a succinct click, as the phone hangs up. He will go in tomorrow. But he needs today.

Later, he’ll dissect why he feels so dreary and worthless. Why he views his life as a mess when its exterior breeds envy in others. These frayed days always end the same; they’re ugly but consistent.

By midnight, he’ll be brimming with conviction that his life isn’t so crummy after all. Maybe his boss and everyone else he despises lead lives that are far more abominable. Maybe he hasn’t met the right woman yet. Maybe one day he’ll have a meaningful hobby. Maybe there are people living in the dregs of society, attempting to slumber with pangs of hunger rioting in

their bellies. Maybe others who appear serene aren't what they seem. Maybe others have these days, too. The possibilities are endless. By tomorrow, the pit so hollow and prevalent within him now will vanish.