

THE BLUE ROOM

by

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INT. A HALLWAY IN A FACELESS GOVERNMENT FACILITY - NIGHT

The scene is deserted. If anyone is working tonight, they're currently elsewhere. We cut between various angles on what could be the same hallway or others identical to this one.

Everything in this building looks the same. The walls are blank, broken only by doors and occasional windows into laboratories. A security camera with a blinking light is the only presence.

We begin to drift slowly down one of the halls, and we become aware of a low hum. It's an empty sound that could almost be coming from the air itself. This glacial movement and sound last right up until the point where it becomes uncomfortable. Then we hear someone whistling far away.

INT. A SIMILAR HALLWAY - NIGHT

DAVID CHEN is walking down the hall, whistling and swinging a flashlight on a cord around his wrist. It's not dark enough to need the flashlight, but they're standard issue for all security guards. As he walks, he opens doors and looks in through windows to make sure everything's copacetic. He makes his way downstairs to the facility's archives.

INT. ARCHIVES - NIGHT

Peering through a window into a room labeled "815," Chen sees a wooden box on a table. The box is attached to all manner of wires and electrodes. He squints at it for a few moments then continues down the hall until he reaches the security office.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Chen sits down at a desk. There is a monitor with feeds from security cameras displayed on it. The desk also holds various items such as a coffee mug, clipboard, intercom, etc. On the wall behind him, there is, oddly enough, a painting of a dog.

Chen picks up the clipboard and fills in the log for the round he has just completed. Then he glances at the monitor, looks around the office in boredom, and sighs. He turns on the intercom and dials it to the correct channel.

CHEN
What do you call a cow with no
legs?

The voice of ISAIAH KELLAR speaks from the intercom.

KELLAR
I don't know. What do you call a
cow with no legs?

CHEN
Ground beef.
(long pause)
Because it's on the ground.

KELLAR
Good one, Chen.

CHEN
You get it, right?

KELLAR
Of course I get it. It's a terrible
joke.

CHEN
I got a million of 'em.

KELLAR
I'm sure you do.

CHEN
What do you call a dog who can do
magic?

KELLAR
I don't know.

CHEN
A labracadabrador.

KELLAR
Sensational.

Chen slaps the table, grinning at his own joke.

CHEN
So good!

KELLAR
How's it going up there?

CHEN

Just fine. Same as ever. What's it like down there?

KELLAR

You don't wanna know.

CHEN

Sure I do. I'm interested in your life, Kellar. That's why I always ask how you're doing. I'm interested in your feelings. How are you feeling, Kellar?

KELLAR

Fuck off.

CHEN

Someone told you to fuck off? That's so rude. I would hate it if someone said that to me.

KELLAR

Haha. You're just bored sitting in that little room up there. I'm sure someone's doing something illegal somewhere in the building. Why don't you watch your cameras and let me get back to work?

CHEN

What kind of work do you do again?

KELLAR

You know I can't tell you that. We've played this game before.

CHEN

Some kind of research, right?

KELLAR

Given that it's a research facility, that's probably a safe bet.

CHEN

It's some kind of... particle physics? Didn't you mention that one time?

KELLAR

You know I didn't. My work is top secret, therefore...

CHEN

Come on, Kellar, I'm so fucking bored! At least tell me if it's particle physics.

KELLAR

What, do you think we've got the Hadron Collider down here?

CHEN

I don't know, maybe you do. I've never been down there.

KELLAR

That's because you need security clearance to come down here. Kind of ironic you don't have security clearance given that you work in Security.

CHEN

Fuck off.

KELLAR

I should really get back to work. Did you need anything else, Chen? Oh wait, you didn't need anything to begin with, did you.

CHEN

Fine. Go have fun with all your whatever.

KELLAR

I sure will.

CHEN

Oh, hey, Kellar?

KELLAR

What is it?

CHEN

What's that box in Room 815?

KELLAR

815? Jesus christ, how am I supposed to know what room you're talking about? I don't have every room in the building memorized.

CHEN

It's that room in the archives,
near my office. The one with the
fancy door. It has a table, and
there's a box that's hooked up to
all these wires and things.

KELLAR

You mean like a computer?

CHEN

No, god damn it. It's a wooden
box... like a chest almost.

KELLAR

A wooden box.

CHEN

They never gave me a key to that
room. If they had, I'd be really
tempted to open it.

KELLAR

There's probably a monkey in there
with its head split open and all
this weird goo coming out.

CHEN

All right.

KELLAR

You can see his brain, and it's
pulsating. He's probably
radioactive...

CHEN

All right, I said.

KELLAR

...or maybe he's just got a really
bad attitude.

CHEN

Right, right. Go back to your
important work.

KELLAR

I will, thank you.

Chen switches off the intercom. He rocks back in his chair
and looks around the room. He fidgets with the items on the
desk. When he can't stand it anymore, he gets up and leaves
the room.

INT. ARCHIVES - NIGHT

Chen makes his way to the window of Room 815. He stares through at the box on the table. It's taunting him with its silent mystery.

CLOSE ON the box. It could clearly be opened with one quick pull and yet it's just beyond his reach. He gives up and goes back to the office.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Chen is sitting at his desk. He leans back in the chair with his eyes closed, rocking slightly. We begin to drift CLOSER to him.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Nondescript houses stare blindly from either side. The scene is mostly dark except for a pool of light at the far end of the alley.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

We CLOSE IN on Chen's face. His expression is peaceful.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

At the far end, we see the silhouette of a tall figure, its head turned sideways in profile. Its body looks to be covered in fur, and something is sticking up from its head.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Chen's closed eyes. He still looks unconcerned.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The figure turns its head toward us, and we see that it has two long, twisted horns.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Chen opens his eyes. He is calm, but he has an expression like he's trying to remember something. He thinks for a few moments, but he still can't place it. Coming back to reality, he looks around the room then leans over and switches on the intercom.

CHEN

Did you hear about the Mexican magician?

KELLAR

No, but I have a feeling I'm about to.

CHEN

He tells the audience he will vanish on the count of three. He says, "Uno... dos..." and then, *poof* he disappears without a trace.

KELLAR

I like that joke because it's short.

CHEN

Yeah, I could've really drawn it out, but I didn't. I do these things for you, Kellar, because I love you.

KELLAR

Is that what you call it?

CHEN

Of course.

KELLAR

Annoying someone every ten minutes isn't love, Chen. It's sexual harassment.

CHEN

You flatter yourself.

KELLAR

You sure know a lot of jokes about magicians. Did you know I was named after a magician?

CHEN

Yeah, right.

KELLAR

No, it's true. His name was Harry Kellar. He was a friend of Houdini's. He used to do a trick called The Blue Room.

CHEN

(unsure whether to believe him)

Your parents were into magic?

KELLAR

Oh yeah. They saw him perform in London, and they were so impressed they named me after him.

CHEN

Wait... I thought Kellar was your last name.

KELLAR

No, it's my first name. But that wasn't his real name either. It was just his stage name. No one's who they say they are.

CHEN

In your case, I understand why you'd want to tell people you were someone else.

(Kellar isn't biting)

So what was this Blue Room trick?

KELLAR

He had this room onstage with him. It was made out of three blue panels and a couple of curtains in front. He could make anything happen in there.

CHEN

Anything?

KELLAR

Anything.

CHEN

Like what?

KELLAR

He could make a pear tree grow out of a flower pot in ten seconds. He could make himself disappear leaving only a skeleton. Then its head would come off and float around.

CHEN

What?

KELLAR

Its head would float around the room.

CHEN

(to himself)

That's fucking weird.

KELLAR

What?

CHEN

That's fucking weird.

KELLAR

What is?

Chen studies the intercom for a moment. He's not sure if he wants to talk about this.

CHEN

I had a dream last night that I was in a room with a man whose head came off and floated around.

KELLAR

No kidding.

CHEN

Yeah. It floated around the room. I just remembered that.

KELLAR

That's very strange.

CHEN

What kind of fucked-up coincidence...

KELLAR

That's just one thing that happened
in the room.

CHEN

Okay, but what are the odds I would
dream about that and then hear it
from you the next day?

KELLAR

Exactly nine million five hundred
sixty-six thousand two hundred and
twelve to one.

CHEN

Fuck off.

KELLAR

If you don't want to hear about
magic, I'll stop talking and get
back to work.

CHEN

Sorry. That just freaked me out a
little. Anyway, I should probably
do another round soon.

KELLAR

Has it been that long already?

CHEN

Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

KELLAR

Be sure to say hi to the mystery
box for me.

CHEN

(distracted)

I will.

(snapping back to
reality)

Fuck you.

Chen switches off the intercom. He sits thoughtfully for a few moments then takes out his phone. He types something in and scrolls through, reading. He types something else and reads more.

CHEN

(to himself)

Oh, come on.

He turns to the computer in front of him, bringing up the facility's database and scrolling through it. Then he switches on the intercom.

CHEN
Okay, good one, Kellar.

KELLAR
No joke this time?

CHEN
I said good one. Very good.

KELLAR
Or maybe your delivery just sucks?

CHEN
You had me going with that stage magician stuff. A friend of Houdini's? I looked it up. Harry Kellar stopped performing in 1908. Your parents couldn't have seen him.

KELLAR
Are you sure about that?

CHEN
Even if they were teenagers and saw him the year he retired, which I doubt, they would've been like ninety when you were born.

KELLAR
How old do you think I am?

CHEN
You're thirty-five.
(pointing to the computer
as though Kellar can see
it)
I'm looking at the employee records right now. Plus, Kellar is totally your last name. Your first name is Isaiah.

KELLAR
You got me.

CHEN
(slightly relieved)
You're the King of Pranks. You're the Vice-Chancellor of Jokes.

KELLAR

My parents did love magic, though.
My mother taught me a trick. Do you
want to see it?

CHEN

Okay, fine. Show me what you got.

KELLAR

Think of a card. Any card. Are you
thinking of a card?

CHEN

Yeah, I got one.

KELLAR

Now, I want you to write it down.
Are you writing it down?

Chen picks up the clipboard and tears off a small piece of
paper. He writes "Six of Spades" on it.

KELLAR

Do you have it written down?

CHEN

Yeah, yeah. Got it.

KELLAR

Crumple it up and swallow it.

CHEN

Fuck you!

KELLAR

Come on, do it. Roll it into a
little ball and swallow it.

CHEN

Fine. But this better be good.

He rolls the paper into a ball and swallows it.

KELLAR

Did you swallow it?

CHEN

That's what I asked your mother
last night.

KELLAR

Very funny. Now open the desk
drawer.

Chen opens the drawer. Inside he finds a photo. He takes it out and looks at it.

CLOSE ON a photo of a woman with black hair smiling sweetly.

CHEN
What the fuck?

KELLAR
Is this your card?

CHEN
That's my wife. Where did you get this?

KELLAR
Turn it over.

CLOSE ON Chen flipping the photo over. He sees the Six of Spades taped to the back. This makes him even more pissed off. He drops the photo on the desk, next to the intercom.

CHEN
This isn't funny, man. Where the hell did you get this photo?

KELLAR
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you. I should've used a different picture. Maybe the one behind you.

Chen turns in his chair and sees that the painting of the dog has been replaced by a large image of the Six of Spades. He jumps to his feet.

CHEN
Jesus! How did you...

CLOSE ON the desk, next to the intercom. The photo has been replaced by the Six of Swords inverted. Kellar's voice is broken by static, giving it a ratcheting, insectile quality.

KELLAR
The Slough of Despond...

CHEN
(turning back to the desk)
Okay, that is freaky, Kellar. Like, I have no idea how you did that. It's impossible.

KELLAR

(his voice is back to
normal)

The best magic is impossible.
Right, Chen?

CHEN

(calming down)

Did you ever see a movie where a
magician does his act, and they use
camera tricks and CGI to make him
do this unbelievable stuff, and
everyone just acts like it's
normal? But you're watching it, and
you're like, "There's no fucking
way he could do that in real life."
That's how I feel right now, except
that totally just happened.

(he starts to applaud)

Nice work, man. I gotta say. I
thought you were full of shit, but
that was stellar.

KELLAR

I'm glad you appreciate it. It's
always nice to have a captive
audience. People enjoy things more
when they've got nothing else to
do.

CHEN

Ha. True. So how come you never
told me you could do magic before?

KELLAR

When would I have told you?

CHEN

You know, one of the five hundred
times we've talked to each other.

KELLAR

We've never spoken before tonight,
David.

CHEN

Come on, cut the shit.

Kellar doesn't answer. A low hum seems to be coming through
the intercom. Chen looks around the room to try and place
the sound.

CHEN

Kellar?

(no answer)

Hello?

(he taps the side of the
intercom)

Hello?

There's a burst of static. A voice comes through. It sounds like a radio transmission.

VOICE

...generally been associated with the objectivity of scientific method, employed through the generations to sift fact from superstition, build facts into theories and theories into laws which we can trust and use to improve our lives. One early title for this card was The Navigator, one who has learned enough about the relation between the Earth and the heavens to be able to set a course across trackless oceans and arrive at a chosen spot on distant shores...

CHEN

Hey, Kellar. Hello?

KELLAR

...hear what I said?

CHEN

No, you were breaking up.

KELLAR

I said, have you ever thought about how the world might be something else?

CHEN

What? What do you mean?

KELLAR

The world could be something entirely different than it appears to be. Maybe it's just disguised as a thing we recognize.

CHEN

What are you talking about? Does this have something to do with your research?

KELLAR

Have you ever drawn a cube on a piece of paper? If you do the shading right, it looks like it's three-dimensional, doesn't it?

CHEN

Yeah? So?

KELLAR

Well, that's a two-dimensional object which appears to have three dimensions. It's an illusion. What if you made an object in three dimensions which appeared to have a fourth dimension? If you looked at it from the correct angle, it would appear to be moving through time. But that would be an illusion.

CHEN

An illusion?

KELLAR

If you did the shading right.

CHEN

Kellar, why did you say we've never spoken before tonight?

KELLAR

We've spoken to each other thousands of times, David. But it's always been tonight.

CHEN

The fuck does that mean?

KELLAR

When we speak, it's always tonight.

The image on the computer monitor jumps and wavers. Chen leans forward and stares at the camera feed. There's a figure standing in the shadows in the corner of one of the shots. It's dark and blurry, but Chen can see something sticking up from its head. The figure stands perfectly still, then there is a flash of movement and it's standing in the light, once again still as a statue. After a moment, it turns its head to look at the camera.

Chen leaps back against the wall. He doesn't notice that the Six of Spades hanging in the frame beside him is now the same image from the computer screen of the figure looking at the camera.

CHEN

This isn't as funny as you think it is, Kellar!

KELLAR

(his voice beginning to distort)

I'm not laughing.

A high-pitched screech explodes from the intercom, quickly turning into shrieking laughter. Kellar's voice distorts even more. It sounds like there are two of him speaking at once.

KELLAR

Sounds like someone's laughing, though. They must get the joke. Do you get the joke, David?

CHEN

Yeah, I get it. "Let's fuck with Chen. Let's scare the shit out of him." Maybe your whole team is in on it, helping you.

Kellar's voice mutates again. Now it sounds like two people are speaking the words back and forth to each other.

KELLAR

I don't have a team. It's just me.

CHEN

I've seen your team. In the database.

KELLAR

A base for our data. That's what we all need, right David? Once we have it, we can put anything we want in there. We can put people in there. We can put rooms in there. We can put buildings in there. This building is like a room, and the room is special because it's not like other rooms. I can make anything happen in this room.

CHEN
Right. Right. The magic trick. The
Magnificent Kellar.

KELLAR
Look at the monitor, David. You
remember that face, don't you?

Chen doesn't want to, but he makes himself look.

CHEN
(miserable)
Yes.

KELLAR
You used to dream about that face,
didn't you?

CHEN
Yes.

KELLAR
When you were a kid?

CHEN
Yeah. I did.

KELLAR
That was a long time ago, David.
Longer than you think.

CHEN
What's that supposed to mean?

KELLAR
When did you last see your wife?

CHEN
This morning.

KELLAR
No.

CHEN
This morning.

KELLAR
(starting to laugh)
I did a magic trick on you. You've
been here a very long time. Your
wife has been dead for many, many,
many years. So have your children.

CHEN
(shaking his head)
No. No.

KELLAR
Do you want to know how they died?

CHEN
Shut the fuck up, Kellar!

KELLAR
There was something in the woods
behind your house, David. And you
weren't there to protect them.

Suddenly Chen is bound to the chair with vines. He struggles
but can't get free.

KELLAR
Maybe I can make it up to you,
though.

A WOMAN WITH BLACK HAIR appears in front of Chen. She's
bathed in an eerie blue light, and we hear a loud buzzing,
crackling sound. She's writhing in pain. She isn't the woman
from the photo.

KELLAR
Is this your card?

Chen stares at her, horrified. He can't speak.

KELLAR
I'm sorry. I fucked that up. I
haven't done this one in a long
time. At least, not to you.

The woman vanishes and is replaced by THE WOMAN FROM THE
PHOTO. She is also writhing in the crackling blue light.

KELLAR
Is this your card?

CHEN
(sobbing)
Let her go! Please!

KELLAR
Your poor wife! I thought she was
dead? Do you think there are gods
who wear masks and hide in the
dark, waiting to catch the wretched
lost souls who fall through the
cracks?

CHEN
(whispering)
Fuck you.

KELLAR
Maybe I conjured her out of thin
air! Maybe she was never really
your wife. Maybe you've just seen
that photo so many times that you
started to believe it. It's all
sleight of hand, David!
(his voice distorts
again)
Prestidigitation and legerdemain.

CHEN
(shaking his head)
No. No. No. No. No. No.

KELLAR
Do you want to see something really
funny?

CUT TO:

INT. ARCHIVE - NIGHT

Chen is still bound to the chair. He is sitting in front of Room 815, but now the door is open. The box on the table faces him as impassively as ever. Kellar's voice speaks to Chen. It has the crackly tone of the intercom even though the intercom is no longer there.

KELLAR
I've got to get back to work soon,
but I wanted to say hello in
person.

Suddenly the lid of the box flies open. From where he sits, Chen can't see inside.

KELLAR
How long has it been since we spoke
in person, David? Even I don't
remember. It might have been
tonight. Or maybe it was tonight?

Chen stops trying to pull free from the chair. He stares at the box.

KELLAR

Or maybe it was six thousand years ago. Or maybe six million? Or maybe it was exactly nine million five hundred sixty-six thousand two hundred and twelve.

CHEN

Oh my god.

KELLAR

I don't really understand what I am anymore, David. Everything seems like it's happening now. But when is it really happening? I used to be something called Kellar, but when was that? Was there an accident? I don't remember.

(starting to cry)

I don't remember. I don't remember.

CHEN

Jesus. Kellar...

KELLAR

I don't remember!

(his voice turns
sarcastic)

I don't remember! I don't remember!

(laughing)

Just kidding, Chen. Just kidding around.

Chen drops his head in defeat.

KELLAR

I had you going, though, didn't I? I've had you going since forever. Remember, I'm outside the room. You're inside. It's hard for me to get in there, it's so small.

(his voice is now the
ratcheting, insectile
voice)

But I'll try.

Chen shakes in terror as two hands with long fingernails feel their way out of the box. They grip the sides as though they're about to pull the whole world open like a sheet of elastic.

CLOSE ON Chen's face as a putrid yellow light washes over him. It grows brighter and brighter, and he begins to scream.

We ZOOM madly into the light in the box. As soon as we collide with it, it flashes out. We see only the outlines of vast geometric forms in the endless dark.

At first far away and then growing closer, we hear whistling. PULL BACK to reveal:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

A painting of the geometric forms hangs on a wall in the Security Office. Outside, Chen is whistling as he does his rounds.

THE END