

There wasn't any use trying to contain him.

The boy was fresh out of his junior year back then, a computer science Microsoft intern at only the measly age of seventeen. As expected, math and physics drew him in like a lion awaiting its prey, trapped him in with its proofing claws, and threw him in a sea of binary digits that blinked inhumanely back at him. But he loved it.

He loved it all. The world, the mystical future of accelerating technology, the seemingly meaningless numbers and letters that were useless until he, *he* himself shot them together like atoms in a particle accelerator. Because, then, somehow, as he sat in front of a dimly lit java compiler doing just this, something extraordinary would be produced.

He loved it all.

But it did not love him back.

The first trouble came in the form of sporadic motivation. There seemed to be a fault in his wiring of some sort because the boy was not built with the exact standards that his manufacturers had made him. The boy had... well, to phrase it bluntly, a very short attention span. If something did not interest him, all the words that were said about it passed through one ear and came out the other. He also was very meticulous and selective; he had to finish his project in one sitting if he wanted to finish it at all.

Quite obviously, therefore, his grades were a direct reflection of this.

There were one-sided discussions with professors, long sleepless nights, disapproval, disappointment, crumpled up papers in the recycling bin, and wet pillows stained with anger every time he actually did wind up in bed.

But the boy refused to let himself be consumed by the identity that the world seemed to force him to become.

He strained himself. Harder and harder courses, stacks upon stacks of textbooks. If he wasn't underneath his covers, his glasses glinting off the glaring light of the computer screen, empty energy drink cans littered around his bed, he was sleeping in an isolated corner of the library, always with a book in his arms.

In the process, he came to the conclusion that it wasn't that he couldn't handle school; school couldn't handle *him*. The strict structures but poorly organized assignments and standardized tests, the lack of overall personalized instruction and care by teachers, and the nonconclusive slanted results of the grading system locked the boy in.

*"What about the key?"* the boy would think to himself sometimes as he mindlessly stared up at the incessant spinning of the fan. *"Did they throw it away? Or was there none in the first place?"*

*"Does it matter?"* the world seemed to answer. *"Why don't you stop foolishly looking for something you don't have and instead try to break out of the prison with what you already have?"*

The boy shut up then, and further did he sink into the quicksand of uncertainty.

But three hundred and sixty-five days came and went. Too fast, like he was on Mercury, where time moved a little faster than on Earth. A second on Mercury was only very slightly shorter than Earth's, but as these differences added up, the boy suddenly had too much time lost.

Before he knew it, he was holding his diploma on the stage of the one place he despised living in. His figure was still and his eyes scanned blankly across the sea of clapping that hurt his ears. His mind was muddled with the promises the world had broken on this very day.

"This is the end of your chapter, but the start of a new one," they said.

It must have been intended to be inspirational, but to the boy, it was only a constant reminder.

Of his failure. He had failed to escape the prison surrounding him. Forever, now, he would be just another bird in a cage, another robot built into this utopian dystopia of society.

"He is the face of a man who couldn't bear the weight of this world for much longer," historians would write.

And they were right.