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Final Draft

The Iron Man

"What the bloody 'ell are you doing," I shouted, coming upon him lying there on the grass, looking up at nothing in particular. It was that time just after twilight, when it was dark, the memory of day the only thing lighting up the sky, and everyone was somewhere between self-reflection from the past day and anticipation of the newly^{high} born night.

I simply couldn't figure out just what he was looking at. He didn't seem to be doing much of anything, yet he looked not bored, but more deeply interested than I could remember ever seeing him before.

"Stare," he replied. His abrupt response only baffled me further. It was one of those things that he wasn't going to explain to me, unless I pursued it further, in which case he would give me a fully detailed, paragraph-like explanation.

Not particularly wanting to pursue this just yet, I looked up into the sky to see if I could solve the mystery. "Right..." I said, finding nothing. I continued to look, though. I just could not accept the idea of nothing being there.

A few bystanders, just as baffled as I was, were watching from a distance. I suppose they could be compared to the crowd that gathers around an injured athlete until they are told to move aside by a frantic EMS worker. They might have even thought he was really hurt, or even dead.

But they stood far away. They didn't want to intrude on whatever it was he was doing. I, on the other hand, was perfectly happy to intrude, if it was the only way I could find out what there was in the sky that was so intriguing.

"Anything in particular you're staring at?" I asked. Ah, now I'll get that explanation, I thought.

But it didn't come. His final answer was just as abrupt and vague as the first two things he had said so far: "No."

I was frustrated now. But I kept it to myself. If I wasn't going to get an explanation from him, I'd just have to find out for myself what was up there that drew him in so. So I lay down on the grass on the hill with the flying trapeze at the bottom, a

few feet away from him. Perhaps there was something that could only be seen lying down.

I looked and looked and looked in the sky; in fact, at the time I believed I was staring, as he had said. But I saw nothing.

Then, when I looked over at him, I noticed something. His eyes weren't open at all. Now, I was interested. Before, I was curious about just what he was looking at. But now, I wasn't even sure he was looking at anything at all.

I stood up so fast, I almost fell down. I wasn't particularly in the mood for doing much more nothing at the moment. I'd try again the next night, I figured.

"I'm gonna go to the Dungeon for a while. I'll see you back at the bunk." I thought I saw him nod, just slightly.

I came back the next night. I didn't see him around. I took a spot near the bottom of the hill, lay down, and looked up. I got a picture of the stars in my mind and closed my eyes.

This time, I really was staring, with my eyes closed, at the picture I had in my mind of the sky. The stars and constellations were less real in my head, but in a way they were more real. In my mind, I could fiddle with the sky as much as I wanted. It was my own reality, and in some ways, it was more real than the reality I had been used to seeing all these years. That reality belonged to someone else. Whether that someone was god or just the rest of the world, it was not my own. I could not alter it at will.

In this newly discovered world inside my mind, I could make a story by stringing together constellations. Looking at *my* sky, I could change the stars into words, completely randomly, fall almost out of consciousness, and come to with the capability to make sense out of nonsense.

I don't even know how long I lay there. I don't know how big a crowd gathered far away from me, thinking I was hurt or dead, yet too afraid of intruding to come close enough to me to help. I don't know how many people thought that I was just acting, that I really just had the pretense of a calm philosopher, that I really would rather be doing something other than just lying there, with my eyes closed.

But I didn't care. I didn't need to argue with that crowd. I didn't need to point out the irony that the very same people who refused to wake up in the morning at wake-up call to go to breakfast were unable to understand the concept of lying down, doing nothing. Previously I had thought that my friend had been pretentious, a wannabe philosopher, but now I realized otherwise. For his reality that he crept into inside his head, looking up at the stars at night, was just as welcoming to him as mine was to me.

reph. to make
clearer -
or simpli-
fy

All of us create our own reality. Pessimists call it lying, and maybe it is. But no one is hurt in the process. We ourselves are the only victims of this crime, and we are truthfully only creating a home for ourselves, a world we can fidget with as we wish. Everyone needs that comfort, I think.

My friend and I, and all of our other friends whom we later introduced to these philosophy stares, we were all invincible. We were iron men. We could not be bored or worried. For whenever there was trouble, we could just sneak into our own reality, our own little nook in the universe, and think and imagine.

Maybe we were all liars. But at least we admitted it.

Well, Zack: In exchange
for no interview, I don't
have to write much.
We both win! You certainly
win w. this. It's understated.
You also leave no reader in suspense
until just the
right moment! (A)

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