

## Solitary Confinement

By Toby Thompson

*The only color in my life is grey.* I fixate on the concrete walls, looking for a new blemish or crack of some sort. I know I won't find one. Exploring an empty room takes only a few days at most, much less months. I come to grips with the fact my expedition for new territory is as wretchedly hopeless as it is ironic. *All I know is grey. Having different shades confers upon me no sense of consolation. Grey isn't like other colors. Grey doesn't change so drastically from shade to shade, as say, red. Dark grey, light grey, it doesn't matter. It all congeals into an amorphous Grey. My walls, my jumpsuit, my water, even my skin: it's all grey. I bet if I had a mirror to look in my eyes would be grey, too. If I still believed in souls- or more particularly the existence of my own- well it would be also be grey.* It dawns on me that I am obsessing over grey again, and if I don't stop I may finally just snap and go insane.

To relieve myself of my morbid situation, I hop up from my bed and begin pacing. I close my eyes and start to walk a familiar infinite-sign shaped loop around my room. For some reason I try to recall the digits in pi. I get to about fifteen three times then give up. An attempt to remember the way the sun felt on my skin on my skin ends similarly. I stop pacing and open my eyes. What did the sun feel like? Had it really been *that* long? I breathe heavily on my forearms, bristling the hairs with heat—a weak attempt to emulate the sun's warmth, but somewhat comforting nonetheless. I continue to warm myself this way until I am winded. Then I wonder what else I can no longer remember, like a recovering addict trying to piece together the shards of a life of abuse, but I put those thoughts aside before they consume me.

Next, I try to sleep; it's all I can do but pace. I flutter between waves of consciousness for a few minutes, and then it comes to me all at once, like a storm from converging black clouds; like a well-aimed bullet hitting your ex-wife's lover.

*I dream I am on the outside again. We sit on a park bench watching our daughter as she swings on the playground. Everything would be perfect- but something is blatantly, horribly awry. The color from the world is gone. The sun, the sky, the skyscrapers, the concrete and trees and birds, the children on the playground — my daughter- it's all turned grey. I am overwhelmed with horror, nearly petrified with anxiety and anticipation, as I turn to look into my wife's eyes. They are not grey, but a piercing, burning, fiery red. The world around me bursts into flames as she whispers the name of her lover. I see the reflection of his body, crumbling in her pupils, and my own flesh is ignited. I am consumed by red.*

I wake up screaming, and bash my head violently against the wall. Then I do it again, but harder. To my great pleasure, an abstract mural of red explodes across the room, splattering across the walls, my clothing, and even a little on my sheets. It's a welcome change of pace to the sullen grey. I dig both hands into the wound, grimacing with pain and delight. I paint a sun, followed by a crude portrait of my daughter. When the guards come to drag me out, I am just finishing painting the fifteenth digit of pi.

