

Somewhere, somehow along the way in life, we all feel inadequate. Many of us feel this early in life. Many of our early insecurities we outgrow. Zeitgeist is not many people. Just one, and so filled with insecurities that he might affect the most complicated architecture to a point of crumbling. Or so his fears tell him. He doesn't know.

He rarely enjoys being alone. Anxious around others as he may be, the company of his brother is assuredly better. When you're alone, you can't ask if an odd sound or creak was your imagination. Unless you merely think you are alone - knowing and thinking are far from being mutual. Russ was within earshot, right? A yell should be enough if he could muster it.

"Be louder," plays the rough voice of his brother in his memory. "You're dead silent." He can't help his walls, his bubble, going up around himself. Stifling his own sounds comes naturally to Zeitgeist.

Careful hoofsteps still crack twigs and brittle stone. Zeitgeist knows his bubble confines his noise within it, but caution is his nature. There's no true need for his hands to reach out to hold it up. They hover by his sides anyway. His ears still twitch and swivel and bend. Like a shawl, he spreads the bubble apart at a point, listening more closely to the world around him.

Nothing stands out. From the outside, you may find this as a good sign, for which you would be terribly, terribly, ever so terribly wrong. Nothing unordinary means that one is not detecting *overt* danger. This does not mean there's no beast lurking in the undergrowth nearby, or a person overhead to drop down on you from the branches. He wishes he had a bond— no, not a bond, never a bond— only sight, however unreliable it may be. Zeitgeist does not trust any of his own senses. The sounds of the world press against his skin the way grease settles from thick air. Like a stagnant

breeze will bog you down, like encroaching vines that erode stone to gain its own purchase.

He shuts his eyes, you should know, for his focus to draw inwards. He reaches for an inarticulable sense of his own essence and steadily counts from six. By the time he reaches one, his feet are sinking into the clay and soil outside the back door to familiar safety. His brother kept true and stands leaning against the frame of the door.

"You're getting better," Lazarus notes. "S' ready up for dinner." A wash of warm reassurance runs through Zeit. He listens as Russ shuffles, moving aside to leave the doorway open. "Get you your cornbread."