

Fighting Obstruction

By Ryan Gray

Obstruction. He looms ahead, blocking my path, face darkened by shadows. My polite sidestep was met with one of his own. I shifted my weight to my right foot, bent my left knee and shuffled back the other direction, but his defense was just quick enough to keep my path blocked.

“Please move,” I asked with a tad bit of irritation.

The obstacle chuckled back at me, gleefully.

My eyes narrowed as I glared into his darkened face, “Move now, I won’t ask again!”

He folded his arms across a big barrel chest as a crew cut, brown head of hair slowly shook back and forth.

I hit him hard. I struck him in the face with two quick jabs, connecting with a cheek-bone and an eye socket. The obstruction grabbed for his face, which gave me time to shove him to one side, as I pushed by. Just as I thought the scuffle was over, an iron-like grip yanked the back of my shirt collar, pulling me down to the ground. The wind was knocked out of me. Coughing to catch my breath, I stared up to see a size eleven running shoe stomping down towards my face. A last-minute barrel-roll to the right kept me in the fight. I continued my momentum, rolling into a backward roll-up. As I got to my feet, I was met with a front snap kick, which I managed to fend off with a circle block. I weaved away just as his straight punch headed for my face. That was my attacker’s last mistake.

Before he could retract his arm, I snatched his wrist and pulled. He pulled back, I invited it. I let his arm go and stepped low to his legs, grabbed a handful of blue jeans just below the kneecaps and stood up with all my might. The obstacle’s back bounced off the ground. Now, it was his turn, to catch his breath. I wasn’t taking any chances this time, I pounced on my prey, grabbed a handful of his shirt, cocked my fist back, ready to strike as I pulled my enemy’s face closer. I stopped. Waves of confusion washed over the grey matter in my skull as a bone-shaking chill climbed my spine. It was my face...I was staring at myself!

I shook my head, expecting to awaken, but I didn’t. I composed myself and shook the figure with frustration, hand still cocked, ready to strike. “Who are you?” I demanded.

The lookalike grinned back at me. "Why... I'm you of course. Ego's, my name!" He extended a welcoming hand. I snorted at it, he shrugged and rolled his eyes, but continued the introduction, "I have many names, actually. Fear, Disbelief... Unattainable!" He chuckled again with glee.

Ego's laugh felt targeted at me, at my world, at my hopes, my happiness, and my dreams. A thought crept onto his face and with a satisfied grin Ego added, "I'm where dreams go to die."

Dazed and confused, I stood and wandered back up the path of my journey, the way I had already come and plopped down hard onto the soil of life. I felt his hand around my shoulder as he squatted on his heels next to me. "Ah, don't be sad, buddy. I'm not all that bad. I'm also Comfort, Distraction, Amusement and...Self-pity. I mean come on, old friend, who doesn't deserve some pity every once in a while." Ego ended his soothing with a little snicker and stood up to return to his station, obstructing my journey.

That last snigger I'd heard before...more than once. Actually, more than twice...a hundred...a thousand times. All those chuckles rang in my head, louder and louder until I couldn't stand it. "NO!" I screamed and jumped to my feet.

A dastardly smile grew on Ego's face once more as he opened his mouth to speak, "Again, oh it's so cute when you're..." I didn't let him finish. I jabbed at his face which was blocked, but that was not my real target. I followed my strike with a sidekick through his kneecap. He screamed in pain, but I didn't wait or stop. With one smooth motion, I hooked his shoulder with my arm and caught him in a full hip throw, slamming his body onto the earth. I didn't let go of his arm. I twisted it around until he rolled onto his belly. A quick pivot of my feet, a knee to his back and Ego was at my mercy.

"Please, wait, stop, you don't wanna do this!" Ego pleaded as I reached down and wrapped my arm around his neck. "You're nothing without me, you'll have no fun without me..." I gripped my opposite elbow with one hand and stuffed the other behind his head. "I keep you saf..." He barely gasped out. "No risk... no reward!" I hissed into his ear, then squeezed and twisted my body hard to the right resulting in a sharp *snap*.

With a puff of smoke, my Ego was gone...for now.

I stood, brushed off my clothes and grinned. "Hmm, now... let's see what adventure awaits on the journey to my hopes, dreams, and happiness." I was safe, the only enemy with any true power over me was dead, but it is still up to me to keep Ego in the grave, because, there can only be few things worse than fighting a flesh-eating zombie who looks just like you.