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*Stories*

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# Katie

*by Matt Sheridan Smith*

## *Katie's Room*

*You've assumed the figure of an actress, a player, twice, but also maybe, as a figure of speech, you could be called Katie.*

Your twelfth birthday, today, has come and gone with a flat, snapless hum. It was neither exciting nor disappointing: The cake had your name on it and you got nothing. You asked for a bicycle. A bicycle like the man on the stage in France. You grew up in many homes. You imagine that bike is here in your bedroom, never ridden; you can almost see the metal gleam in the dark. The moon is out. You can't sleep. You close your eyes and open your ears. There are three distinct silences surrounding you: speechless, statuesque, sleepless. LISTEN TO what's around you.

> listen to the statuesque silence

*This is the silence as felt by the one causing it, holding it. You feel their reciprocal silence pushing back onto you, the silence tells you to act, to break it, but your own silence holds out fast against it, isometric soundless pressures exerted against each other. Maybe it's really their silence that's enforcing yours, it's impossible to tell, such negotiations between silences are of course made only in silence. Camera and... action.*

## *A Forest Somewhere*

Is this even you standing here in this wedding dress? Everyone gathered here today, in these remote woods, this little clearing in the trees, is gathered in secret. But the secret you hold from them is that you never came here. You left the real you behind; she's only somewhere in someone's imagination, somewhere on film, somewhere deep inside the silence you maintain. He looks at you, he is flesh, you married the actor but this isn't him either. The question is posed. You just have to say I do. You do. You're gone. Secrets don't always end in telling. You wonder what to call a secret that everyone has already forgotten.

> listen to trees

*hoohoohoo ... kshhkshh.*

> listen to dress

*swsh ... swsh ... swsh ... shwsh.*

> listen to secret

Nice try.

> listen to something else

You can't see any such thing.

Plot hole detected. Initiating content restore:

Other worlds are not unique to multiples; medians and singlets can have them as well. Many people with such worlds resist calling them inner worlds or imaginary worlds, because these worlds are not make-believe or fantasy to them, but an emotional reality.

Type CONTINUE to return to the scene at hand.

> listen to him

I'm not sure what "him" refers to.

Plot hole detected. Initiating content restore:

Median: being neither multiple nor singlet. Many people feel the idea of a continuum from singlehood to plurality to be inaccurate, so are seeking a term to replace midcontinuum. Median is a fuzzy state between single and multiple, a single identity made up of multiple identities. Probably the main characteristic distinguishing medians from singlets and multiples is the presence of more than one person in the body, but without the independence of persons in a multiple system. Persons in a median system may be dependent on a single individual (who may have created them at some point) and unable to exist without that central person.

Type CONTINUE to return to the scene at hand.

> tell me another

I didn't understand that sentence.

Plot hole detected. Initiating content restore:

A median system might say something like, "There are many of us, but we are really all Katie" or "aspects of Katie," etc. Various metaphors have been invoked by median systems to describe their experiences, such as a stem with leaves, the spokes of a wheel, pages in a book or a sun orbited by planets. Separate cutting tools on a turret lathe ... the turret rotates to bring the appropriate tool to the task at hand ... or perhaps a microscope with different lenses. Another friend "rotates the jewel," as she puts it, to showcase different facets.

Type CONTINUE to return to the scene at hand.

> do you understand anything at all?  
 That's not a verb I recognize.  
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Introjection occurs when a person (singlet or plural) internalizes another person (real or fictional) into his or her mental space. In classical psychology, the introject is usually a parent, whose advice for good or ill becomes integrated into the person's moral system.

Type CONTINUE to return to the scene at hand.

> well i give up asdsjflkajlkasf  
 That's not a verb I recognize.  
 Plot hole detected. Initiating content restore:

Having fictive persons in the group can be experienced as a form of hosting. Some people report including historical persons or simply ordinary people from former times or even from the here and now. (These are now referred to as factive presences.)

Type CONTINUE to return to the scene at hand.

> thanks anyways  
 That's not a verb I recognize.  
 Plot hole detected. Initiating content restore:

Many plurals do not switch obviously or overtly. The change may not be obvious even to the people in the group. Selves may simply influence feelings and actions rather than coming "out" to take full control of the body. This may be the source of sensations like hearing words coming out of your mouth that don't belong to you, seeing the world as if you are taller or shorter, having someone else's feelings and thoughts overlapping your own, and so on. This covert, behind-the-scenes action is usually hard for anyone on the outside to notice. For this reason, multiples can go for decades with no one, including themselves, being aware they're plural.

Type CONTINUE to return to the scene at hand.

> bye  
 That's not a verb I recognize.

*(This is an excerpted playthrough from Matt Sheridan Smith's You Can't See Any Such Thing, an interactive fiction commissioned and published online by Triple Canopy. You can play the game at: <https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/you-cant-see-any-such-thing>.)*

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*Matt Sheridan Smith (b. 1980) is an artist living in Los Angeles.*