

The Midnight Scholar

by Taylor Brown

The room was bathed in the soft glow of a solitary desk lamp, its light creating a small sanctuary in the small, square-shaped room. The air was tainted with the scent of sharpened pencils and the faint rustling of papers. A lone figure, hunched over a desk cluttered with textbooks and notebooks, sat in determined concentration. Outside, the night held its breath, as if the world itself had succumbed to slumber. Yet, within those four walls, a silent battle raged. The papers seemingly multiplied as the clock on the wall ticked on, a constant reminder, as if it was the ads on the radio, to the task laid out before him. The homework stretched across the desk like a map to be deciphered, each answer, a small piece of a much larger puzzle. The scratch of pen against paper filling the room became almost monotone.

Scratch... scribble... scribble, scratch... erase... scratch some more.

Time seemed to blur as hours melted into minutes, as equations were solved and essays took shape. The pile slowly shrunk as the hands on the clock slowly marched on. The outside world, with its distant laughter and passing cars, felt like a distant dream. At times, frustration clawed at the edges of resolve, threatening to breach the dam of determination.

Through the window, a sliver of moonlight stole in, casting a silvery glow upon the pages. It was a silent witness to the dedication, a celestial nod to the midnight scholar. And then, at last, as the final problem was solved, a sense of satisfaction settled in. The pen was laid to rest, the books were closed, and a sigh of accomplishment released into the night.

As the figure pushed back from the desk, a sense of fulfillment washed over them, a reminder that they were the supreme ruler of the place called bedroom. The room, once a battlefield, now stood as a testament to persistence and the triumph of diligence over adversity. Homework had been tamed; life once again held purpose and meaning.

As the last pen was put away, the slender tool slipped through the aching fingers of the right hand – it landed on their foot. The figure's vision warped time and space until it steadied at a horizontal view of the smooth, wooden desk. Slowly, they stood up from the chair and squinted at the clock. "No. No no no no no." Heart beating and mind racing, they slowly glanced back at the green, neon characters – 5:45 p.m.

The figure looked back at their desk. Papers and folders silently addressed him with almost a heart-felt expression. The realization sunk in: instead of putting the first puzzle pieces together, sleep had taken over, leaving him depressed and hopeless. They sunk into their chair with a sigh of melancholy emotion slowly escaping from their breath. Taking one more look at those cursed numbers, the white folder with "Chemistry" written in sophomore hieroglyphics was opened.

Scratch... scribble, scratch... scratch... erase, scratch....