

2019

## The 20/20 Pod

Timothy R. Maxwell  
*University of Central Florida*

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/horrorshort>  
University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Short Story from 2019 is brought to you for free and open access by the KnightVerse at STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Knight Terror by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Maxwell, Timothy R., "The 20/20 Pod" (2019). *Knight Terror*. 10.  
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/horrorshort/10>

"I'm sorry," said the boy sitting diagonally from me, isolated in his own study pod. "And I didn't mean to stare."

I leaned out and glanced around-- surely he wasn't talking to me, as the plastic study pods obscured us from the knees up. Even at 3 in the morning the library buzzed with fluorescent lights, though our corner felt dark and isolated. His pants and sneakers were black, and that's all I knew about him other than that his voice was breathy and weak. But as I stared at his pod, all white and plastic with a dull glow inside from a laptop or phone, I could see that his posture was twisted from the waist up, and he was facing directly at me.

"I'm sorry?" I asked, "Are you talking to me?"

"No, I told you, I am the one who is sorry," he said.

I croaked a sort of "Okay" and slumped back into my pod, and peered down at my notebook for a while, thinking about him. I felt suddenly vulnerable and alone, and again leaned out from my pod to see who else was around, still uncertain that he was even talking to me at all-- but no one else was with us. I quietly closed my textbook around my notebook and set them in the cubby next to me. With feign coolness I stood up to take a look around the library, and as I stood his feet shuffled in a sudden jerk-- tightly up against his seat-- and I could again see that his posture was turned straight towards me. My heart pulsed between my collar bones. Slowly I lifted my head to peek over his cubby, but once I was able to see his tangled brown hair I noticed that he was turning his head away as I raised mine. My eyes were wide enough for me to feel the pressure behind them; my ears rushed with anxious blood flow.

I was breathing too loud.

I swallowed, caught my breath, and then realized it was he who was breathing hard. Even wheezing. He slumped away from me and his silhouette disappeared behind the frosty white pod. His legs slid out into the small walkway and his hair slid out of view.

Unsettled and too wired to study I gather my belongings and turned to leave.

"Peripheral vision," he suddenly whispered.

I turned towards him, unsure he even had said it, thought it sounded so clearly directed to me. Again his figure sat upright facing my direction through the glow of his pod.

"It's almost like hindsight," he said. Then he slumped over and began to snore quietly.

Slowly I turned away, my eyes glued on the pod, and as I finally turned my gaze towards the library I saw in my peripherals that his eyes were peering through the pod like it were barely frosted glass. I looked back urgently, but the pod was just as obscure as it had been before.