

Fade Away
By Angelus

Lightbulbs clinked and rattled inside the cardboard box that Adam was carrying them in. His big anteater hands easily grasped the oversized box as he made his way down the hallway toward the designated containment unit. As a member of the the lowest-ranking personnel unit, he wasn't told much about the containment unit he was assigned to, other than that he needed to change all the lightbulbs in the room's spotlights, one at a time.

The door to SCP-1591 was a huge metal bulkhead. This wasn't unusual, but it was still intimidating to stand before it in nothing but a uniform jumpsuit while carrying a box of bulbs. He leaned against the scanner beside the door to scan the ID badge at his hip. The scanner blinked green, prompting red warning lights and sirens to flash over the bulkhead. He heard the familiar hiss of the hydraulic locks depressurizing, and the doors groaned open.

His tail puffed out and his fur stood on end. Spotlights in the corridor turned on, flooding the space with intense brightness just before even more light poured out of the containment unit. He had to squint to see as his eyes adjusted to the light. Cautiously, he stepped over the threshold and into the containment unit.

The first thing he saw was the sculpture. It was a glass sculpture with a blue core and countless clear spikes pointing out from the center. Adam's brain likened it to a star, though he wasn't sure why.

The bulkhead sealed behind him. The pressurized hiss of the hydraulics pulled his gaze away from the glass star and he got to work. He counted over two dozen spotlights in the unit, and he started with the ones closest to the ground. He unplugged the first spotlight for safety, then unscrewed the cover to remove the bulb. He set it on the ground, and replaced it with a new bulb before replacing the cover and plugging the light back in. The spotlight lit up brighter than ever. Perfect! He moved to the next one, and the next one, diligently replacing each one and noting them down on a clipboard.

As he worked he noticed the room's brightness didn't diminish even when one of the spotlights was out. He started to pay attention to the way his shadow played across the floor and walls, and realized that the glass star was emitting bright light of its own. A small frown of deep thought tugged at the corners of his elongated snout, but he pushed his thoughts aside. There was no point in speculating about the nature of all of the objects and creatures contained here. As long as he did his work and did it properly, everything would be fine.

It took about an hour, but all of the spotlights were changed without incident. He gathered up the old bulbs in his box and flashed his ID to the door scanner. The warning lights and sirens went off again, and after a few seconds the huge bulkhead slid open. He stepped out into the hallway with a relieved sigh.

It was only once he was standing outside the room that he noticed the exterior spotlights had failed to turn on. All of the illumination in the corridor was coming from the star beyond the open bulkhead. He gave a curious hum and shrugged, jostling his box of used lightbulbs. Not what he had been tasked to replace, not his problem. The bulkhead hissed closed behind him, and the hallway dimmed to the level of the usual overhead lighting.

Adam turned to head to the recycling room when he realized he could slightly see the bulbs through the cardboard box. In fact, he could see right through the other side of the box and

look down the hallway ahead. He put the weird box on the floor, and that's when he realized he could see through his own hands as well. His eyes widened and he looked over his body, feeling over himself. He was still solid, but he was quickly becoming transparent, like a ghost. He looked over to his box of bulbs, but it was nowhere to be found. He grasped around where he had set it down, but it was gone completely. Faded into nothingness.

He tried to shout for help, but he couldn't make a sound. His blood chilled as he realized no one could hear him, and he was growing fainter by the moment. He had no idea what was going on, but it HAD to have something to do with that star. He ran back to the scanner by the bulkhead and tried to open it, but the scanner couldn't read his translucent ID. By this point he was so faint he was starting to doubt his own existence.

Just then, a creaking, squeaking sound came around the corner. His fellow D-Class anteater, Ada, was pushing a cart full of lightbulb boxes around the corner. She idly blew a bubble of the chewing gum she was working on as she did her best to peer over the stacks of boxes to see where she was going.

Adam frantically gestured to her to try and get her attention. She could open the door, and if he got back into the light, maybe he would be saved! He flailed and tried to shout, and frantically gestured to the scanner as he faded to little more than a ripple in the air.

Pop!

Ada's gum popped and nearly splattered over her face. She carefully slurped it back into her mouth as she squinted up ahead. She could have SWORN she saw someone by SCP-1591's bulkhead as she rounded the corner... but she was totally alone. If anyone had been there, they managed to vanish without a trace. She shrugged. This was no time to be worried about seeing ghosts. She had to replace all the bulbs in SCP-1591's exterior spotlights since they were just about to burn out...