My arm is bloody and bruised. The handcuffs grate against my wrists. I smell like stale sweat and regret. My breath is scarce. My ribs are broken. The plastic chair prods at my spine. I must look like death. My voice is husky. My ears are listening and my eyes are scanning. It is not going to be easy getting out of this one.

“Mr Clayton.” A manila folder finds its way onto the steel plated table. A microphone is positioned before me. The officer who has just said my name sounds hoarse with tiredness. He has worked a long shift. He doesn’t need to deal with insolent and intolerable guys like me. I’m a wayward teenager. The law should have more pressing things to deal with. I look up and meet the officer’s moustache... He is a cliché sheriff. His ginger hair is trimmed back, his moustache groomed and his mouth hidden behind the coarse bristles. Purposefully, I suppose... To hide looks of disgust? Or to conceal laughter?

‘Which one are you?’ I think. ‘Good cop or bad cop?’

The sheriff plops his immense self-down on the plastic chair adjacent to me. One of his hands holds his knee as he leans over the table. Stance of a bad cop... His blue eyes find mine and I see pity, and, the look of someone who has seen the likes of me far too often. The eyes of a good cop.

“Look son,” the Sheriff’s moustache comes to life releasing that husky tone, “my name is Constable Larson,” (there goes the Sheriff persona) “and I need you to understand that your actions will not go unnoticed. We know who you are now and we know where you’re from. Your actions aren’t excused by your circumstances son, that’s just the way the world works.”

I shake my head. I was wrong. This is ‘condescending cop’. I already liked the cop who had brought me in. He was nice, silent and non-judgmental. I miss ‘indifferent cop’.

Constable Larson stares at me a moment more, hoping the words sink in. I shake them out. Along with the knots in my neck, I let his words loosen and dissolve.

“Now, according to this file here, your name is Eric Clayton, correct?” Larson glides the folder closer to me. I lean over but a stinging in my wrists only permits me to lean so far.

Larson curses under his breath and walks over to the only door standing in the small confession room. He calls to someone. ‘Indifferent cop’ walks in. We nod. His dark hair is matted with gel and he looks too young to be in the force. His jaw is tense and all his features are piercingly straight and defined. He grips my wrists tightly, not unfriendly, but practice, as if he does this every single day. It’s more than likely that he does. I hear the small clink as the cuffs unlock.

I look down at my lap and focus on the here and now. I feel the harsh metal brush against my calluses as they are stripped from me. I should feel liberated... I should sense freedom... I should hear the cacophony of victory at this small feat... I have become less of a villain and more of a free citizen. Yet I need those cuffs, like paperweights, to hold me back down in this moment. To be real... to look ‘condescending cop’ in the eye. I can’t let this disguise slip. They need to believe I am Eric. I have to believe I am Eric.

“Better?” ‘Condescending Cop’ asks solemnly as ‘indifferent cop’ struts out of the room.
I ignore the tight taught pain that encases itself around my wrists, like invisible bindings, I feel a sense of longing for the cuffs once more. I lay my raw wrists on the table. Maybe the evidence of maltreatment of a minor will bring out the goodness in this sheriff.

He reaches for the manila folder, his gaze decisively navigating away from my war wounds. He flips the folder open. The sheriff seems almost nostalgic as he flicks through the folder. After a few moments he drops it on the steel table, entwines his fingers and sets his hands on it. Very businesslike, maybe he has adopted the role of my lawyer.

"You see son," (here we go with the ‘son’ act) “In our youth we have all thought about taking risks. Having all those hormones raging, your mind telling you you’re invincible, you’re body proving you’re not. However, the practice of self-control is one that is clearly needed in your case.”

My eyes remain firmly on my lap, looking at the creases in Eric’s jeans, pretending that I am on that bridge, close to meeting my brother... the other half of me, in our watery grave.

"Now your dishevelled appearance and your occupancy on the top of that bridge brings some questions to mind. I’ve seen many boys much like you, intoxicated, gallivanting on that very same bridge, egged on by their mates."

He looks at me, watching as his words transform me...alter me...make me into someone else. Someone willing to confess, someone willing to leave changed and whole once more. Somehow, I did not hear any words to that affect.

Larson’s eyes soften and he looks down at the folder. His voice grows softer, into a low growl of instinctive sympathy.

“I am real sorry about your brother son. To have a sibling end their life in such a way, it’s, it is tragic. But just like it wasn’t his it’s not your time either Eric. Even if he was your twin he’s not you.”

Anger pulsates through my veins. It clods around my major organs. Seeps through the mazes of cracks in my heart. Heads up my skin, boiling my insides. Blood pumps through my brain and I am as angry as he was.

“I AM NOT HIM.” I yell and feel the pain of the force of my words as they crawl out up my throat. I spit them out as though they were the poison that was killing me so slowly, too slowly.

I don’t realise when Larson is on his feet, but I feel him pressing against my shoulders. He calls for the other cop, ‘indifferent cop’ runs in. His hand is poised on his taser. I need to jump start my heart again, I am tempted to tempt fate. I am tempted to meet my end with a spark and let it die with me. To pulse with electricity, to end it all with such velocity, such energy that my brother lost when he lost all life.

I am pushed forcefully by Larson back into the plastic chair. I hear it scrape across the ground. All I can think about is the life leaving my brother before he jumped. The golden child dead before he even fell from grace.

“Eric, you need to calm down.” Larson is trying to soothe me. ‘Indifferent cop’ remains passive, standing guard at the door.
My throat is torn to shreds by my revelation. My wrists are aching unbearably. I hadn’t noticed that I had been beating the table with my fists.

“I’m not Eric.” I whisper. My head bowed. In a silent prayer of redemption.

“What did you say son?” Larson is still standing by the side of my chair. His voice is devoid of emotion. He doesn’t understand it. My parents are coming to get me. He needs to tell them for me.

I look up. I look straight into the eyes of Larson and in a voice of utter contempt I utter, “I saw Eric jump off the bridge.”

There is silence. Then Larson speaks.

His words are slow, they slightly tremble as the realisation breaks through, “Son, you saw Aaron jump. You are Eric.”

I am shaking my head profusely. I am not stupid, but he was smarter. I lacked ambition, I lack motivation and Eric had it all, yet it was empty. Just like what he became. An empty shadow of the boy I use to know.

“No,” I murmur, “I saw my brother, Eric Clayton jump from the same bridge I was on tonight. I am Aaron Clayton and I have killed my brother’s memory.”

“You stole your own brothers identity? What could lead you to do such a thing?” Larson’s voice rises with every syllable, and spit has formed at the corners of his mouth.

I reach for the manila folder across the table and open it.

“He got in trouble for the most idiotic of things, yet he was everyone’s golden child,” I shake my head and face Larson, “tell me son if you could imitate a gilded boy and kill his bronze counterpart in the process, why wouldn’t you?”

Larson holds the back of a chair, looking as though he is going to be sick.

“Regret,” I look at him, “it’s what leads you back to those bridges.”