

Turn Out the Lights

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There was something special about every little detail, how the pieces seemed to fit together and make sense. And with someone like me, things never turn out to be that simple. I'd like to think that I don't have a problem, but the way scenarios play out in my head, I'm not so sure. The sound of rain-drenched wind above my head, audible...

I lay there, my eyes drilling a hole in the ceiling, staring up at the imagined stars that beckoned with their thoughtful distance. It's not as if the stars weren't really there; believe me, I've often amused myself with the idea of some government agency that creates our perception of the Earth, the others inhabiting it, and the endless mystery just beyond the Earth's outlying edge. If my life were just another manufactured product with its own distorted reality, it would be too easy to resign to the fates and pity the abuse of my freedom and individuality. So instead I beat it by ignoring these thoughts and regaining control over my own perceptions.

He was a mass producer of sounds, a spreader of thoughts, and an implanter of visions. You might be wondering what exactly his job entails, but harvesting emotion and cultivating others' sympathies is not so easy to understand. His talent resonated most with those whose lives weren't running one hundred percent smoothly, whose minor hiccups cause debilitating depressions, whose thoughts have been invaded by the persistent remnants of death, sadness, heartache, denial, cowardice, and fear. Those who have lost their control.

Then my life became consumed by his message. For what I couldn't feel conventionally, I felt honestly in the sound, the rhythm, and the lyrics. I fell into a trap, albeit a pleasant cycle that never left me quite satisfied. The days passed, filled with excitement and plenty of new experiences. But there was always that itch, irksome nag, nefarious inkling that I wasn't doing what I wanted most, living with the freedom I hoped for.

Many times I had sensed that freedom somewhere nearby, like a jittering rabbit hiding in a bush, or just behind the uncomfortable stare of someone drooping by on a wintry sidewalk. The idea was too ugly to look in the eye and once you got around to doing even THAT, it was too quick to catch in your cumbersome hands.

So instead of trapping the idea, I tried sharing it. I was at peace that the creature was out there in the wild and that catching and suppressing it was nearly impossible. The sad truth is that sharing it turned out to be just as tough on my mental fortitude.

Deep down in my chest, propped neatly but inconspicuously between layers of mesentery and other functioning parts, I keep my emotions gagged and bound. But I

don't support this imprisonment; truthfully, I do everything in my power to put a stop to it. My subconscious is the culprit in this case, stepping in whenever sadness attempts to pull the lever for tears, impeding reason from wriggling free to stimulate my love, or when trust tries to traverse choppy waters with a friend and make it out on the other side of the maelstrom. You see, I cannot resolve what happens hidden deep inside, what's guarded so ferociously.

But there are times when my numbness deadens for spells. Like a pulse of pure nerve sensation methodically working its way from my extremities inward. Like the lifting of an overstayed amnesia as I remember what it is to feel. We didn't have to speak; thoughts communicated by touch, the absorption of heat on contact, the notion that we could stay like this forever knowing that there was at least one person in the world that solely wanted to be with me.

And for once, I was absolutely fine with the touch, the moment frozen because we both were lost souls looking for someone to understand, to care. It was that touch that somehow conveyed to me what it means to feel comfortable with someone. And even more than feeling connected to them, I felt self-assured for the first time in ages.

Taking those steps out the door and driving away produced an egregious void in my center. For the past two years, I'd gone through spurts of being foolishly smitten, obsessed with outlandish ideas of fate. But now I felt a true longing for one specific charge, and it was new to feel grounded within myself.

Simultaneous to this self-realization, I felt insulated from the dynamic chaos I had previously envisioned for years. I was finally ready to trust that sharing my new-found feelings of longing wouldn't result in an apocalyptic lashback.

The rain was systems away and had probably dissipated somewhere over the ocean. All my age-old fears were being hunted by an emotional immune response, a growing hope that I was becoming my own person. I was channeling my connection to music into a written work and in turn into decisive, fearless action. As I lay here, the holiday lights (not yet taken down) reminded me of the spirit I'd been lacking during Christmas and the coming of the New Year. The red glow visualized my strangely loud beating heart that yearned for a warm touch. As I continued to lay, to stare, to imagine, and to contemplate my freedom, the vision and essence crept into a smile on my face.

I had no way of knowing the means for taking interest and molding it into consensual sensation. Blood rushing back into my limbs, they begin to move again, but awkwardly and with deliberate hesitancy. A new year is such a superficial excuse for enacting change, but the genuine conviction I felt was justification enough for me. I promised myself that I wouldn't float through a lifetime without expressing to people how much their very existence meant more to me than they would have known otherwise. I was fully prepared to wake up and rub this new thought on the faces of the sleepy lemmings stuck in their unhappy habits. Watch while I resuscitate them with

my contagious energy and conviction. No escaping while I impose my emotion on an unsuspecting world. Our joking yet ironically appropriate mantra of “just go with it” was about to help me sift through the life experiences that got snagged in the fibers of our clothes and metamorphose them into my new purpose.

The little things can reveal a great deal about a person’s tendencies. Years upon years of partitioned confusion, an accumulation of unanswered questions and deluded answers. The undeveloped frontal lobe of a boy, a young man, is unequipped to address these issues of identity and purpose.

To travel inside the mind is akin to entering a library whose books are caked with dust and warped with time. The shelves are buckling under the weight of excessive books and expectation. The selection is grand, decorated, yet nothing is grandiose about incompleteness or obscurity. Each novel is miserably unfinished, blatantly unaware of where it wishes to end. And like my emotions these books are bound with the toughest materials so as to keep out sensation mongers.

Synaptic impulses continuously relay new messages to the library front desk; for too long, these messages have been shoveled in and forgotten in a mix of misaligned priorities and a clinging hope that everything in life would fall perfectly into my lap. There is no order or reason to my memories, but I’m sure there is an overlapping connection.

Staring at the blurry corner of a movie theater screen, KNOWING that I alone in the world would experience that pixel. Becoming the mastermind behind a series of pranks, the concocter of potions and natural remedies and globular salves. Thinking of light as a guardian of dust and dust as the manifest of a transparent life force. Assuming (but still KNOWING) that I could judge others, analyze them, and somehow understand them in ways no one else was capable of.

I was chasing an ideal. Blessed with a sharp mind and an overactive imagination, it consumed my being and I lost my sense of feasibility and objectivity. I would wrap myself in these over-hyped ideas, keep warm in the fleece false assurance and the wool embrace of something that, to put it bluntly, would just never come to fruition.

Everything was coming to light. Everything was light. My eyes couldn’t handle the drain of a thousand glowing bulbs, the wispy buzz of fluorescence, the searing pain in my temples from the glare and the glass and the energy. I was drawn in, yet repulsed. At every opportunity, I would turn off the light and find solace in darkness. The appeal, the emanation, and the allure were not enough to allow me comfort.

I withdrew in the presence of light into the dark recesses of the stacks and was fully assimilated, devoured by the blackness. How habitual it was to suck others into the darkness also. I preyed on ambiguity and reservation and noncommittal replies, to protect what was sacred to me. And when I was forced back into light, I froze for the

peril was all too familiar. Secrecy was a sworn friend of mine.

My eyes were tired from the familiarity and weary from constant fear of the light and also scarred by the penetrating darkness. To some extent, I was regressing to what I once cherished and what I knew to be safe.

She was incorrect in making the assumption. He implied that it wasn't a good fit at the given moment. They all knew I was capable and ready, but I guess my motivation was up on the chopping block. What I would have done in the past continued on undeterred while small pieces of me were slowly chiseled off when I turned away. The light beckons again, as expected, but now I yearn for small doses of fear and exposure.

There's a certain step on the front walk that proves dangerous for most visitors. There's a patch of black ice deceptively basking on the landing above the outer lip of the step. There's a dog sleeping there, snout dribbling over the lip, dreaming of dog things. Should someone disturb its sleep, these dog visions would mutate from pleasant doggy dreamscape into a bloodthirsty rage, swallowing pits of bile, smeared blood in the slush of the dubious ice patch. And when the dog regains awareness, there's no halting his menacing progress. You cannot climb the step (run away in fear!), and traverse the lip (please avoid the black ice!), and turn the faded brass handle attached to an old barren door. You missed out on something big because you lacked subtlety and caution. What was behind that door?

To be completely honest, I was somewhat distraught, but not at all surprised. I've blown way too many opportunities to think that things are going to fall in place now. One door closes... But the crash never came, the sound of shattering hearts and cracking courage never reached the threshold of my ears. I felt potential down this road. I've stopped caring about the image or even the reaction, because I feel something genuine and organic and loving. One door opens... I may be hiding behind a misleading safeguard, my past lending to expected assumptions. If I am totally mistaken, if I end up causing and being and becoming the crash, I may be irreversibly scarred. So you can see why making the first move would be tolling. Failure: my greatest fear.

And until I overcome that hurdle, the sentiment will be the same. This story can have no end or beginning. Just an amorphous collection of thought floating freely, occasionally colliding with my brainwaves. I am the catalyst for my own change and until then, I romance with darkness and turn out the lights.