

As a Child

There is a little lamp next to my side table. I usually forget it is there, even when I'm using it. It's one of those things that I use because a long time ago I discovered it was convenient, around the time I learned to read by myself, most likely in first grade, so around six years old, and needed light to see. Since then the light has been on every night without me really thinking about it. Maybe in first grade the lamp was so fascinating because it symbolized my independence, and even though in first grade I didn't realize that it did, I still had that wonderful feeling, like a giddy sort of happiness, every time I turned on the light.

It's one in the morning, and the light has been off for two hours. I've tried to sleep, but I keep turning over and over again, restless although my eyes are heavy and my mind feels like it is on fire, burning and thumping against my skull. Aspirin didn't help, nor did a midnight stroll with cold pinpricks of air on my face and hands. My legs were thankful for getting stretched and, by the time I got back from my midnight walk, I felt nearly blind because of how little I could open my eyes. I thought at last sleep had come. But I realized that night that sleep isn't something that comes like a friend knocking on my front door, a friend who has the ability to negotiate with me. Sleep works by itself and listens to no one's reason or logic.

I was ready to sleep all the way to the point when I got back into bed and laid my head back down on my pillow. Then the headache and restlessness returned once again, and I was tossing and turning from one edge of the bed to the other. Blankets and pillows were thrown onto the floor as I rolled onto my stomach with my right hand stuck between my stomach and my mattress and my left dangling over the edge like a fishing pole with its line thrown out of the boat ready to catch a fish. I lazily scooped up my pillows and blankets and reeled them closer to me and up and over my back onto the bed. Then I rolled myself off the bed, banging my head on my nightstand and scraping the left side of my lower back against the sharp edge of my bed.

Groaning in pain, I tightened the muscles my back, closed my eyes, and slowly shook my head from side to side.

When the pain subsided enough for me to reopen my eyes, but not enough to get my temporarily paralyzed body back up again, I rolled my head back as far as it would go.

That's when I noticed my lamp. I remembered as a child sitting in bed turning it on to read, then off when I thought I was staying up too late, at around 8:30 back then. I would lay in

bed with the curtains up staring up at the stars, planets, and moon until I fell asleep about ten minutes later.

As a child, life was so wonderful; why was I so happy then? How could a lamp fascinate me so much?

When feeling came back to my limbs, I pushed into a sitting position using my arms to try to carefully balance my aching body. Once the head rush went away, I pushed off of my arms and managed to struggle onto my knees. Again I had to sit there waiting a few minutes for the second head rush to settle down and for the colorful shapes and lights that temporarily blurred my vision to disappear before I could crawl over to my nightstand. There I sat flicking the light on and off as if it could somehow bring me back to my childhood and let me one more time relive the feeling of joy caused by a simple lamp.

Why did things have to change? It was such a simple thing, a lamp, but that's all it took to make me happy inside.

I remembered how a lamp, a straw, a certain pillowcase, or a favorite shirt would give me a moment of happiness that was equivalent to my mother buying me an ice-cream cone or my dad taking me to the movies.

I turned off my lamp light one more time and rolled off my knees and onto my back.

I stared at the shadowy plain ceiling, thinking so what if I paint it? Would adding colors to a ceiling make any difference to my life? I rolled over onto my side and looked at a picture hanging on the wall. If I took it down, within a week would I even remember and notice it was missing?

I rolled onto my stomach and banged my hands and feet against the floor as if I were three and having a tantrum. A few minutes later I abruptly stopped and bolted upright, clutching my knees to my chest, rocking back and forth.

I released my knees and jumped into the air, banging my hands on the ceiling. I came crashing to the floor without bothering to use my legs as springs to cushion my fall.

I ended up hitting my cheek right below my left eye on my desk corner, and a trail of blood dripped down my face.

I screeched in pain and reached for my face with my nail bitten hands, swiping at the stream of red until my hands were stained tie-died with blood.

I sat back down and returned to hugging my knees.

My arms released my legs which sprang straight out in front of me. Then I rolled onto my stomach, then back, then stomach, until I hit the wall.

For a moment my brain had enough sense to comprehend that it was near three in the morning.

My eyes started to roll to the back of my head. Then they crossed. I let them dart any which way they pleased as I laid trapped in my own body on my own bedroom floor.

I lifted my stomach and legs off the ground and spun 180 degrees around on my butt, until I faced the door.

A man walked in, tall, thin, gentle, wearing a suit, and sat down next to me. He sang me a song, but then stopped in the middle. Not hearing the end of the song felt like torture. Then I saw in his coat pocket a silver blade. I tried screaming, but the words wouldn't come out, since the man's left hand strangled my throat. His right held the blade up above my heart.

I blinked, and he was gone, but my bedroom door was open.

I stood up to close it, and I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned and saw a dwarf balancing on twenty stools. I made a move to knock him down, but the more I swiped at him, the more stools he added until the whole room was filled with white, three legged stools, and I was forced to stand backed against the wall, sucking in air until I was gasping and choking for breath, and when I couldn't take it one more second, the dwarf and his stools vanished.

I sank to the floor, holding my hand on my chest, breathing deeply.

I stood up to close my door, but the moment I stood up, I started to sway back and forth as if I had just looked up at a star and spun around as fast as I could for thirty seconds. I watched as the floor seemed to become vertical and come closer and closer to my head. I hit it hard with a big bang.

Then I opened my eyes and saw a bright, blinding light, and I thought... nothing, nothing at all, but I felt happiness. And not just the kind of happiness I felt when I aced a test, but the happiness I felt as a child when using my lamp, straws, or pillowcase or wearing my favorite shirt.

I took a deep breath, and I got to my feet. The room was still, silent, and dark, now that the blinding light had gone.

I looked down at the bracelet on my wrist, tiny, silver hearts connected by multiple clasps. It made me happy to have this bracelet, very happy.

I walked calmly over to my bed, got in, pulled the covers up to my chin, rolled up the shades which blocked the window, and stared at the planets, stars, and moon, until I fell asleep ten minutes later, whispering a list of things that made me happy... straws, stars, the moon, the sun, planets, pillows, yellow, butterflies, stickers, sweatshirts... a lamp.