

## Lighthouse

Sometimes, I awake in the middle of the night. At first, these involuntary awakenings were unwarranted, and I desired nothing more than to, perchance, resume a dream that began in media res; one without a possibility of an ending. People have constantly guaranteed sleep without interruption: tossing and turning, counting sheep, fighting the urge to think. I tried, in their best interests, to follow the methods exactly as I've been instructed. Nothing worked. After several consecutive nights, I continued to discover myself waking again and again to the darkness of my still room, aware that I would be, once again, in the long run for quite some time and that there was nothing I could expect. Just to lie still and wait for the impossibility of sleep again.

Soon enough the dreams slipped from my memories as spontaneously as they transpired and though I tried pondering and materializing in my mind's eye precisely as to what the vague figments I conjured were, distressing images or not, it seemed that each passing night I gradually lost the ability to recollect what it was that I saw. I could only recall these images in a vapid fugue; a foggy cobblestone side street, a hotel suite without any doors, a lighthouse on the tip of a rock-strewn jetty revolving its blinding light, a desolate diner without chairs, tables, patrons or a maître d' would then vanish from my thoughts and transition into the

darkness of my room. Nothing I could do would let me recollect what passed around the corner of the side street or who the silhouette in the dim corner of the hotel room was. All that awaited me when I awoke was that I would never be allowed to re-assemble the fragments of an intangible memory I knew never existed in the first place.

Consciousness warranted that the liberation to my troubles was the respite guaranteed to every person who lived on this earth. A chance to momentarily desist from the weariness that contractually arrives with existing. It was a third of my life and being denied this was, at first, a great burden. For before, I never understood how crucial it was to be rid of the minutiae of a normal day, the trouble of having to work, to eat food that might or might not taste good, to talk to others and on occasion speak to those I had no intention of ever having before, or wanting to, converse with. No matter how many times I was roused from a comfortable or irritating rest, I couldn't help wonder if these awakenings were something I unconsciously desired. Because sometimes we are not explicitly certain whether something we despise is beneficial for us and most people cannot recognize serendipity when it arises.

However we analyze or interpret it, sleep is sleep and it's accurate to conclude that certain biological states like it cannot be interchanged or radically redefined to fit our own wants. There are

those who suffer from insomnia, but I doubt for sure that was the affliction inconveniencing me each evening, if inconvenience is even the proper nomenclature for my indisposition. In fact, when I woke up (for I was still able to sleep again, though I could never pinpoint the precise moment when the weight of it fell upon me) I rarely felt dazed. On the contrary, I began to notice that I was about as alert upon waking up in the morning as I would be on a given midday nap. As naturally as I awoke alone in the night struggling, and not uncommonly, at the start of the whole ordeal, enraged at my inability to fall asleep, I rose in the mornings to a sound and pleasant rejuvenation I never experienced prior.

On account of this, I decided not to consult a psychiatrist at the time, for I had neither the money nor the urge to waste my time scheduling appointments through ineffective middlemen. I assumed the circumstances were temporary and that, like most things in due time, it would either continue perpetuating itself indefinitely or fade away, allowing the disorder to be quickly ignored like one forgets a minor cold or a canker sore once it passes. Besides what more could a sleep specialist do that wasn't facile enough? Prescribe something here and there, concentrated Motrin that is said assured to work and, of course, to book another session in a week's time. I knew that the others, the faces I see daily, would find it disconcerting to hear that each night at some

unknown time I would be disrupted for reasons unclear even to myself. It didn't make sense for me to afflict the others with my burden, being that the rest of the world had its own baggage that it did not bother to delve or dip into with anyone else, myself especially. How would I remedy any of their situations if they couldn't even find the source of mine? Of course, there are those impulsive folks unable to separate troubles of their own, mixing them into the monotony of small talk, the premier pastime for those who have nothing interesting to say. But generally, after initial pity is gifted by those willing and emphatic enough to hand it out, eventually the narratives recounted sound slightly warped and distorted the seventh or eighth time told and immediately one starts to recognize even the intonations associated with every other word and suddenly each method of the story's delivery becomes a cliché in itself. And like a wilting araucaria, those that still bother to notice the shriveling stems and stubby cones neither concern themselves anymore about its care, nor completely relinquish their duties in keeping it alive on its deathbed since a dying potted plant on a windowsill is always more convenient than not having one sprout and grow in the first place.

So, like all other things, I kept my affliction to myself. Yet I believe unconsciously, I had absolutely no notion of whether letting it sit internally was making the best situation out of all the

possible circumstances that were available for me. Something has definitely happened to me, but I had no notion as to what it was, or how to resolve it.

So... since I am by myself, left to contend alone in the darkness, I do nothing but stay and lie awake. No outside light contracted the room's overbearing tint. Neither the moonlight, nor the street lamps out in the apartment parking lot, could counteract it, for I knew that though light still shined outside it would not bother to creep through the window shade, as if it was aware that during nighttime it would be denied permission to enter. And since I could not see beyond the faintest, curvilinear outline of my fingertips, which were only vaguely visible if I placed them mere inches in front of my open eyes, all I could do to associate myself with existing on the earth in a rented room were the objects I could not glimpse, but only hoped still existed in the darkness. A broken clock, with its second hand ticking back and forth fixed on one precise spot between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> second, managed to pull the illusion that time was still passing. Though the clock was capable of its job, only incapable of fulfilling its only redeemable purpose, it was not rendered completely useless during those seeming hours. I managed to count each passing second with remarkable zeal, never knowing whether it was 3 am or 4 am. In hindsight, each morning, I knew that it was perfectly possible to turn on the

bedside lamp. But at night it seemed blasphemous to reveal the room's shoddy appearance and disrupt the utter sensation of non-being. Darkness resembling that of what I assumed was the quintessential image of a tranquil and, quite frankly, untroubled death. It seemed unfair that I should deprive myself of understanding a feeling that I never experienced before by shining a light that would disrupt everything that I had managed not to accomplish myself; long-winded theories, each with their own intentions and vivid stories, all really fiction in its own regard, wallowing in their specific certainties and anticipations, couldn't impose themselves on the stagnant darkness of my room and the fervent incarnation of my mind lying still, alone and awake, encountering the notions of both being and non-being, sighted and sightless, animated and lifeless. It seemed that I was gifted an inconceivable sense, whether it was a puerile illusion or not, of understanding what it is to die, while still enjoying the sweet and unconditional tangibility of my terrestrial body under the covers of a tasseled blanket, obscured in a side corner of the world. I can only compare the experience to being a desolate star burning billions of miles afar, an undulating wave on frigid open waters off the coasts of the Arabian Sea, a passive, drifting wind gently blowing sand and running along the faces of Saharan dunes that it

formed millenniums ago, a lonely rock on the surface of Mars.  
Anything without the slightest hint of emotion.

Soon, the thought of being roused once again in the small hours, unbeknownst to me then still why, had excited me more than my intermittent dreams and the desire of searching and stitching together the vague recollections of an imaginary restaurant or a forgotten secondary school classmate. Even the knowledge of eventually waking up and having to resume my position in the material world, constantly spoiled by a passing requirement to live out the daytime being expected by others, needing expectation, seemed acceptable as long as the feeling existed; it's the highways, congested or not, strangers on subways, God in fake hearts, authentic deaths, dreams marring the lives of those I don't know, books already read, books I'll never read, temporary mountains, and love in all forms: plastic, unrequited, carnal, platonic, practical, universal. It all agitated me further. But in the night, accustomed to my scheduled interruptions, I departed from the depravity of waking life. Apart from the metronome of the clock, I could hear the synchronized groan of the pipes or the heater murmur behind the plaster walls. Occasionally, even at this hour, one could hear the distinctive creaks of other tenants enclosed on all sides of their rooms, trapped in a sense like myself in their original cells and their original habits. And far in the grand

distance, the bellowing of a train whistle, mitigated to a baritone drone for my ears, could be heard by all those still awake and I - I had the sheer luck of being there the precise moment the locomotive embarked from its station when the conductor, pulling the chain that blew the horn, signified to others, who may have been ignorant before, that a moving train would be departing for its next destination. But that is not what I thought and though the conductor may have pulled the chain for his own reasons, I lied on my bed thinking if he had any idea that I was still here listening attentively to every octave of the whistle. And soon I became conscious of all that would go on in its essence while others were asleep, all that could happen, all that will happen and everything that has occurred in the course of events, regardless of my witness. The millions of whistles blown across the continents, all the little people in Siberia and Constantinople, Herodotus in his cradle and Herodotus on his deathbed, machines decaying in cattail fields and machines being built in the mechanical pits of factories constructed by men I may or may not have passed by on the street, all the music recorded, all the music lost for those who have never had the ability to record, each piano key played, every artist that has never been able to play, planets uninhabited, shoes tossed in landfills, Napoleon shooting his pistol, arguments unresolved, the sound that a burbling brook makes. It was the nostalgia of being something



that never existed in my lifetime, of re-living the things that may have happened and imagining the moments in history that never occurred except within the recesses of my mind!