

The Light

The White Light fell from the midnight sky with unvarnished intensity.

I waited for the sound of its impact with the field in the horizon, but it never came.

Instead, it just settled into the distant, grassy hump.

“Charlie! Get out here! You have to see this,” I yelled over my shoulder. He didn’t answer me. He never did, but it was a whispered reflex to call him whenever there was something happening that I didn’t understand.

The darkness of the night seemed to thicken around me, but I couldn’t take my eyes off of the green hills threatening to dim the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen.

I stood with my back to the house Charlie and I shared and stared out into the acres of rolling hills surrounding me as The Light rose again and grew in a humming ascension until it took over the horizon, then suddenly sucked into itself with a quiet “thop” into the a small circle the size of a grapefruit.

It bounced along the rolling hills in my direction.

There were times when I thought it vanished back into the air, only to have it reappear at the top of the next peak. It glided just slightly above the grass, sometimes slowing like it was looking for something, at other times moving with a hummingbird-like grace.

“Charlie?” I said softer this time.

The Light stopped about 20 feet away from me, still hovering in the air and

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brightened.

If I didn't know any better, I would have thought it recognized my voice; like it saw me. And unlike most of the people I'd encountered in my adult life, it was happy that I was standing there.

The Light picked up its pace in my direction, but stopped short when it got within arm's reach.

"What are you?" I asked it. There was so much life in the little beaming ball that it seemed reasonable that I should have been able to talk to it and feasible that it would respond.

The Light grew more intense as each word I spoke passed through my aged lips and into its core. I couldn't tell if it was throbbing or breathing. Either way, it was alive and made me feel the same way.

I reached out to it, letting my fingers run along the circumference of its glow. Its warmth embraced me and let my worn hands dance inside it.

I felt whole, safe ... young.

Inside The Light I couldn't see the blue veins through my wrinkled skin or the twisted mess I'd called my fingers before the arthritis set in.

I shook my hand in the light, mimicking the Ms. America wave I used to practice in the mirror so many years before ... in my life before Charlie.

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My skin was always just light enough to be on the right side of the “paper bag scale”. My long, black, cotton-like hair extended past my bra strap. These were two things that ensured my pick of eligible men in the small, rural black town just east of Trenton, N.J.

But I chose Charlie.

And I thought it was a good choice until we realized my womb could never bear him a child.

That was when Charlie decided he would choose everyone else in town. He made it no secret, even bringing them home sometimes.

“Don’t mind her,” he’d say as he brushed past me on their way to what used to be our bedroom.

But I took it. I took it over the alternative of him paying attention to me with his fists.

I stopped going into town a few years after we got married because I could no longer take the stares of judgement from some and the pity from others. So I stayed in the house and watched the mirror as the beating of time (and Charlie) devoured my beauty and any glimmer of freedom I ever felt.

My fingers swayed back and forth in The Light more nimbly than they had in years. I balled them into a fist, trying to hold onto The Light. I could feel the

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weight of it pressed between my fingers and my palm. It was soft and pliable, but firm.

I opened my hand and pushed it above my head.

The Light fell from my hand and burst into a million sparking pieces, showering down on me.

“My God!”

The smaller pieces of light quickly filled the space around me. Some were as small as the flecks of dust I wiped from the tables and shelves in our small house. Others seemed to impregnate themselves, becoming just as big as the first one. I reached out my hand again and they began dancing up my fingertips and slowly bouncing their way up my arms and down my back. They touched me rhythmically and my body followed their queue. My bare feet began moving along the soft blades of grass, slowly at first. But our pace quickened as I twirled in the crisp, nighttime air, The Light vibrating on my skin.

I looked up to find the black sky devoid of any stars. It only carried the moon, which acted as my spotlight.

The strap of the flimsy slip dress I wore fell from my shoulder and onto my arm, but I dared not to push it back up. I was taken by the spirit of movement. I missed a step and tumbled into the soft grass. The rain storm that'd taken the sky earlier in the day made the

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soil soft and the grass feel like fresh linen. I rolled down the hill in a flurry of enlightened bliss, stopping at the bottom with my feet landing in the edge of the stream that lined our property. The Light on my feet illuminated the water, exposing the little fish gliding in effortless harmony downstream.

The tumble caused my dress to make its way up my thighs. I tried to pull it down, but the smooth skin of my legs tackled my inhibitions. They were longer with the taut skin now holding in the muscle, instead of sagging under the pressure of lumpy flab and cellulite. Sliding my hands up to my midsection, I found my belly no longer stretched and sagged from the years of binge eating my feelings away. And my breasts ... my breast were firm and round.

I tore the cheap dress away from my body and lay naked, allowing The Light full reign of me.

My skin had returned to its golden brown hue, replacing the pale that came with indoor living. I basked in The Light as it continued to transform my body ...

Until ...

it slowly ...

died out;

leaving me laying in the dark valley as the stars returned and the moon reset itself back into the flat sky.

I raised myself on my elbows and stared out into the emptiness, only sounds of the trickling stream as my company.

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“Please don’t leave me,” I cried out into the night.

The tears ran down my cheeks in waves. I allowed myself to cry hard in hopes that my tears would run the stream over its banks and carry me away.

My emotions weighed my body back down to the ground. I closed my eyes and surrendered myself to the elements.

Then the stream fell silent.

The darkness behind my eyelids turned a fiery red. I tried to open my eyes, but The Light had returned, burning brighter than it had before. I could feel it pulsating at the end of the stream, just above my feet.

I parted my legs, revealing my stale womanhood and The Light entered me slowly; more gently than Charlie ever had. It stroked my insides with care. It was harder than before, but warm, like a steel rod soaked in hot water. I opened my mouth and released a guttural moan into the valley, the sound of my voice filling the air with the same warmth The Light brought with it when it fell from the sky.

“Please take me with you,” I whispered into it.

As quickly as the words left my lips, The Light released itself inside me.

I made the climb up the hill with minimal effort. Watching as the grass folded onto

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itself before I could place my foot on the ground in front of me, I felt weightless. I could see The Light, now within me, illuminating the vast emptiness in the hills and valleys.

I wasn't alone anymore.

I walked in the front door of the house. The places where the battered floorboards normally creaked didn't make a sound as I approached my sleeping husband, lying naked on the couch.

I watched him resting peacefully, his chest rising and falling with what had to be conscious effort after the years of smoking. He stirred beneath the sheet covering the lower half of his body as The Light changed the room from midnight to dawn.

"Anna?" he barked with a raspy gruff, wiping his eyes. "What the do you want?"

The Light ruptured inside me, now turning the room stark white.

"Nothing!" I said without parting my lips. "I don't want anything, Charlie; nothing at all."

The pressure swelled in my chest until my anger and resentment, now fueled by The Light exploded into his frail form. I watched carefully as his skin began to meld from his body. The pain seared through him so deeply that his mouth just hung open; no moaning, no cries of agony; just a wide eyed stare with his bottom lip on his chin. He laid back on the couch I used to cry myself to sleep on while trying to drown out the sound of him humping on some random woman, convulsing his way

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into death in a heaping mess of bone and red mush.

The smile spread across my face, wide and bright.

I packed light. I didn't have much.

Sliding into the driver's seat of what used to be Charlie's car, I stopped to adjust the seat. My belly had grown big by the time I'd awoken from my slumber.

It was now ripe with life.

I looked in the rearview mirror as I started the engine and drove away from the house. It was the last time I'd ever look behind me.