

My eyes were once accustomed to leaving the lights off in the house. The way the furnishings around me slowly dissolved into vague and fuzzy shapes as the sun set and left my eyes with less to focus on—it gave me more brainspace. More time to take comfort in my own unawareness.

But one evening I felt an urge to turn the lights on, to break the darkness—and in retrospect, the randomness of the urge is frightening, as I was only one passing thought away from never seeing the truth—but I followed my instinct.

In an instant, my room flooded with harsh light - the comforting dimness of the ambient evening glow from outside washed out by a pure and brilliant gleam.

It didn't look like my home anymore—everything was covered in grime, diseased, evil. The clean walls and solid floors were even less recognizable with every layer of misery creeping on them. I, for a moment, nearly regretted my awakening—

But the grime began to fade away.

With every moment after I had flipped the switch, the grime itself seemed to recoil from the light. As if merely revealing its existence was enough to make it wither in shame of itself. It withdrew from every crevice in the house until its tiny, black heart could only beat its evil rhythm in the most reclusive nooks of my abode, unbothering.

Suddenly, it buzzed within my awareness that there was a person in the corner of the room. I felt the urge to hide from them out of thoughtless fear, but a look at their face told me they felt far more out of place than I did. Androgynous. Tired. Scarred with abuse and garbed in shadowy clothes—huddled reclusively as they wished not to be noticed. And I looked into their eyes, and 40 million souls stared back at me.

They'd been there perhaps longer than I'd lived in that house. Unnoticeable—purely because I'd left them in the darkness for my own comfort.

They seemed relieved. Wordlessly. And yet, I had done almost nothing.