

“Freezing Hot”

12:12 am

I'm still awake.

I mean, I went to sleep for a little bit but now I'm awake. Does it count as “still” awake?

I'm awake again.

12:22 am

I had taken 36 mg of melatonin. That's *twelve12twelve* times the dosage on the little purple bottle. One-two. Ten-two. It took just three (3) little sips of water to get all twelve (1-2) little pills down. They're a soft white with little purple specks that match the purple on the bottle. I didn't like the ones that melt in your mouth because they numb the tongue if you take more than two. I hate numb. And it's nowhere near the most I've ever taken anyways. I think I topped out at about forty-two, and that was just because I ran out of pills. I was almost scared I might die from it at first, but my brother told me that the only reason he doesn't take a lot of melatonin is because the high sugar content in those strawberry melt-a-ways. It's a natural hormone that my body produces, so it won't hurt me. He didn't know that I had taken a bunch or anything, I just asked how much I could take. He had always said he took more than usual. All I asked how much I could take.

12:51 am

I decide to open my eyes. I had to fight the thin layer of flaky crust (*AppleOfMyEyePie*) that forms from yawning with closed eyes. The doctor said to prevent opening my eyes for as long as I could possibly manage. But honestly, fuck him. He wanted me to have Celiac to support his research on gluten intolerance as a cause for early clinical depression in youth. Too

much bread means not enough serotonin. My daily PB&J is absorbing those hormones. It's ridiculous.

I grab the bottle off my desk and stare at the label in the blazing red of my alarm clock. I am supposed to flip my clock downward too, using it only as an alarm so the light couldn't wake me up. But I tried that and couldn't breathe when I woke up in the middle of the night (?:?? am) and couldn't fall back asleep for hours after thirty (30) minutes. The pill bottle is a dark purple with a crescent moon and clouds on the plastic wrapper. A clear night sky. Whoever designed it wasn't taking enough melatonin. They were busy watching the night sky.

2:33 am

I wake myself up. I hate to do that, but sometimes I have to. There's this feeling when you're *SleepingButNotReallySleeping* and you almost lucid half-dream but all that is happening is your body feels a warped passage of time where minutes are hours and you can't move your body no matter how hard you try and sometimes you can't even make yourself breathe. But when I am finally able to move, I want to forget the dream. It's always the same, so I doubt I ever will. Infinite infernos and locked labyrinths and melting monsters with *onetwo* eyes and *one* mouth and *one* nose. Divine dragons smothering scale-less skins whipping with twitching tails.

2:41 am

I've come to a decision: Life is not for the faint of heart; that is what sleep is for. And if you can't sleep, can't dream, night becomes something else. A place for *TickTockThinkingThoughts* that need to circle around the brain. They need to circle perfectly or they need to do it again. Again. Again. Each time a perfect repetition Or Else. Or Else is the driving force of this type of humanity. The gravity of the depravity that corrupts the brain

beyond recognition. We are controlled by puzzle pieces that float around the body, clicking into the grand image to create a *HappySadConfusedAngry* real person. I'm missing the easiest pieces to place, the corners.

3:58 am

I'm sitting at the left side of my desk in almost total darkness. The only light is the makeup ring light to the right of my face. A fluorescent circle that I know creates a ring around my pupil. I rub my eyes -- another thing I'm not supposed to do. My face is wet. Not the *DripWithoutDrop* of a deep yawn, it's sticky and stings. Out of the corner of my glowing eye, I can see why; I am melting.

Well, not melting like a Wicked Witch, more like a candle that just started to burn. I rub my cheek and the skin pulls away like a peel from a sunburn. It burns. It feels like when I shower in water that's too hot and I come out bright red with minuscule burns that blister and break open to bleed clear blood when I lie on my back. That same pus is what's on my hand. I pull away from the first layer of skin, sucking the deep breath I take before I rip off a band-aid. It slides off with ease. I stare at the translucent pink in my hands; it's the same skin as when I pick my chapped winter lips. I roll it into a ball and drop it into the trash.

I stare at the mirror again, but my face doesn't look any different. My cheeks are still glistening with the thin watery pus-like substance like a film of sweat. This time, I dig my nails and scratch down, forehead to chin on both sides. The dead skin piles underneath my nails as if I am digging in a garden. *DirtyDNADidIt*.

Then, I'm in my bed, curled underneath one of two blankets I haven't kicked off yet. My face still burns. I slowly unravel myself and open my door. The hall light floods my eyes and I

creep blindly into the bathroom. Four long scratch lines run from forehead to chin on both sides of my face.

4:03 am

There's a lot you can know about someone without ever knowing if they've slit their wrists to relieve the hematoma-like pressure *BuildingBuildingBurstingBoiling* blood. You can know their favorite song or their favorite food or what animal they would want to be. But knowing someone is different from knowing about someone.

"I don't know anything about you!" my sister whined last night at the foot of my bed.
"You never tell me anything!"

"What do you want to know? I just need specific questions," I responded without looking up from separating the trail mix sitting on a paper towel on my desk. Five items, each gets its own corner with the M&Ms in the center, lined up by color. I don't have any greens in this package. *RaisinsPeanutsAlmondsCashewsCandy*.

"I can't even do this stupid Buzzfeed quiz about us! What's your favorite color?"

"Depends on what I'm looking at the color for," I replied.

Briana groaned, "It's not that hard of a question! Pink, blue, black, purple, green, or red!?"

"Pink?"

6:02 am

I know the alarm is going to go off in 17 minutes and 38 seconds. *37.36.35.34*. It's not counting, it's from the slight glow of my watch. Alien green slipping out from behind a pillow.

My room has man-made stars on the ceiling. I made the big dipper (7) right above my pillow, scooping my melting nougaty-caramel self right up into the Milky Way sky. I filled the rest (23) of my ceiling with randomly spaced out stars. They only glow right after the lights are turned out. When they have absorbed all the light they possibly could. Then they fade into nothingness, disappearing into the cloudy white chocolate sky painted above my head.

6:30 am

The alarm sounds like a buzzer married a young truck horn but had an affair with an older, more sophisticated alarm clock (George Clooney of clocks) and somehow had impossibly superfunducated a set of twins that are both screaming into a megaphone not even six (6) inch worms cankering into my ear. *SnoozePauseSwitchOff*. I get to lie down and decide. Decide whether I will go back to sleep, which I never do.

But I could. I could just not get up and ruin everyone else's day. Mess up the schedules of everyone in the house. Waste paper and pen ink to write a note. Ring the buzzer to get into the building because the doors are locked so no one with a gun can get in without ringing the buzzer first.

I'm supposed to get up go to the bathroom turn on the left two switches for low light and fan turn on water halfway to warm up while I pee get in for 5 minutes 42 seconds (*5.7minutes342seconds*) turn off water put hair in towel pat down put on lotion let sit put on towel take out hair flush toilet with right toes readjust towel turn on bright light (*NowI'mShiningBright*) brush teeth.

6:58 am

Mom is running a minute late; I've already been sitting at my desk for a few (2) minutes when she knocks two times and asks if she can come in. It's supposed to be a sign of respect for my personal space because even though she's worried about her baby, I still deserve respect. She starts to open the door before I can answer. She smiles, says good morning, and closes the door *AlmostButNotQuiteAllTheWay*.

7:07 am

Mom sighs softly as she walks down the stairs, spotting my scratchy black boots. She doesn't like them. She asks me to move before she notices that I'm already leaning against the right wall, curled over myself as I massage the dog pressed between my legs. She's warm and I can feel her breathing slow. She only just woke up. I try to match my heartbeat to hers, but I can't feel either through my jacket.

"Oh my god, Serena!" Mom shouts from the kitchen. I try to run in the kitchen but my socks slide on the hardwood floor.

But I am wearing shoes when I hit the ground. It doesn't hurt. I don't feel my head bang into the ground, but it must. Mom isn't there anymore. No one is. Everything around me looks like TV static *NotSoftFuzzy*. Like the gray when I stare at the sun with my eyes closed. I try to get up, but nothing is working. My muscles can't *ADPToATP*. I can't even breathe.

It doesn't scare me. I know it should, but I know I just need to wait it out. I can still hear Mom's voice echoing like a bad speaker in the classroom. "Serena! Wake up!"

"I'm trying to," I want to whisper, but my mouth won't work.

7:02 am

I'm wrapped in my only surviving blanket of the night.

“Enough! You need to get up!” Mom groans angrily from the doorway, fumbling with an earring. “I don’t have time for this!”

I jump out of bed disorientated and stumble over the foot wrapped too many times in the blanket. I apologize and tell her I didn’t mean to fall back asleep! I didn’t even know I did it! It was an accident!

I go into the bathroom and turn on the low light and the fan. I undress. Mom opens the bathroom door when she hears the water turn on. She doesn’t knock. “You don’t have time to shower.”

I stare blankly back at her, confusion *KnitPurlKnitting* my brows. “I have to shower, it’s the morning.”

“We don’t have time. *I* don’t have time!”

“But, it’s the morning.”

She sighs and shuts the door. I can’t hear it, but I know she’s mumbling to herself about how she has to switch up her day and how this is very inconvenient for her.

I pee while the water warms up. I get in and shudder as the burning bullets shatter against my back. The water is as hot as it can go, and I can already see my feet turning red.