

The Man Lying In Bed

By Sam Mills

“Wake up silly,” Anna spoke quietly, almost seductively into her husband’s right ear. A smile struck his face, as his eyes remained shut. He could feel her light breath caress his face—his lips. She was the only woman he had ever known who didn’t have bad breath in the morning. She never seemed to believe him though, she would pretend—playfully—to be disgusted by him whenever he said that. She would throw her hand over her mouth—“no!” she would exclaim and throw her head around in the other direction, concealing her beautiful smile, but she could smile with her eyes, and he would always see it.

He opened his eyes and saw, hovering overhead, the most perfect—color changing—eyes. There was a lamp (which she had turned on) sitting on the bedside table to her right, his left. The pupil of her right eye was smaller than the one in her left eye, which was larger in its attempt to catch more light. The light gave her left eye a yellow tint over the already perfect hazel shade that consumed her eyes.

“I think that it’s adorable how you still call me ‘silly,’” he closed his eyes and stretched. When he re-opened his eyes she was even closer to him, their faces almost touching—she was holding her breath. His right hand crept its way into her line of sight, the index finger resting just below his bottom lip, pointing up to where he wanted her lips to be. She shook her head playfully, with a smile. “No?” he asked.

“Mm-mm,” she said, still smiling—keeping her mouth shut. Her eyes shone. He could feel her bare breasts against his bare chest; he had always loved the feeling of flesh on flesh. “You don’t get any kisses today!” she said.

“None?” he certainly did not like this idea. “Not even one?” he asked innocently.

She closed one eye slightly and curled her face up towards it, as though he were asking for too much—but she wished that she could permit him at least one kiss during the course of the day. “When do you want it?”

“How about now?”

“Oh no, I don’t think so.”

“One?”

“Okay,” she leaned in and kissed him on the lips. When their lips met, he felt as though he was released, when they kissed they were the only two people in existence, and they were no longer a part of this world—no longer stuck in this boring reality. This world of monsters dissolved around them and true

beauty was revealed. The walls of perceptive reality would melt through the simple merging of lips.

When the kiss was broken everything fell back into its place, and the world would return to what it truly is. “Come on,” she hit him lightly on the chest, “breakfast is almost ready,” she jumped out of bed, topless with pajamas on, and ran into the kitchen of their apartment. He looked over at the clock; it was nine-thirteen.

He climbed out of bed and went into the bathroom. He walked over to the toilet and took a piss. While he was washing his hands in the sink, he looked up at the mirror. In it, he saw a reflection that was almost impossible for him to recognize, a smiling one. One that was truly happy.

When he entered the kitchen Anna was cooking bacon and eggs—topless, naturally. “So, when did it become customary to cook breakfast nearly nude?” he sat down and admired her from the kitchen table.

“Oh,” she spoke to him without looking at him, “well, I figured that since today is such a special day, I would let you look at my boobs all morning—or what boobs I have,” she spoke elegantly.

“Well, that is mighty nice—and generous of you—I must say, and to think that it isn’t even my birthday,” he came up behind her and put his arms around her waist and kissed at her neck—she pulled away slightly—feeling only the slightest touch from his lips—or was it only his breath that caused such a tingling sensation that she shuddered a little, as though a cold breeze had cut through the room—and cut through her?

She turned around and faced him. “No, it isn’t your birthday. Do you know what day it is?”

He tipped his head back slightly; still able to see her if he looked down, which he did not. “Um, let’s think. Martin Luther King day?” she shook her head, “no? Oh, well then it must be Hitler’s birthday right?” he kind of laughed, she didn’t, “okay, I got it! Today is your birthday!” he backed out of her arms and started to sing, “happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday-don’t worry I know that today is our anniversary, happy anniversary I love you—dear A-nna, happy birthday to you!” she clapped her hands and he bowed.

“I love you too,” she smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him. “You hungry?”

“Yes, I am very hungry actually,” he replied.

“Well, good, because I made a really big breakfast, and I figured that we could maybe give the leftovers to that nice old homeless man outside,” she turned back around and started to put the rest of the bacon and eggs onto a large serving platter that was already piled high with bacon, eggs, and toast, all of the breakfast essentials, and nothing more.

She placed it on the already set kitchen table, where her husband had just barely been seated. They

both sat down across from each other and then stared at one another. They didn't so much stare, as they glared. He started to see it in her eyes, and then her lips started to break. She tried to stop herself and her lips contorted into many different positions before finally giving in and forming a perfect smile. Then they both started laughing and she reached forward and started to put her food onto her plate. When she was done getting her food, he piled his plate up while she waited. Then they both began to eat.

When they were finished eating the man threw his napkin down on his plate and said, "why don't you go and get dressed, I'll do the dishes," he stood up and carried his dishes over to the sink.

"Actually, I was thinking that we could have sex, and then just leave the dishes for tomorrow." The man washing the dishes turned around and faced Anna, his arms crossed. "What do you think of that?"

"Well," he began, "I think that is the greatest idea that I have ever heard," and they both quickly ran to the bedroom.

He thought about that, as he lay in bed, alone for the first night in ten years. He had all of the curtains drawn, blocking all of the lights from the busy city outside. He hugged his pillow, and he cried into it. He could hardly even move, let alone want to, from his bed.

The phone rang; there was one sitting on the table next to the bed. It was an old rotisserie phone with a very loud ring. Anna had bought it at an old antiques store for thirty dollars because it was "cute." It rang four times before the person on the other end finally gave up. He really wasn't in the mood to speak to anyone. He rolled onto his back and stared up at the ceiling, it was white. Anna had always wanted to paint the ceiling of their apartment, but they had never actually gotten around to it. He reached over to his right and retrieved the pack of cigarettes from the table, the one with the phone on it. He opened the pack and took out a cigarette; he let it hang limply from his lips as he reached into the pack and took out his lighter, which Anna had bought for him. He lit the cigarette and exhaled smoke. He stared at the flame as it danced with his breath, moving, twisting—conforming to its changing environment. It pushed the darkness away, but only for an instant—he let go.

His stomach growled and he could feel hunger start in on him. He tried to move from his bed, but when he tried to sit up, he only fell back down again. He sat up, however, with his back against the wall. He preferred to smoke his cigarettes in a somewhat upright position.

He stared at the black curtains—covering the sole window in the bedroom, which was located on the wall opposite the foot of the bed. Their bed was a large futon, which they laid out flat. The curtains used to be white, Anna's decision. She said that white curtains made the sun seem even brighter when they were

closed, and she hated to look out the window at the city below. He had changed them to black so that the sun wouldn't be able to shine in on him, he didn't want to see.

He took another drag of his cigarette and exhaled the smoke in a series of smoke rings, he hadn't known how to do them well for very long, and he liked to blow them whenever he had the chance to. He watched them as they rose higher into the distilled air, and he watched as they slowly broke apart. "I can't stop thinking about you," he said aloud, to a face that wasn't there, to ears that would not hear his words, to lips from which no reply would come.

Night had arrived, with its legion of stars. Tears ran constantly from his eyes, and they made his pillow wet. He had filled his solitude with the sorrow that he felt from the loss of his beautiful Anna. It was raining outside and he could hear the wind beating at his window, trying to get in at him.

He closed his eyes and he could feel her, not physically, but he could feel her. He opened his eyes and looked around; she wasn't there. Of course, she wasn't there. He looked at the clock and saw that it was ten-thirty. He closed his eyes again. It was almost pointless for him to close his eyes for he knew that sleep would never come. Then he heard a faint whisper. The wind, he thought to himself, it is nothing but the wind. Then he heard three words, which echoed in his mind a million times—"wake up silly," and then it was carried away.

He opened his eyes quickly, but didn't have the energy to look around for the source, no matter how badly he wanted to. Then she appeared there in front of him—a ghostly white figure—Anna. She stood there for a little while and stared at him, not moving. He propped himself up on his right shoulder and looked back in wonderment. He couldn't believe his eyes—which were shedding more tears of happiness than they had ever shed for sorrow. She was wearing what she had on when she was found. He didn't dare breathe, for he feared that his breath might whisk her away, he feared that she was just an illusion—a trick of the mind. That was until she moved. Oh, she moves! She climbed into bed to lay next to him, her back facing him in the spoon position. He lowered his body down to the soft cushion of the bed. He imagined how—if she were alive—she would be able to feel his breath on the back of her neck—and that it would make the hair on her arms stand on end. He thought about how—if she were alive—she would be able to feel his lips as they kissed her neck, tracing a path to her ear, and how she'd be able to hear his heavy breathing—how she would roll over afterwards and kiss him, hard, on the lips, her hands pulling his face as close as possible.

He watched as her transparent hand reached around behind her body. Its fingers grabbed at his left hand—he held it in his own. She carried his hand to a familiar place—her breasts—as she held it firmly in

hers. His arm was around her now—and he couldn't bring himself to speak. He thought hard—what should I say?—but he couldn't think of anything to say to the ghostly apparition, which had so suddenly appeared.

“Anna?” he asked, quietly—nervously. His voice faltered, it wavered with his emotions. He was crying, and it was hard to stop—he really couldn't get himself to—he hadn't stopped crying since she was murdered—or presumed murdered. “I missed you—I mean—I miss you. Why did you have to leave me all alone?” tears continued to fall.

He waited then, silently, for a reply, but there was none. “Anna,” he pleaded, “please just speak to me. Even one word would make me happy,” and he waited. There was nothing, she just lay beside him, holding his hand tight against her breast. There was no warmth from her body though, it was cold now, and it wasn't really a body.

“You looked lonely,” she finally spoke. He gasped loudly; his eyes sparkled even more vibrantly because of the tears that dwelled inside of them. He closed his eyes and buried his face into the back of her neck, pulling her as close to him as she could possibly be. He wanted her to be one with him, he always had. He felt like they just weren't close enough, he wished that they could become one person—one single entity. He loved her so much.

“Is that why you came here?” he asked.

“Yes, I came so that you wouldn't have to be alone at night,” the ghostly apparition spoke, “and I will visit you every night until you die—until you join me.”

“Anna,” he pleaded, “why did you do it? Why did you leave me so alone?” for a long while after that, no one spoke. Almost an hour passed before Ann spoke to him.

“I just couldn't take living anymore,” she spoke simply, quietly. The man lying next to her tried to conceal his sorrow—to stop his tears, but he couldn't.

“Wasn't I enough to keep you happy?”

“Oh, babe, you were what kept me alive all those years. If it wasn't for you I never would have been able to last as long as I did. You brought happiness into my life—and I truly was happy—I really was, but it was just too much to take. I wouldn't want you to suffer as much I did,” he became furious.

“I am suffering as much as you. Can't you see? I'm dying without you,” he held her hand a little tighter. That was the first time that he felt it—her warmth—the warmth of her soul radiating off of her. “You're warm,” he gasped. He tried to hold her closer, to become one with her, like he'd always wanted to. But, he couldn't. She was even further away now than she had ever been. He could hardly feel her as he held her in his arms; she was so far away from him.

“Do you ever feel like you just can’t get close enough?” Anna asked him while lying together.

“What?”

“Like, I just don’t feel like I’m close enough to you. I really just want to be closer to you.”

“Sweetie, you’re practically on top of me,” he said. He wasn’t wrong either. He was lying on his back, staring up at the stars, and she was to his left with her left arm across his chest, and her left leg crossing over both of his, touching this right foot—it was warm. Her face was buried into his chest.

“I know, but I just feel like I need to be closer to you,” her words were slightly mumbled because of her face being in his chest.

“Well, this is as close as you’re gonna get,” he said.

“I know!” she hit him lightly on the chest with her left hand, “and that’s what makes me so sad!”

There was a long silence after that. It wasn’t complete silence, there were peepers in the distance. “You know,” he finally said, “there are many articles of clothing between us, if we took them all off—then we’d be a lot closer to each other,” he never looked down at her while saying this.

“You’re a jerk,” she hid her face further into his chest, deeper, closer to his beating heart. She pulled at his ribs a little harder, and shifted her leg so that it was closer to the right side of him. He could feel her body, every single part of it, as it pressed against his.

“I know, I’m sorry.”

She looked up at him now; he could feel her eyes on him. “I’m gonna keep you for a little while longer,” and she put her head back down, “okay?”

“You can keep me as long you want,” was his reply, which was followed by a kiss. When the kiss broke he looked back up at the sky, at the stars, which surrounded this world—enclosed it. He watched as one of them flew across the sky, and for one instant he saw beauty in its truest form. He watched as it faded away, and even the traces that it left slowly disappeared from sight and from memory. “Isn’t it funny how things fade away?”

“Hmm?” she was too tired to form an actual reply.

“I mean—don’t you think it’s crazy how things just fade?”

“What do you mean?” there was no emotion in her voice.

“Well, unless you did something really spectacular, no one even remembers your name.”

“That’s not true, what about all of the people who know you and love you?”

“Well, I mean, after they all die your name is just something that someone heard once, but it doesn’t really mean anything to them. I mean, after a while there is nobody alive anymore who knew you. And

with their dying, you become nothing but a black space—an emptiness.”

“Did you just see a falling star?”

“Yeah,” he laughed.

“You think too much.”

“Yeah, maybe I do,” and he closed his eyes. When he opened his eyes again, she was staring directly into them. He saw then, what true beauty is, and what the stars were meant to be. “I bet the stars envy you.”

“Why would the stars envy me?” she asked, except it wasn’t really posed as a question.

“Because they wish that they could shine as bright and beautiful as your eyes,” there was a long silence after this as they stared at each other.

She moved her head down and stopped looking at him, “you’re such a liar,” and she stood up.

He propped himself up on his elbows and watched her as she walked through the field. The other end was far away, and one could easily see the moon as it lingered above the silhouettes of the mountains, and hear the river flowing on its way to the sea. The peepers had gone mad hours ago, and they hadn’t stopped their peaceful tune, serenading the night with their song.

“When will you finally realize how beautiful you really are?” he called after her. She didn’t turn around, or even stop walking towards the taller grass in the distance, towards the end of the field, where both darkness and beauty dwelled.

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