

Out of the Corner

The cricket in the corner bent and warbled. My cheek was pressed to the floor, the wood heating my skin.

I had forgotten my legs, my back, my neck. The vibration was concentrated in my head, a bulbous knot holding me to the ground. I felt a train coming and the railroad silver was trussed up and the marbles on my dresser fluttered and rolled behind the blinking blue doll and –

I shook my head, stuffing stale crackers in my mouth. I looked over at the essay assignment and the big empty space beneath. On my desk, my alarm clock wavered and pulsated. 2:32 A.M. The red glints curled and were teeth, clicking and hissing.

My mind was blocked and I felt heavy. I scratched my face. It was hot. Three minutes swarmed past. I reread the obscure assignment – two days left – and grabbed the pillow for a guttural scream. I licked my lips. No more salt.

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I turned on the radio... 90.9 FM. Calming. But this time was different. I increased the volume and from the speakers vibrated a melody -- unflinchingly atonal. It was ugly... a great boar was trapped inside the room, smashing wood instruments, bending steel, bucking up the stairs.

I listened to it, letting the music crash through my ears, filling my brain. I felt aware of my breath, my quivering nerves, my individual cells. My sight. I could see the light gleaming through the lamp shade, the unreachable cobweb blowing from within the vent. The paint streaks on the wall, dribbling to the floor. I could feel my eyes; they were moist and bold and their ideas bore into my mind. I found I did not care about danger; I did not want to hide. I turned up the volume to the highest it would go. I wanted to snatch the music, trap it inside my hand and hear it scuttle and trill with sweat.

The chords escalated in their cadenza and pierced the air. My fingers twitched. I bit my tongue hard. The door downstairs unlocked and swung open, banging into the wall, but this sound – unapologetic creation – made me embrace my nerves. It urged me to hunger for the tangible and intangible... to live feelingly.

I heard footsteps on the stairs. I did not open the door right away. I wanted to sit a while longer, running through my fingers the anxiety, panic, wonder – brilliance – of the piece. I was slowly turning sideways with ideas, words and moments for my essay. The night had dazzled. The sky tore apart, soaked in an excited blue.

Brightness can be found anywhere – especially in stressed moments, when we are driest and things are dim. Sitting in my room, boiling in music, I found that creativity changes the world by redirecting fear and thrusting us into raw life.