

I woke up one morning and something was different. When I moved my legs to sit up from my bed, something stood out in my mind. It was confusing but I could tell where my bed ended before my legs found the ground. I was puzzled but didn't think much of it. It wasn't just the bed but other things in my room, such as the closet or my desk. My mind could see it before my hands felt it and that sensation was oddly satisfying.

I went into the kitchen to grab my breakfast and I could hear my roommate was already up, her shower running. "Hey Emelie," I shouted, as I walked to the refrigerator. I opened the door and that's when it hit me. I could see.

I could do what was unheard of nowadays. It's considered a crime to have sight. The Atolian government banned it decades ago because of the rise of prejudice based on the appearances of others. Racism was running rampant so they prohibited sight. Society now functioned better since the ability to see was bred out of the human genome. But why was I able to see?

I knew that I could see because Emelie liked to put things in the wrong places just to screw with me. She would move things around the cabinets, the family room, even in the bathrooms just to make me confused about where they were. Today, I could see which box had my cereal in it. It was a bit taller than the other boxes, making it easier for me to tell which one it was. I pulled it out and shut the cabinet doors.

I put the box on the table and went to get a bowl and some almond milk. I realized that I should be more careful with my newfound sight. While I'd love to wipe the nonchalant smirk off Emelie's face (which I could now see forming on her face), I couldn't had her knowing that I could see. She'd turn me in to the police without hesitation. Why wouldn't she? Heck, I should be turning myself in. Seeing is the ultimate crime.

But for now, I had to act natural. I forced myself to feel through the dish rack until I found a bowl and I did the same for the silverware. But when I opened the refrigerator, I was momentarily blinded. This was my first experience with light.

“Everything alright?” she asked me curiously, now done with her shower.

“Yeah, I’m good. Just... kinda light-headed. Maybe I’ll go lie down later,” I told her, trying to sound as normal as possible.

In all honesty, I’d forgotten one of the main features of our refrigerator. Emelie didn’t like the amount of textures that companies started putting on our objects to compensate for the lack of sight. When possible, she bought antique products so our refrigerator came with a light. Without vision, light bulbs weren’t needed and the bright flash had shocked me.

I squinted away from the light inside of the refrigerator and while turning my head, I could see what Emelie looked like. She was surprisingly beautiful, much fairer than her voice ever gave her credit for. Her hair was long, cut in layers. It was an unidentifiable color, which I later learned was strawberry blonde. Her eyes were a dazzling emerald color, her face was tan in comparison to her light hair. Her body wasn’t too thin and the way she leaned against the table made her curves stand out.

“Did you find the milk yet? You’re letting the...” Both of us were stunned. While talking, she looked up at me. Why? She didn’t need to, she was blind. The moment our eyes met, I could tell something was wrong. Her eyes mirrored her stunned expression. She could tell I was looking at her just as much as I knew she was looking at me.

At that moment, we realized we were in a sightless world together. I didn’t need to fear anymore, I had somebody with me.

“I’d call in sick today and maybe tomorrow.” She said this uneasily, as if someone would find out about my new talent.

I gave her a confused look. “Why? I can’t just hide because....of this sight thing. Won’t that be suspicious? You go out and nobody notices, they’re all blind.”

She shook her head, obviously knowing something I didn’t. How long had she had vision anyway? “You won’t be able to be outside for a couple of days, minimum.” She motioned to the refrigerator, “If that’s bright enough to stun you, I bet you won’t last 5 minutes outside without someone knowing about your vision. You’ve never had experience with the sun.”

Bright? Is that what the striking sensation was called? How could it be worse outside? She got up and closed the refrigerator. "We'll go out tonight to the yard. Hopefully the sky is clear. Then you'll understand the beauty of seeing." She walked into her bedroom and called for me to follow her. She closed the door and just like that, I lost the ability to see. Not even the blurry shapes of her furniture were visible.

"What's wrong? I can't see anymore. Was getting my vision back temporary?" I sounded like a child without her doll but I found myself getting attached to my new sense. It just felt right and it pained me to have it taken away so suddenly.

"Relax, it's just because I closed the lights. Your eyes like light and without it you can't see anything. Anytime you go into a building, you'll be just like everyone else for a few minutes. It'll make it easier to blend in." She paused for a moment and sighed, as if my sight was a burden to her. "Now, I need you to leave for a minute. I'm going to call in sick for you." She picked up the phone and went through the extensive process of calling someone.

I thought about work. Would I still be able to work there? I sorted audio files in the main government office. I listened to the content and decided if it should be released to the public. I had rules and I stuck to them, I always had. The rules were simple - making sure the language didn't refer to nonsensical things and didn't make the listener feel isolated. Colors were forbidden in the records because our brains were unable to process what they were. We had a list of them in Braille but sometimes, even we weren't able to process them right. For example, chestnut was a problematic term. People didn't know if it was referring to a hair color or a food item. Confusion was discouraged in our society.

Emelie ended the call and called me back into the room. She motioned me over and went to her desk. Kneeling down, she pulled the bottom drawer out. The noise of the drawer sliding out was a familiar one and now I knew the cause. She removed a piece of wood and took something out. "It's a false bottom. I'll make one for you later. I couldn't risk them being discovered by anyone."

She pulled out a long tube with a button on the side and a thin piece of something smooth on the top. She handed me the tube but kept the other object. I noticed she was holding it oddly between her fingers.

I examined the tube and before she could stop me, I pressed the button. I was holding it to my face and suddenly, there was a burst of this brightness. I dropped the tube and muttered some profanities, my eyes watering from the pain.

Emelie chuckled. "You'll get used to that feeling soon enough. I knew I'd had to, especially with the sun's light" Now that I thought about it, I'd heard that word in some of the banned recordings. I felt conflicted about my ability to see and the banned recordings but kept my confusion to myself.

I left the tube on the ground and directed my attention to the second object. Now that it was brighter, I could see that the edges looked a bit sharp, like small knives. As I looked at it, it confused me. Before it looked like it was just a smudge of dark. Now I saw a face, different than Emelie's. It had eyes that resembled the brightness and hair that was contrasting the eyes in a severe fashion. The hair had a texture that my fingers seemed to know. The jawline was round, the cheeks full and rosy.

"Emelie, what is that? Why am I seeing a face? Is this what they call a painting?"

She smiled before replying, "Alexandra, that's your face. This is what we call a reflection."
