

I've forgotten what it is like to love someone. I have forgotten what colors are, what my parents look like, what I look like. I can't remember the taste of my favorite food, or even my least favorite food. I don't know where I am or what I am doing. I am trapped inside of my own head. I am trapped in this body that has imprinted itself on a bed of a hospital room in a town I can't recall. I've just woken up, yet I am not awake. My eyes won't open, but I can hear. They talk about me like I don't exist. They talk about me in the third person but I am right beside them. I think they are doctors, nurses, maybe my parents, family, friends. I wish I could remember my age, where I live, my job. I've woken up in a place I know nothing of. I've forgotten everything about myself. I've forgotten everything about everyone I've ever known and everything I've ever done. I wish somebody would explain it all to me, but I can't move, I can't speak. The only thing that I can remember is the name, Ben.

It has been a day now- at least that's what I think. I have trouble with time because I can't see my watch. Ha, am I even wearing a watch, more over, do I even own one? I am listening to the people that walk through here. I want to learn about what has happened to me. I've learned very little; my name is Lindsey and I'm in my twenties. I have been in an accident, although I don't know the details. I have a very severe head injury and I've been in this bed for about a month now. That is a very strange thing to have to fathom; I have not moved in a month. Even worse, I have forgotten everything I've ever known, and I've been sitting in silence streaming with a lack of memory for a month. Regardless, I have met someone new. His name is Jason. I know he is around my age and that he is very upset by the fact that I am not responsive. Sometimes I forget that the only person that can hear my thoughts is myself. We were 'talking' today, Jason and I, and he couldn't help but get emotional. I could sense it in the way he spoke to me,

"Lindsey, please! You have to wake up for me. Please, at least move a finger, can you move a finger for me?"

"No Jason, I cannot move my finger. I cannot do anything actually, if you haven't noticed. I'd like to be able to jump out of this bed and dance around the room but I can't! So please stop asking me to do things that I cannot." Nevertheless, he can't hear me, which I presume is for the better since I'm getting so anxious for someone to be able to hear me that I sound a bit sarcastic. I don't know this man, though. Jason is a stranger to me. I can tell he knows me, but I'd like to know how he does and how much he is willing to share about my life. I'm

getting tired now, I know, how does someone who is constantly closing their eyes tired? Well it is exhausting listening to all of the noises around me. I feel all of the energy I have continue to drain as I set my mind to focus on whom Ben is.

I've been woken up by the sound of a frantic woman's voice, my mother. I can tell it is her because she is clearly screaming about her being my mother, and her sarcasm is not very well concealed. She has found it appropriate to be screaming at this time for a reason I have slept too long to know of.

"I can see that she is not awake, doctor! Thank you for your extremely intelligent observation! Those extra hundred years of school you had to go through have really helped you to make the observation that my daughter is not waking up!"

"My goodness mother, you need to calm down! I am doing the best I can, and I'm sure the doctor is, too!" I know she can't hear me, but I cross my fingers- ha, like I can- that she will calm down as the doctor explains how they are pursuing my situation the best, most effective way that they can conjure up. I can hear my father trying to calm my mother, reminding her that this is the best hospital in Massachusetts- ding, ding, ding, another clue! However, I still can't remember what either of them looked like.

Jason is back this afternoon. He keeps on talking about a house I should be at and two dogs that miss me. Apparently their names are Milo and Otis. They are pretty cute names, probably because I picked them out. I don't know what kind of dogs they are, though. I don't even remember any type of dog that exists. Jason is talking about how much he loves me. He continues to say that he misses me and wishes I'd come home- me too, Jason, me too. I feel guilty that this man is so unconditionally in love with me, and I can't find any feelings inside of me that make me love him or miss him back. I keep thinking about Ben and how I wish I knew where he was and why he isn't here, sitting bedside, as my body lies motionless as hours pass.

I am in love with Ben. I can feel it in my heart. Why is it that he is the only person, only thing at all actually, that I can remember? Why do I know exactly what he looks like when I can't picture anything or anybody else's image? He is the only thing that I can picture against the black canvas also I call my eyelids. I am entranced by the memory of his crystal blue eyes and the way his natural brunette hair sweeps across his head in subtle waves. He gels it up as it hits his forehead, it makes him look older, at least that's what I remember telling him. He has a beautiful smile, his teeth perfectly straight without the help of any braces. His jaw line is

flawless, perfectly chiseled. He has the physique of an athlete, the strength of a super hero. I remember him picking me up and tossing me in the air. He thought he was being funny at the time, I thought he was funny all of the time. He made me laugh so easily that I couldn't help but fall in love with him everyday. I remember so much more about Ben, but it makes me sad to think about him too much. All I know is that there is another man here that loves me, and that Ben hasn't shown up since I've been in this hospital.

The doctors say I was in a car accident. They won't give details, though. I am unsure if I was the only person in the car, or if others were too. I might have been driving. I may or may not have been wearing a seat belt. I really hope that I wasn't texting, or drinking, or anything utterly insane like that. I just wish someone would explain everything to me. I wish I could talk to people again.

"Ben." I've finally broken through this invisible wall keeping me from connecting to the outside world. I said his name and they heard me. It is chaotic here. They've called my parents, Jason, the doctors. I don't know why it was his name that was finally released from my mouth, but I do know that there is a reason that he is the only person that I remember from before the accident. I know there is a reason that his name is the only word to escape from my mouth in the past month and a half. The nurses are frantically checking my vital signs. Everything is normal, heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, all perfect. I am listening to the nurses explain to my father what has happened. My mother is screaming again, and if I had any sense of sight or feeling, I would know that she is about five inches from my head, eager for another sign of response from her comatose daughter. My father says to her,

"Anna, dear, please stop screaming. The nurse says that the only word she said was "Ben". Do you know who Ben is? Why would she have said that name?" I am anticipating my mother's response. She knows a lot about me and would be the first to remember anyone name Ben. I am sure if I could feel anything my hands would become sweaty and my heart would beat faster. Is she thinking about it? Why isn't she answering?

"I don't know anyone named Ben. At least, I don't think I do. Ben and Lindsey? Maybe she worked with him? The name is starting to sound more familiar, but I can't put a face with the name Ben." And just like that, I sense a deep sadness overcome everyone in the room. My mother is silently blaming herself for not remembering exactly who this person is. She is deep in

thought, because the one thing her daughter has said in months is practically a mystery to her. The one thing that could help her daughter is almost impossible to obtain.

Jason doesn't know anybody named Ben. They had asked him as soon as he got to the hospital later that day. He has been sitting with me for a while now. He is silent, though. I can tell he is hurting the most of everyone who has come to visit. He wants me to respond to all of his simple requests, but I can't. I'd like to. I'd like to become alive again for him, for my parents. I'd like to learn the story of why I'm here and who Jason is, who Ben is. Jason loves me, I can tell. It is hard to feel the same way -in love, I mean- with someone I know nothing about. Guilt is beginning to spread through my body and I am eager to have him leave my side. I want to love him back, but I can't because I am focused on Ben. Why do I love Ben so much more, when I hardly remember who he is? He hasn't spent days beside me, he hasn't cried over my never changing state. I let myself fall into a deep sleep, to escape the reality of the hospital room for a while.

I am in a building that seems to be a school. Lockers line the hallways and the lights are dim. A bell rings and I head towards the drinking fountain. I don't get any water; I just stand there and gaze down the hallway at the waves of students exiting their classes. I hear nothing that I can understand, it is all murmurs and mumbling. A boy walks up, and I know immediately who it is. I can tell by the blue of his eyes, and the ease of his smile. We've met here before; it's our spot. He looks like he is 16 or 17 at this point. I can't see myself, but I would guess I'm about the same age as him. He grabs my hand and starts to pull me down the hallway, parting the crowd so I don't have to. I recognize no one else but him. We reach a door, but I feel myself resisting going through it. I have to be somewhere else. I let go of his hand and he doesn't turn back. I'm not bothered, I've already seen his face, felt his hand embrace mine. I wish he would turn towards me, one last time at least. I'd like to see the only face I can remember. He's gone through the door, and others file in beside me. I let myself stand in angst, hoping he will appear again. The pressure of the other students becomes too heavy, so I let myself fall back into reality. This time, however, when I wake from my slumber, I open my eyes.

I am alone in the room when I first wake up. I look around and recognize nothing. The windows are drawn so I can't see outside. Is it summer, winter? Is it night? I am looking around for some way to contact somebody. I notice a larger red button sitting beside my bed. I reach

over to press it, hoping a nurse will hear. I am looking right at it now, but my arm is not moving out of place. I'm paralyzed. I want to scream but I can't do that either. I can only move my eyes.

I sit in the bed for another twenty minutes. It is 7:48 now, shouldn't someone come check on me? I guess since nothing interesting has happened to me in a month or two, nobody needs to be here twenty-four seven. I hope I don't fall back into a coma before someone finds me. I wish I could warn them, though. I would have to assume it would be pretty strange, and even horrifying, walking into a room of a girl who had been in a coma for so long only to find her wide-eyed. Would it be worse to close my eyes until I could sense someone in the room, then open them? As I am contemplating my plan of attack, I hear a pulsing scream- a great sign that my ears are still working! It is my mother, of course. I don't remember her having short red hair. I don't remember her having such a pointed nose and piercing green eyes. She has freckles, too. I think to myself about how much memory I've lost. I can't even recognize my own mother. However, it is clear that she recognizes me. Her scream changes from horror- I knew someone would be scared- to joy. She rushes over to my bed, sets her coffee down hard on the table, which makes it spill everywhere, and hugs me. I can't hug her back so I just lay there, obviously. Her smile fades a bit when she realizes I am not hugging her back, and that I haven't said a word to her. She knows I am not fully myself again, but that doesn't keep her from asking me a bunch of questions and screaming for the nurses.

I have a blank stare on my face. It is weird to be able to see everything but remember nothing. My eyes are filled with desperation. I've overcome such a hard obstacle, yet I feel no sense of improvement. I sit in silence even though I'm in a room filled with noise. Never have I wanted to be by myself more in this past month than I've been 'awake'. The room is filled now, with men and women of all different shapes and sizes. I carefully analyze the way they move and work and speak. I want to be like them, alive I mean. I don't believe in calling myself alive when I really haven't been able to live since the accident. I'm tired now. I want to fall into a different world, even if it means scaring everyone caring for me. I can hear them questioning the closing of my eyelids. They wonder if I will open them again. They try and make me keep them open, but I'm already tired of the reality I'm living. I've fallen into a dream, now. Or is it a memory?

"Lindsey!" I've opened my eyes to a world of bright colors and a familiar face. He is standing across from me, and I see he is holding my hand. I have no sensation of feeling here, but I am standing with him, so I know this isn't real. It's getting dark and I am getting cold. He

hasn't said anything else to me, so I absorb his look, his physique. I make note of his crystal blue eyes that look at me with a trace of admiration. I've never felt so respected and cherished since I can remember. His smile is masked by a smirk, the one he uses when he is being funny, and knows I will laugh. He steps beside me and we start to walk along the beach, or a city street, or a meadow. It really doesn't matter; I'm focused on him and all of the secrets we hold, and all of the memories we share. Is it crazy to be in love with someone in a dream? Is he a dream? We've stopped now. A car has appeared and he motions for me to get in. As I am sitting down, I notice what I am wearing. They are clothes I have never seen before. Suddenly, I see red spots growing along my shirt. It's some type of liquid. I reach up to touch my head. I'm feeling dizzy. I bring my hand down. It is covered in this red liquid, too. He leans over and whispers,

"It's from the accident, Lindsey." And then he is gone.

I wake up back in the hospital room. Oh joy! At least my eyes are open again, that will make everyone happy. A few minutes later a nurse comes in. She calls for a doctor. The two sit down and explain to me a method of communication. Thank God! It involves blinking to spell out words as the alphabet is slowly listed. It's a slow process but it is a chance to find out the answers to all of the questions I've been forming in my head.

After an hour I've learned the following; I've been in the hospital for almost 2 months now. I am 28 and I am engaged to the man named Jason. I was admitted after being in a car accident on my way to work one Thursday morning. Another car had merged onto the expressway going way too fast and he merged way too far. I was struck on the back passenger side. My car twisted perpendicular to the lane of traffic and I rolled 6 times before coming to a stop. My car landed upside down, which means I was, too. When the EMTs arrived I was non responsive and my pulse was slowing. I had been alone in the car. They told me I am lucky, and that I would have died if I hadn't been wearing my seatbelt. They told me it was a miracle I had survived. It is weird to be labeled a miracle.

I ask about Jason. They tell me he is on his way over as we speak (as they speak. Nice try Doc, I still can't talk). Once he gets here, I ask if we can be alone. Jason already knows the blinking system, so the doctor and nurse quickly file out of the room. Jason takes my hands in his. He brings one hand to my face and swipes his thumb under my eye. I must be crying. I still can't look at him without feeling bad, no guilty, about everything I've put him through these past two months. This is the first chance I've gotten to meet him. He has beautiful green eyes and

blonde hair. It is easy to fall in love with the way he looks. His perfectly pointed nose, and the way he hold so much care in his eyes that it spills over into tiny tears that slowly stream down over his accentuated cheek bones. I wonder if he models, he should if he doesn't. I ask him a plethora of questions, giving him no time to answer in between each one. They are simple questions, how we know each other, how long we've been together. He is in the middle of describing a trip we took to Europe together when I glance over to the door. It's ajar. A head is sticking out from behind it. The face is so easily recognizable at this point that I am sure I'd gasp if I could control my mouth. Jason turns to follow my gaze. He has a look of confusion on his face, one that questions why this man is in my hospital room. When he glances back at me he is suddenly aware of whom this other man is. The eager that fills my eyes is unmistakable. He invites the man to come in. Jason knows to leave at this point. He kisses my forehead and walks out of the room as Ben takes a seat on the end of my bed. I am in utter disbelief that this is happening.

After four hours, Ben has explained so much to me. My mother had an epiphany when she had left the hospital after I had said Ben's name. She immediately called him and flew him out to see me. He lives in Michigan now. Ben and I dated back in high school for 4 years. We were the best of friends and we were inseparable. We were each other's other half. We went to each other for secrets, advice, gossip, and sympathy. We supported and criticized, we laughed and yelled, and we danced. We created adventures and pursued silly ideas. We fought over foolish things, and loved genuinely. There wasn't a girl in the world that I believed was luckier than me. Ben explained that when we were going to college we had decided to go separate ways. We didn't want to hold each other back from choosing the college we had felt that we belonged at, rather than following each other to college. After the first year, we became father apart. I was home in Massachusetts and he was over at Michigan. We each had met other people and it was just a matter of time before we lost connection. We had stayed in touch, though. We would send each other amusing links, and text each other on birthdays. However, I had Jason after our junior year. I lost sight of how much I had valued my friendship with Ben. How much I still value it.

As I lay here in this hospital bed I can't help but imagine a world where I stayed with Ben. Is it fair to see this accident as an opportunity to go back to him? A twisting thought, I know, but it is a miracle I am even alive. It is a miracle that after rolling over 6 times on the expressway has brought me back to the best friend that I have ever known. It is a miracle that my

eyes can open to take in the beauty that radiates off of him. It's a miracle I can hear the sound of his deep, soothing voice.

It is hard to be in a position of loving someone you want to love versus loving someone you're supposed to love. It isn't fair to Jason to let all we've had crumble, but it isn't fair to me to force myself to love someone that I know nothing about. So I sit here, deep in my thoughts, as Ben goes to find Jason. I remember how to love, again. It is not the way that I had expected, but it is love, and I am feeling it. I can't say where I will be in a year from now. I can't say if the two men that are walking through the door at this moment will be with me for the rest of my life. I can promise I will rely on both to help me become stronger physically, and help me to remember my past. I can't say if one will end up walking out of my life at some point. I love the fact that I am alive, that I have a chance to love again.