

A Light Switch
By Lexi Crouse

I had decided to sleep on my stomach because I wanted to dream, and I tend to dream better while laying on my abdomen with my face buried in the pillow so there is little space to breathe. It was not a comfortable position, yet for some reason, on a typical evening in June, I thought this was a good idea. I let my mind race, and then I melted away. My reality shifted, and I found myself in another simulation where my perception continues to be entirely distorted. The lens I have to view the world, or a world as defined by my brain, is my brain which continues to prove unreliable. Yet, while the mind seems to consistently fail, it introduces strange futures through the tricks it plays on me. I now wonder what I am and how many lives run through me, forgotten by the flip of a switch.

I stood with my mother in a small and oddly dark corridor: an entryway to a school. We stood between the two sets of glass doors: the ones that lead outside and the ones that would actually allow you to go in the school. "Don't ever be unprepared," I kept muttering, not knowing why I was saying such a thing, and then she came.

A witchy woman of short stature, wearing all black, had a rifle held against my mother's back. We did not know how she entered the space. Neither of us ever saw her walk in. She just appeared. My mom begged for my life to be spared, not hers, and the woman walked away from her, no longer threatening her with the weapon and planted in front of me, cackling. Warning sirens blared in the school, shouting, "code red". The robotic speakers persisted as did the witchy woman. My mother screamed and a powerful harpoon stuck me through my chest. I felt a brief pain, like a hornet sting, and collapsed to the floor, my eyes shutting as the witchy woman disappeared from the corridor, pulling a black cape over her face. My mom stood horrified, unable to move.

As soon as I shut my eyes, they were open again. It is challenging to explain, but there was no time lapse. Except, now, I wasn't on the floor. I was on a yellow medical table. A woman, I think (it was hard to make out the face) had a short blond bob, and a business attitude which did not match her appearance. She looked like Edna Mode from the *Incredibles*. She then said after briefly observing my face, "Well, that's 39,931 for you," as she typed into a very large computer on the stand next to me. I could only see her and the items on the table. My other senses were gone, putting me in a peculiar state of peace.

"Where am I?" I said groggily as though I had just awoken from death.

She replied, "Where you always wanted to go."

I was like, "... heaven?"

"You bet," she said.

"And what about that number?" I persisted.

"Oh, I see. You are the kind that does not remember at all, good, good. That is how many lives run through you."

"You mean to tell me I have had that many lives?" I was perplexed.

She said, "Yes, exactly," and added, "but don't think you get to stay here. We are sending you back."

"Back? Back where?"

"TO EARTH, YOU IDIOT," she replied, joking with her serious tone.

She was very haste and brief, not providing much explanation to anything she did. Her voice was commanding but she seemed still and solemn as her hands operated the device. The rest of the realm was a vacuous space, like some sort of alien prison. She placed her hand on my head and flipped a switch, a really big light switch it appeared. She closed her eyelids, moved her lips, and then opened her eyes so wide that her pupils seemed to jolt out of her. But, even as her expression concerned me, stillness of peace in this new world, an afterlife, still was bound in me before I was shot back into a new life in the same body as her small hand leaned into the enormous light switch. A flash of blinding light emerged and disappeared without time lapse.

I was expecting to be a different person in a different place as I was consciously aware of what occurred unlike previously, and I found myself at the grocery store with my mom. We were standing with the broccoli and cauliflower in the produce section. It wasn't that we wanted to buy vegetables. We were just trapped in by cameras and paparazzi and staring citizens. Their eyes were glued to me as I shuffled through the store. I questioned my mother as to why we were being followed. She just kept saying I was a miracle and that the doctors couldn't explain it.

The events I recalled were not pretend, yet I was still alive. It did not make any sense at all. I wasn't a medical miracle like claimed by everyone near; I was a spiritual one. I continued to question the workings of the external force, who sent me back, and the strange lady. The curiosity didn't end. I couldn't fathom why I even existed. I do not know why I was sent back. I had lived enough lives already. I continued to question until a familiar shaking hand, my mother's, on my shoulder awoke me. Yes, at least I think, into the world I am most familiar with; I think.

I started to wonder what I am in a greater scheme of existence and felt embraced by some uncertainty, imagining a new perception where there was no pain and only the most rewarding peace. I got ready for basketball practice, considering that many forgotten lives may run through me. Though, my brain continued its tricks, now reassuring me that it was only a dream.