

A Tale of Two Lesbians: The night.

For Barbara, it wasn't the lack of sleep itself, the fatigue that grasped her mind, the ethereal fingers that killed her thought process, the muscles sluggish the heavy eyes... it was the tortuous passage of time. It was to feel every single second weighting upon her mind, the ceiling unmoving, the consciousness stretching to the point of turning every single minute into an eternity...

And worse of all, the threat of stretching her misery to her wife.

Every lil movement, every lil twist and turn felt like stepping on a landmine. Barbara could bear with her inability to sleep, but to wake up her wife? No, her misery was hers to bear and hers alone. Hers would be the sounds of the wind seeping through the window, hers would be the long hours till the sun rose.

To move felt like dragging a sac of bells through a briar patch, with all those quills, Barbara had to slither upwards, in order to not tear the poor innocent mattress, then roll to the side carefully not to brush not even one of those scales. Even if her quills were carefully trimmed, even if she wore clothes and gowns that would pull them down and flatten them against her body, there was always the risk Barbara would end up plunging one of them into something. And while Regina was covered from head to toe in those chitinous scales, they weren't exactly unfeeling and could still register touch, just like a nail.

So off the bed Barbara went, biting her lower lip as her feet violently clashed against the carpeted floor to... nothing. Padded feet with socks and carpet mixed very well, but in the dead of the night exploded with fireworks and sirens. Especially for ears filled with the panic and dread of the long hours ahead, every sound, even the muffled ones, were a threat.

Nothing, Regina still slept turned on her side, curled halfway into a ball as usual.

Slowly, step after step, Barbara left the living room on the first floor of their quaint lil house. With the gentle closing of the door, the porcupine left a last sigh of envy and sorrow at her better half. Regina had no problems with sleep, no need for specific wardrobe, and not fake notions attached to her species.

But those were ideas to ponder another time. Now came the inexorable fight against time. With nothing more than a long button shirt, Barbara walked down the stairs, ending in the small living room. The place where she passed through so many times per day suddenly grew in meaning and details. It wasn't just the spot that linked the whole small house like a heart. With the insomnia, suddenly the walls were full of small smears and dots, spots where a hand or foot nonchalantly pressed, or the lines made when they moved the living room table that stood next to the corner, surrounded by . Nothing that required another coat of paint but...

But the living room wasn't her goal, no. It was just a quaint lil house in the suburbs from where Barbara could take the bus every day to reach all the people who requested her services and... and that would find her wanting this morning. Sluggish, the calculations in her brain being slowed down by the deficit of sleep, and an accountant that couldn't count was just a waste of breath, wasn't she? Anyone could pick up a calculat-

And she felt her thoughts drifting again towards work, and it would make her nervous, and it would make her situation worse in a vicious cycle that she knew so well. Again and again and again. She even knew that, from her realizing this would be a sleepless night to this moment, at most twenty minutes had passed. The clock was a trap, it would tell her how much she was failing, for how long. It would tell her sweet lies like 'your time is running out' to 'you have enough time to go back to bed'. No, clocks should be avoided at all costs... she suffered enough with them already. So when the porcupine stepped into the kitchen for a glass of water, it felt like entering Mordor under the scrutiny of the all-seeing eye. Just like everything in that house, the kitchen was utilitarian, instead of flashy. She wouldn't turn on the lights, the clock was there over the wall and it didn't need to be seen. Yes, her night vision would suffice, Barbara said to herself while drinking some water. Outside, nothing except darkness and the moon. If the neighborhood was safer, perhaps she'd even risk a night stroll, but now... not even her backyard. Not under the possible gaze of the neighbours who could be just as awake as she was. Or were they just sleeping?

Her mind, so calm, so analytical starts to crumble every second that passes, she hears the tick of the clock, judging her, speaking of her failure to sleep... and thus forcing her out of the kitchen. Tap tap tap tap, feet enclosed by socks, the dull thuds reverberating inside her head, steps that, in her night paranoia, would wake up Regina.

The living room was the only shelter. A laptop over the table, a set of headphones and the sequence of crappy shows and timewaster movies descends before her eyes. The first hours are filled with meaningless things, she cannot laugh from comedies, she cannot cry with the dramas... at least not too loud, and the energy was being sapped with every single second. Yes, this is bearable, finally she feels the time passing, minutes instead of seconds, half hour after half hour...

The chirp of the birds bring her from that cozy world, announcing her failure. Even through the headphones, alongside the light that gently pours through the windows. The skies have lightly been tinted with blue, the stars start to fade. To avoid it, Barbara stands up and closes all the curtains, before hopping on her side. How would she explain her sleepless night to Regina? She'd worry, she'd ask if the porcupine was alright... all the sounds of her waking up, the heavier steps of her wife moving from the bed on the above floor... Any time now. It should be 6am, with the light outside, the birds chirping. The clock. To not see it, Barbara closed the laptop and removed the earbuds... And rests her head on the arm of the couch. She failed again, she'd suffer again another week of constant insomnia, of misery... anytime now Regina would wake up...

The smell of brunch woke her up, and for a second she felt that the world was unchanged. The curtains were still closed, the laptop was still in front of her, the headphones still hanging. But the air was warmer... noon probably. Also she had been covered by a sheet. And a towel over her eyes.

Despair does many things to many minds, even the toughest one succumbing, imagining things. Her insomnia would always haunt her from time to time, destroying her nights and days. But unlike what her mind said, Regina would be there to understand, and cover her eyes, and let her rest, and receive her with a platter of warm food after she stood up.