

"The Lights In My Apartment"

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Hey. I guess you forgot your phone or something. So... I really need to talk to you. The lights in my apartment won't turn off and have stayed on constantly for the last 2 weeks.

Sorry, let me start from the beginning. I live in this single studio apartment. It's just me. It's really small, but I'm living in downtown San Francisco, even though you doubted me, you know? It's not too bad though. It's the perfect size for me, and I make it work. There's this little kitchenette when you first walk in, it's just a stove, a small sink and a fridge but it's got a smooth surface countertop between them; there's a computer desk to the right side for my laptop for when I'm working from home; and the single twin bed to the far left. Our Queen wouldn't fit here. It's cozy and the light pastel yellow that they painted the walls really helped with my moods when the world went to shit. That's why I'm calling you, but besides that, getting back to my apartment. There's the door to the bathroom, and a door to the small closet, and that's pretty much it. I like to keep it clean and orderly. All my years of being raised by my grandmother who worked for the local hotels after her mother passed. I knew how to treat stains with baking soda by the time I was 4, so to say my apartment isn't immaculate would be an insult.

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Why did it cut me off? I know you check your messages every day, incessantly, unless something changed. Doubt it. But anyway It's dark here and that's the way I want to keep it. I'm not a fan of the daytime, as the sunlight always seems to flare up my migraines, so I always keep the dark, thick curtains drawn. Besides, the bright, soft pastel yellow walls do enough for me. Sometimes, when my migraines are really bad, I can get it so dark that only the glow of the screens around me and the little alarm clock on the nightstand exist in this room... or at least used to. And before you even ask; so what if I like the dark? It's not like you're here to stop me. I... Well, you know I like to run a tight ship. It used to drive you up a wall when I set up that chores chart when we lived together in the dorms. I just... There's a certain sense of order that needs to be maintained. I deal with the blinding lights during the day, but in the comfort of this tidy, tiny apartment, it's just me and the faint luminescence of the screens around me at night. It's as God intended.

This apartment was supposed to be... *it... Why... sorry.*

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Let me get back on track.

As I was saying, there are certain expectations that are... well, *expected!* When I flip off the goddamn light switch, the light better turn off. But no. No, that hasn't been the case for the last two weeks. Every day, I wake up to work, and try to flip the switch off, but nothing. Fucking.

happens. I leave to go for walks sometimes, when it's allowed of course, and come back, hoping maybe something is different, but those lights are still on. Doesn't matter if I even mess with the circuit breaker, those lights just *stay* on. Like they are being powered by a completely different circuit breaker entirely, or at least that's what I think happened. It's a newer building, so maybe some wires got crossed? It's just frustrating, because I can't seem to get any answers about it when I ask the people in the leasing office. Just blank stares like I'm insane. Whatever. I wish I hadn't signed that new rental agreement, and I can't really afford to move now.

I know all of this probably sounds like incessant bitching, and I get it. Maybe that's why you haven't answered my calls? I know how... uptight I can be, but I'm starting to get scared. Like, have you ever just kept the lights on in your house for several days at a time? I'm not talking about nightlights or shit like that, because everyone can deal with those. No, I'm talking about the overhead ones on the ceiling, but it's those LED pure white lights that burn your corneas. I swear some of the lights feel too hot, like they could melt the dome covers for the bulb. Maintenance recently changed all the light bulbs in the building to those ones and God, have I hated every second of it. I don't understand why it was necessary. Hell, I begged them to just not replace any and leave them empty sockets, but they gave me some canned bullshit line about 'maintaining living conditions.' I tried to complain about it to my neighbor, Mrs. Gladys. She's the older woman that kinda reminds me of... well, my mom, and she's nice to talk to from the allowed distance, but we got onto the topic about Mr. Gladys and his new 'sores' that keep appearing on his body. She said they are only appearing on one side of his body, and Mrs. Gladys doesn't seem to have any, or so she says. I just really hope there aren't any bed bugs in this building! I don't even want to think about how much of a headache it would be if this *whole building was infested*.

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Okay, so I started going down a youtube rabbit hole about electrical wiring and tried to ask maintenance to come in and try to see what was going on in the walls, but they said they won't touch shit until restrictions are lifted. I am so frustrated and pissed off. I told them to do whatever they needed to do to make sure those damn lights could finally turn off, but of course nothing fucking changed and those lights are still on.

Sorry, this situation is just starting to get to me. The state of the world right now, not seeing you, and now this... I think it's starting to fuck me up. I can't sleep anymore. I've done everything: ASMR, Spotify's bullshit sleep playlist, those really expensive earbuds that are specifically designed for sleeping, and even a bullshit cooling eye cover that wraps around your head, but... well, this is why I'm trying to reach out: Recently, even with an eye cover, the light just seep in. Like, it's not like I'm putting it on wrong, and I even checked if there were holes for leaks. It... works outside, but when I'm inside my apartment, I... Well, it doesn't matter if I put on the eye mask or anything, I just can't seem to close my eyes tight enough. I know this sounds crazy, but when I try to bury my head under the pillows to try and shield myself, it just gets brighter. Sometimes, it feels like my eyes are going to burst from how glaring and intense the light is. I swear to God one night it felt like the light in my bedroom was just going to bake my eyes within

my own skull. Or maybe that was a dream? I just remember the pungent smell of what I thought was cooked meat? Things are kinda blurring together... maybe it was just the smells of the takeout I got that day? I don't know how that's even possible, but that's the only way I can describe this mess.

Frankly, I'm beginning to wonder why I'm even still bothering to call you. You would think by now you wouldn't want this whole thing to permanently fuck me up. If I am sleeping, it's broken and not a full rest. And I try to sleep sometimes while I'm working, but those fucking zoom calls... Can't really sleep if your boss is watching you. Doesn't help too that now I'm starting to hear weird shit in the bathroom. It's this dull scratching that I couldn't figure out where in the bathroom it was coming from. I can fucking hear it right now as I'm leaving you ANOTHER fucking voicemail and it's getting on my last nerve. Once my fucking lease is up, *I'm fucking out of here*. Bed bugs and rats. This is un-fucking-acceptable. I hope you're happy.

Hey, yeah so... sorry for that last message. I keep hoping that maybe you'll call me back or message me? I miss you. It's been too long since I've heard from you and far too fucking long since I've seen you... or anyone really back home. Maybe things will get better soon and I can come visit you and finally get some real sleep. You were always so good about making sure I was rested, with those stupid little chamomile teas you made all the time...

Sorry. I know I shouldn't, but... well, you're the only one I trust with something like this, and maybe you can give me some insight. You were always smarter than me. Heh, that's why I copied off you in college. But yeah... please call me back? I... I really need you right now.

Hey! If I ever see you again, you're fucking dead, do you hear me? As dead as the bulbs I smashed! The lights. Don't. Turn. OFF.