

This is an early sneak peek at my book.

A work of fiction now in development.

This is the prologue that introduces our story.

Still a work in progress that may not represent the final version.

But a chance to introduce this world and these characters to you.

For as long as I remember, there's only ever been one memory I could recall with clarity from before the accident. I'm six years old and I'm in my parent's bedroom because I want to see what will happen when I balance the little flicker on their light switch between the on and off. Mom didn't like me going in there, but I knew it had to be theirs as it was the only switch in the house that was like it. Looking back, I'm not sure what puzzles me more. That I can still identify in my mind the types of light switches in my old home. Or that I never did find out why theirs was the only one to have the little toggle. After all, wouldn't an electrician installing them just use the same kind for all of the panels? Or was it once like the rest and whoever replaced it just didn't seem to care if it matched? Even if I wanted to, it's probably much too late now for me to find out why. Besides, I'm going on forty-four and most forty-four-year-olds shouldn't be worrying themselves over their mother's old light switch.

As most kids at six, I had no understanding of how they actually worked. Even if someone tried explaining it to me in the simplest terms they could, it's doubtful I would've been able to. Most adults who hear it from other adults still won't quite understand it once they're finished speaking. So what chance did I have as my six-year-old self? But I didn't mind not knowing as I could say with certainty that the lights would come on when the flicker was up and would turn off when the flicker was down. What left me most curious instead, as many wandering minds may have been while playing I Spy by themselves in their room, was what would happen if the little flicker sat perfectly even in the middle of the switch.

I probably wasn't thinking of it in as many words as I can use now. But the concept did stick with me and I wanted to know. If the light wasn't on and it wasn't turned off, then what would it be? I have a feeling it was something I asked my mom about before trying, but her answer must not have been satisfying because the notion of finding out still stuck with me. I began to wonder if I was the first kid to ever think up this idea. Or was it some well-known secret amongst all the grown-ups they didn't want us to know? I just had to discover this for myself. So I waited one quiet afternoon, as with most quiet afternoons, for her to fall asleep on the couch while watching TV. I might not have known how the electrical current flowed from the wires to the circuit. But I knew enough to notice certain routines from my mom I could use if I timed them just right. Once she was out, I snuck up our stairs, bound for her room to discover the secret behind this light switch conspiracy.

There were only two rooms on the top floor of our old home. My mom's and Simon's. Simon was in his room with the door shut; probably down for a nap. If I made enough noise to wake him, he'd be sure to open his door to see what was happening as certain as he was to tell Mom about my mission. So I had to work fast and I had to work quietly if I was going to get away with this cleanly. Her bedroom sat just across the hall from Simon's. I approached it carefully, slowly turning the knob and opening the door as softly as I could so as not to let any unwanted sound leak out. I remember as I pulled the door open and carefully carried my feet inside that there was a very distinct smell that hit my nose. It had a synthetic yet pungent quality that caused a burning sensation in my nostrils and a sour taste in my mouth. I've never been able to place exactly what it was nor have I encountered anything since I've left

home that has imitated it. But it was reminiscent of the way she often smelled. I could never say for certain whether that was because she was sleeping in an odorous room or if the smell in the room was the result of her being in there.

With the restrictions she placed on seeing her room, it had been many months since I'd even just looked inside and first acknowledged the switch's presence in our home. I was surprised to see it in a state dissimilar to how I remembered it being. The first thing that caught my eye as I entered the room was how much her new bed reminded me of mine and Simon's. A single mattress laid against the far wall from the door with a withered old blanket and a single stained pillow sat at the head. Scattered around the room to accompany it were dirty clothes, greasy bags of take-out long gone, and a withered brown shoebox sat next to her pillow. I didn't know enough at the time to put any weight on what her room might've said about the state she was in after Dad left with a bunch of our stuff. So I just peered innocently around the room long enough to make an impression before turning my attention back to the light switch. It was a few inches higher than my body could reach, so I searched for something that could offer me the extra height that I needed. I grabbed the brown shoebox without any regard that it might not have been able to even hold me or that I'd just end up crushing whatever rested inside of it.

But I pressed it against the wall and it proved to hold well enough as I stood on top of it with one hand against the wall and the other on the flicker. At first, I played with it to get a feel for how it moved before recognizing how an unsubtle hand would cause it to just get pulled toward whichever

direction had the momentum. After a few minutes, I began to feel for the flicker's precision and with as careful a hand as I was able to muster, I finally had it perfectly balanced right in between the on and the off. I moved myself carefully off the shoebox and away from the wall, worrying the slightest movement or breath would cause it to move. I waited, watched the switch closely and peered only away to look at the light right above. Something would happen. Something just had to have happened. Could it be that I missed it? I'd just have to try it all over again. I stood back on the box, casually flipped up the flicker to reset it, and began the process once more. But this time keeping my view on the light instead.

It was around that moment my mind would usually forget what took place after, always assuming it had to be similar to the first time I tried. The truth is there was no secret among the grown-ups. I wasn't making any kind of discovery by balancing the switch. Because when you do, nothing happens at all. We spend so much time when we're young thinking the world can be so much more than what we are given. But that's only an illusion to keep us from seeing things for how they actually are. Messy. Apathetic. Daunting. Disappointing. For the longest time, I couldn't justify to myself why this moment was the only one to resonate from that time in my life. Especially since it seems like such an insignificant thing to hold onto. But in the same way we have our foods or our places that may seem nothing special but serve as our spaces of safety, so are our memories. We need things that ground us. That bring order to our world. That allow us to feel we have some condition of normalcy in our quality of life burdened by pressure and pain.

Because whenever I tried to place anything else from that time, all that remained were the screams of my mother and Simon's blood on her face.

WHEN
SIMON
WAS
AN
ACCIDENT

“How far back would you go to move forward?”

The First Book Written by Mason Arsenault

Coming Soon