

SHOULD YOU HEAR BELLS, RETURN TO THE LIVING

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Wake up.

It's Monday, just a regular Monday. You have nothing planned for the day. The sun is shrouded in drizzling clouds behind a gauzy layer of curtains, and the lights are off. The room is shadowed. The air is flat and placidly still. No one else is awake. You should probably get up.

Go back to sleep.

There is no point in getting up. Your day is empty and your room is dark. If you get out of bed, you'll be cold, and grumpy, and you'll wish you'd fallen back asleep. Isn't it easier to stay where you are?

Get out of bed.

The temperate air turns frigid as you throw back the covers and shiver. Your feet are blocks of ice on the strangely cold wooden floor. You should go open the curtains, but your bed feels so warm and tempting.

Sleep.

You turn sideways, and without conscious thought, fall straight into an unblinking slumber. Your sleep is pleasantly empty and devoid of dreams. Isn't ignorance bliss?

Dream.

You turn sideways and fall headfirst into the clouds. The world swirls topsy-turvy around you, and it's all you can do to keep your eyes open. Or are they closed? You can't tell.

Go back to sleep.

There is no point in getting up. It's too cold, and there's nothing for you to do, anyway. Just stay where you are. It's comfortable. You just have to keep your head down, and exist.

Open the curtains.

You struggle to your feet, blindly, and make your way to the frosty window. It seems to be getting colder the closer you get. At last, your hand grasps the thin fabric and pulls. And lo, there is light!

Toss and turn.

You're awake, but not for lack of trying, and you wish not to be. Turn in your bed. Flip over your pillow. Close

Dream.

You exist in a liminal space of your own dreaming. The clouds cycle endlessly around you. You walk with arms gently outstretched, but they evade your touch. You seem to be walking on a cloud, or perhaps *in* a cloud, but you cannot tell

Open the window.

But though the light on your face beckons through red-veined eyelids, something within you longs for more. Every aching

your eyes and count to one hundred. Pretend there are sheep in your mind, grazing on grass. Fall asleep?	whether outside the cloud it is night, or day, or dawn, or dusk. It simply is. Behind you, a strange bell rings. It has a peculiar tone, one that beckons you to follow it. You turn and begin to walk. Where does the bell lead you?	movement is a struggle, but you fumble for the latch. The cold air hits you like a blow. Breathe?
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Half-sleep, half-wake.	A good dream.	A bad dream.	A dream.	Breathe in.
Well, it's not quite sleep, but you're almost there. Something about your mind refuses to go quiet. Your body resents it, but your body is ruled by your mind and thus can do nothing but complain. You ache. Your eyelids are dry and gritty. The warmth and comfort of your bed suddenly feel constricting, so you rearrange until airflow is revealed. There's something disturbing you that you just can't quite put your finger on. You're not sure what it is, but something feels off.	Clouds dissipate into silver meadows waving gently in the breeze. It's beautiful here, and very peaceful. You lie on your back and dig your hands into the earth. With the wind rushing over you and the dirt solid beneath you, it feels as if you could stay here forever.	Clouds dissipate in a crack of shattering thunder. You flinch from the noise. Out of the darkness looms a shadowed figure; you can't see its face, but you know it's coming for you. You try to flee, but it feels like you're running through molasses. There is no escape.	Clouds dissipate into a fine, gentle mist, like a very faint rain. The drizzle does not obscure your vision, which is why you are able to peer curiously at the delicate trail of light that appears at your feet. It is your choice whether or not to stay or to go, but you are frozen with indecision.	You inhale deeply. The air swirls around your lungs. It stabs into you like little knives of frost, but you welcome it. It's waking you up from that dreamy warm haze of slumber. Gooseflesh is rising on your arms, your thighs, the back of your neck, but you disregard the feeble reactions of your body and instead reach with your mind. Your mind is delighted. Your mind is awake. Your mind is invigorated; is ready to take a step forward and make a change and be a light. Your mind... wants you to exhale?

Lay there, restless.	Breathe out.
You can't sleep. Your slumber has been disturbed by something you cannot name, but it irks you nonetheless. All that's left is to lay there, eyes closed, and attempt to calm your mind. You read	You exhale. The air leaves your lungs, and your head clears.

somewhere that pretending to sleep is better than not resting at all, so that's what you do. But there's something just at the edges of your hearing, a slow tap—tap—tap— that dangles just at the edge of recognition, and keeps you on edge. What is it? You could open your eyes to check, but that would defeat the purpose of rest. Perhaps there is nothing to be gained from lying here, if you cannot master yourself. Perhaps it is time to get up?

You feel calmer,
more steady.
Something about the
air had soothed you.
If only all your
worries could be
calmed this easily.

Open your eyes.

You open your eyes. The light blinds you, but only for a moment. You blink a couple times, and your vision adjusts. You stare out the window. What do you see?

It doesn't matter what you see. You will look regardless. So look out of your window and out at the world. Watch as it begins to wake up, as the sun stretches lazily over the horizon, as the scene changes, no longer a grey-tinted haze but rather the faintest of colours shadowing the picture. The wind blows directly into your face. Inhale the scent of it all, humanity bustling and moving and being alive. What a joy it is, to be alive.

Stand there, just for a moment, and simply look. Though you may struggle to wake and begin your day, it all comes to this in the end: an open window; the future beckoning.

The day goes on, whether you're watching or not, but I suggest you keep your eyes wide open. You don't want to miss it.