

know that the food will spoil, toys will be returned unopened or unwanted, gifts will be carelessly exchanged, drink that caused nothing but arguments and headaches and disease-laden sex will be puked up.

"Another?" he asks. I loll. "Urgh..." I point to the bottled beer in the fridge. "You want a beer instead?" I shake my head. I raise the glass I'm holding and nod towards the fridge. He frowns and puckers his lips like he's about to offer me a kiss. I scamper my fingers across the bar and grin. "Bud," I say; because it's the easiest. He puts a straw in the bottle without even asking and I'm so touched, I have to look down when he hands it to me.

"What's black about my heart?", I wanted to ask my mother.

But I never did, because I was afraid of what she might say.

## Something Light

Jack Wallsten

Tell me something light, she says, something I'll forget.

So I tell her penguins are so old they have outlived the dinosaurs.

I tell her carp has no natural life span and could technically live forever.

I tell her a research project from the 1980s said people with blue eyes generate trust more easily and generally last longer in relationships, while people with brown eyes are more likely to be viewed as distant objects of idolism and affection.

I don't tell her that every con artist I've ever met had blue eyes or that my brown-eyed friends are constantly accused of hiding something from their partners.

I tell her my eyes are green, and sometimes hazel, but I don't tell her that means I'm somewhere in-between.

I tell her a boy from Atlanta, Georgia, got a research grant to study the difference between swimming in water and swimming in oat meal.

I tell her the day everyone realized how easy it is to get research grants poverty will no longer be an issue.

I ask her if she's ever heard of lucid dreaming?

She shakes her head no.

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Image: Whitby Ned and Kathryn by Emma Oglesby.

So I tell her lucid dreaming is the skill to control what happens in your dreams. You can learn this by asking yourself throughout the day if you are awake or dreaming and by training yourself to recognize odd occurrences, or dream signs.

Sounds boring, she says, like knowing how every movie will begin and end.

Tell me something else, she says.

So I tell her the sunsets we have today they didn't have 400 years ago. Pollution is the main reason we have sunsets and rainbows as magnificent as they are today. I tell her that's a silver lining for ya.

I tell her it's impossible to tickle yourself, although scientists have developed a robot tickler which tickles by remote control.

I tell her lions are colorblind. A zebra could be bright orange and still be camouflaged in the tall grass,

as long as it has its wavy lines.

I tell her comedy is social lubricant and one sitcom, or one comedian can unify a generation and define a culture. If this isn't light enough, I tell her, most television is broadcast via satellite and the amount of entertainment we daily shoot into space so vastly outnumbers the legitimate attempts we make to contact alien species that by the time they do find us it won't be maths that's the principal form of communication. It'll be one-liners.

I tell her Scientologists believe evil spirits were brought to Earth in space ships that were exact copies of Douglas DC-8s.

I tell her of a recent survey that said people were 60 per cent happier in the 1950s.

I tell her that since 1950 fifteen countries have risen above the poverty line, medicine and technology has frog-leaped, and candy tastes better (I tell her I can't vouch for that last one, but think of the advances made in chocolate alone and argue no more).

I tell her the 1950s were five years after WW2.

I tell her this survey listed neither names nor geographics.

I tell her music is energy and it vibrates forever in between the atoms of inanimate objects. Mud and gravel carries the notes of Mozart and Bob Dylan. Heat them up and they'll sing songs back to you, some hundreds of years old. I tell her there's a rock in a vault at Sothebys in London that remembers the first song ever played.

I tell her she's sleeping and not listening. Her closed eyes neither agree nor disagree.

**"I tell her, most television is broadcast via satellite and the amount of entertainment we daily shoot into space so vastly outnumbers the legitimate attempts we make to contact alien species."**

Fiction submissions should be sent to *Aesthetica* via email as an attachment to David Martin at [submissions@aestheticmagazine.com](mailto:submissions@aestheticmagazine.com). Submissions should be no longer than 2000 words.