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Yellow highlight  
indicates reflection.

### Regret

I close my book and turn out the light in the living room. In the bathroom I look into the mirror to see the tired expression of my reflection peering wearily back at me. I think of the three books I still need to read, the assignments I still need to complete, and the essay I still need to write—all before Monday; these thoughts weigh heavily on my mind, forcing my shoulders to slump. Exhausted and discouraged, I flip off the light in the bathroom and stumble down the hall. I open the door to Joshua’s bedroom, and the burst of the door exploding from its frame and squeak of the hinge pierce the silence. Please don’t wake up, I ache. Inside the crib, he rhythmically pulls air deep into his lungs. He’s asleep. Unwilling to further risk waking him, I peek my head into his room, and softly whisper, “Goodnight, Josh. I love you.”

I slowly close his door and make my way through the lonely house and into my room. Allison went to bed two hours ago, and she’s fast asleep. While I open the blankets and slip into the inviting sheets, I look at the clock: 12:37 the green LED numbers glow. Six-and-a-half hours, I think, I’ve functioned on less. But I can’t sleep; my mind won’t stop ruminating about the books I haven’t read, the assignments I haven’t completed, and the essays I haven’t written— not to mention the guilt I feel for not spending the not-so-lazy summer days with my wife and son. I miss them. Tired of being tired and frustrated that sleep is ever fleeting, I stare at the clock. 1:08 it mocks. Six hours, I think as I listen to the crickets chirp their sporadic melodies in the warm summer air. Finally, the sweet oblivion of sleep overtakes me, and my mind and body are at rest.

But the morning comes too soon, too abrupt: Joshua, gagging in his own vomit, wakes me and wife up. I glance at the clock—2:13. Allison rushes into his room, turns on the light, picks him up from the crib, and hurries into the bathroom while I, in the comfort of my bed, pretend everything's fine. I listen to my son, tired and confused, as he cries in pain between episodes of violent heaving while my wife soothes this tiny body and cleans the mess. Annoyed, I close the bedroom door and convince myself that because I have so much to do, I don't have time for this.

*I don't have time for my sick son?* The thin line of light creeps under the door, I can hear Joshua's whimpers in the other room while I drown my guilt in sleep.

The beeping of the alarm breaks me again from my sleep. I reluctantly drag my tired body from the comfort of my soft bed, and already I can feel the stress of the day mounting. I open the door and walk into the living room where I find Joshua burrowed in the caring arms of his mother as they sleep peacefully on the couch, an acidic tang still hanging in the air. *I should have helped, I think disapprovingly. It's funny, what people regret. I regret not holding my son's contorting body, his face buried into the toilet, his stomach wringing out his insides like a dirty wet rag.*

*I should have been there.*