

A hush sprinkled over the crowd as a wave of iPhone flashlights flicked off one by one and the screech of sneakers on the painted hardwood floor echoed throughout the arena once more.

It had only been a couple of minutes, a small break between a time-out as a sea of green and blue jerseys and six-foot-seven men shuffled off the court. But it was enough time for the nearly eighteen thousand people to illuminate the unlit arena.

It was almost a visible manifestation of a butterfly effect as one by one, five by five, ten by ten, phones emerged from purses and pockets, and soon hundreds of tiny beams of light broke the darkness that had hung in the air just seconds before.

And just as quickly as thousands of tiny twinkles had seemingly materialized out of the still air of the packed arena, the lights dissipated and the young woman who had prompted everyone to take out their smartphones in support of a fight against cancer campaign strode off the court, heels clacking and blonde hair bouncing.

The game resumed, and the sense of unity that had been instantly created by 17,999 other tiny beams of light between Lakers and Jazz fans slowly faded as hundreds of smartphones resumed their usual position perched between pinkies and thumbs.

Minutes went by. The scoreboard ticked away. Suddenly my eyes were drawn to several small glimmers of light from across the arena. About five people scattered among hundreds of others in the section across from me had forgotten to turn off their phone flashlights. Their lights continued to beam from between their hands as the game went on.

My eyes flitted around that half of the arena for a second more, and I noticed at least a dozen more people whose lights shined on unintentionally.

And then a thought came to me. Out of the thousands of people sitting nearly 100 feet and hundreds of rows across from my seat, I was staring at one person; a woman. I found myself wondering what her life was like. What kind of purse she would slide her iPhone into once she realized her phone's flashlight was still on. I wondered if she had come to the game with her husband and kids or if she was with friends or if she was alone. I wondered if she had lit her phone because she knew someone who was fighting cancer, or just because she wanted to be a part of the cause, as I did.

I realized that I would have never, not even once, wondered about the small and large details of her life, or the people's around her if her light hadn't been shining, making her noticeable among the thousands of people whose light had disappeared minutes before. No, I thought, I would not have been thinking of her. I would have never even *seen* her.

My thoughts zeroed in on this woman and about a dozen others because their lights were on after others had been extinguished. I thought about their lives, their hobbies, their interest level

in the basketball game that was happening in front of all of us- our common denominator. After watching the same basketball game, we would all get in our different cars and drive to different houses in perhaps even different states, and live very different lives.

I could only imagine what their night may or may not look like after the game, but the truth was that I would never know.

I would never know if they'd go home to a sleeping baby that was born only months ago and lay them gently in their crib after finally leaving the house for the first date night in weeks. I wouldn't know if they'd unlock their front door and stoop down to pet a tiny dog, barking high-pitched and happily at their owner's return. I wouldn't know if they'd go home to a husband who would swoop their feet off the hardwood floors. Or if they'd return home to a desk with a series of papers featuring empty slots waiting for initials and signatures to signify the end of a marriage. And I wouldn't know if one of these people who left their light on would only return home to flick it off and cry into the dark hollows of tightly clasped hands.

What I did know for certain though, was that I saw them because of their light.

We make a choice daily, not only to exude each of our own lights- that innate part of us that makes us unique from the rest of the world; but to see others' as well.

Our lights tell our story, if only just a sliver of it. For centuries, movies and songs and bible verses and stories speak of light as a part of us, and sometimes even a part of us that can be lost or removed. When mermaid Ariel gives up her voice, and it seemingly flows from her heart to her throat and exits her body as a probe of light into Ursula's grips. Or when wizard's wands, and very soul's exude light when they conjure up a spell or patronus within the walls of Hogwarts. Or, when a children's song reminds us, "this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine"...we are left with the impression that our lights are within us, each different, each playing a crucial role in our makeup as a human being.

Everyone radiates their own version of this light, whether it's a gleam, a glow, or even a glint that's been struggling to stay burning through the day. When we see the light in others, we see *their* story, if only just a sliver, a glimmer, a flicker or a flash.

