Footsteps

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Early Saturday morning…A bedroom door quietly creaking open pulls me from my dreams and I try to guess. With one eye half opened, I look at the clock, hoping it would say 7:30. In the tenuous light of the early morning 5:43 glares at me with its harsh red glowing digits. I hear quick, light steps coming down the carpeted hallway. Is it Quique or Joaquín?

I pretend to be asleep. The regularity with which this scene plays itself out has me always hoping for a different outcome. Once, just once, I would like for Quique who is five and/or Joaquín who is three, to look in the bedroom, see that their parents are still asleep and turn around quietly to go back to the cozy warm comfort of their own beds and go back to sleep! So, although I’m fairly certain that I’m hoping in vain, I pretend to be asleep.

The now cautious footsteps venture into our bedroom, pause, come a little closer, pause, then retreat. The sound of little feet on the bathroom tile is different. I hear the long held stream of pee – I still am unable to identify which of my two young boys is awake so damn early. Flush – no hand washing – it must be Joaquín. Sure enough, I hear little steps approach my side of the bed (it’s always my side of the bed in the mornings). I feel my son’s presence but I still pretend to be asleep. I want to see what he will do. In my mind’s eye, I picture a little boy standing there next to my bed, looking at me,
considering his plan of action. I keep my eyes closed, my breathing slow and steady, mimicking the sleep that is sure to elude me now. I feel a light touch rubbing my arm and sense a face getting closer. I open my eyes and smile at the tentative face in front of me. That’s all the invitation he needs. Joaquín smiles back and climbs in.

Trying to find the positive in being awakened so damn early on a day I could possibly sleep a little late, I whisper to my three year old, who is not usually the cuddly type, “I’m glad you want to cuddle. I like snuggling with you.” Joaquín replies, “There were shadows in my room I don’t like. I knew you would let me in.”

I stretch out my arm and he snuggles in next to me. We lay face to face, looking at each other and smiling, a veritable love fest. I hug him and he says, “Mamá, you’re choking me” and so concludes the snuggly part of our morning.

With my hopes of falling asleep now completely dashed, I gently push Joaquín to roll out of bed. Together we quietly tiptoe down the stairs. As we sit in the kitchen (at 5:56 A.M.), me with my already brewed coffee, Joaquín with his sippy cup OJ, I find myself thinking, “Maybe tomorrow I’ll get to sleep in.”