

## *Journal of sleepless endeavors*

I would have hoped to be asleep by now, but I am rarely so lucky.

You are still awake, remaining calm by taking in crisp breaths at a steady pace. Is the air too hot or too cold. There must be something wrong with the air, because you're still awake. Your feet are wrapped up in warm socks keeping a warm circulation of blood going<sup>1</sup>. You roll around so much that you feel like a windmill. Your mind tells you, as if you are already dreaming, that this accomplishes something important.

*Roll to your left.*

*Now roll to your right.*

*Now back to your left.*<sup>2</sup>

What is it that keeps me awake? I like to imagine it being about chemicals mixing and exploding in my mind at the wrong times. That isn't the reason though. I know it isn't. Professional articles like to use the terms "mental disorders" or "excessive stress". For my personal "case study", it would be an oversight to not use the word *fear*. Let's recount what happens when I get brief moments of sleep on these sleepless nights.

You might imagine a world with her. This world appears lovely at first. You might talk with her, you might catch her casually smiling, or you might think you're happy. Then your mind steps in. She remembers that everything is actually more important than you. This world leaves you behind. That audition goes wrong and people throw chairs at you. Your mission to another planet goes awry.

This is when I jolt up and kick the bed and it's sheets in a rebellious impulse against *fear*. The air is still too hot and too cold. Every inhale seems to be filling my body with *fear* and my sanity seems to depart with every exhale.

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Wear socks' is an actual tip from a youtube video titled "10 Amazing Tips To Improve Your Sleep" from Quirkology. Regardless of how scientifically accurate the claims of the video are, I feel more comfortable when I have socks on. Though the fact that I wear socks to bed tends to result in mockery and furrowed brows from the general public. In fact, one of the first comments on this video says something to the effect of "I sleep better without socks". This would seem to suggest that my issues stretch beyond insomnia.

<sup>2</sup> Another amazing tip to improve sleep would require me to sleep on my right-hand side unless I am pregnant. Unfortunately my mind isn't able to rationalize such a course of action during insomniac episodes, so Quirkology's improved sleep once again eludes my grasp. The constant rotation also tends to launch my blankets on the floor which compounds my predicament.

What is that weird feeling? That must be a heart attack. You are having a heart attack. No, you are sick and dying. No, you are already dead. What time is it? 4 AM? Time moves by so slowly when you are dead.



What am I experiencing exactly? Irrational thinking and imaginative terror wasn't on the insomnia checklist. The closest I get to hearing my symptoms echoed is in music. Ruban Nielson has written songs which many speculate to be about his own insomnia.

“Words are floating through the windows  
and in the house she blows them away

Faded in the morning time”<sup>3</sup>

I can't help but hear my dreams floating amongst the psychedelic twang.

You have been lying in your coffin of air that is both too hot and too cold for so long. Aren't you sick of it? It's beautiful at night, go experience it. You won't miss anything, you certainly won't miss sleep. Carefully creep as if your legs are stilts. You don't want to wake the dog or your parents. Cross the threshold and take it in. The fresh and freeing air. Oh, how you've missed it. It feels incredible out here. You are caught by its beauty every time. The moonlight never ceases to amaze. It's milky glow brings with it an unfamiliar sense of hope that you often forget. You feel like you can flow and find peace. You'll sleep eventually but take a second to fully enjoy this. Swim with the stars.

---

<sup>3</sup> This is a lyric excerpt from the song “Faded in the Morning” by Nielson's band Unknown Mortal Orchestra. Nielson's lyrics are included on the band's official website and while I enjoy learning the official lyrics, they often leave me with new questions. Another lyric in this song is as follows: “Walking through the winter markets, and all the horses floated away”. Regardless of what was intended there, it reminds me of how my own dreams often include ludicrous and irrational scenarios such as being on an expedition to Mars in a spaceship resembling a narrow metal straw with scarcely enough room for myself. The lyric also has me eagerly anticipating the night when my dreams yield a winter-time transaction and horse levitation.

## Annotated Bibliography:

Coss, Shawn. Inktober Illness Series I, 2016.

Coss made an ink illustration for every day of October as part of the artistic annual event “Inktober”. His illustrations all sought to represent a different mental illness, including insomnia. His artwork often gets compared to that of Tim Burton which might explain why I felt drawn to it. I felt the large eyes and small pupils helped show the lack of comfort and cohesive thoughts occurring in this individual. I felt it could visually represent aspects of what I experience.

*Facts about Insomnia.* , 1995. *SIRS Issues Researcher*,

<https://explore.proquest.com/sirsissuesresearcher/document/2250464178?accountid=194618>.

An informative article giving helpful terminology and statistics about common types of insomnia. This article helped me increase my vocabulary to describe my own insomnia, although I still have experiences that aren’t explained or addressed.

Unknown Mortal Orchestra. *II*, Jagjaguwar, 2013.

Unknown Mortal Orchestra(or UMO)’s second studio album explores various topics ranging from relationships to religion. Their distinct sound tends to be categorized as psychedelic rock but labels vary. I personally greatly enjoy Ruban Nielson's distinct guitar and vocal style. The Band creates musical sounds that I consider uniquely great. Regardless of what Nielson’s intentions were when he wrote the songs(many speculate them to be about drug use and touring causing a lack of sleep) I have been able to find meaning in them.

“10 Amazing Tips To Improve Your Sleep”. *YouTube*, uploaded by Quirkology, 2 April 2014.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTYyy8tHhCk>.

The psychologist Richard Wiseman recounts 10 tips regarding sleep in part to promote his new book *Night School*. The video features a visual style and an upbeat piano soundtrack that are common to most of Wiseman’s Quirkology videos. It might just be that Wiseman is using psychology to his advantage but I enjoy the tone of his videos and have found some of his tips to be relevant to my own life.

### Intention Statement:

*Journal of Sleepless Endeavours* received its name and inspiration from my own personal intermittent insomnia. The essay seeks to capture and compile various aspects of my insomnia as well as details from specific episodes. Throughout the essay, I alternated from first person and second person writing. The first person paragraphs are intended to be more linear and grounded in reality to help give the reader a look into my mind and thoughts. The second person paragraphs explore more specific and abstract feelings and events from specific insomnia

episodes. For example, in one of the paragraphs, I discuss and allude to actual dreams of mine which are very personal. I would be uncomfortable talking about these dreams directly so I used more vague and abstract ways to describe them. In addition, I also tried to move into more abstract and less tangible ideas as I wrote so that over time the essay gets crazier. I wrote the essay in this fashion to simulate how insomnia seems to cause me to lose a sense of reality as I am awake further into the night. During peer review, my readers gave a lot of positive feedback which I really appreciated. I was worried that my essay might be too abstract, but they reassured me that it was still enjoyable. They also helped me decide to add the image from Shawn Coss which I had been debating previously. I wasn't sure if its tone would work with what I was intending but my peers agreed that it worked well within context. I was also inspired by the writing of David Foster Wallace, so I tried to emulate his use of footnotes in the early linear section of the essay. My footnotes seek to add humor and additional context similar to how Wallace wrote *Consider the Lobster*. I also tried to build a somewhat cohesive narrative into my lyrical essay so that it would be more satisfying to read. The paragraph where I irrationally believe I am either having a heart attack or have recently perished is another reference to actual experiences of mine while also attempting to build suspense. A common symptom of my insomnia is irrational thoughts and irritations regarding the temperature but it is often hard for me to decipher if it is too hot or too cold. This then became a guiding theme throughout the essay to show what led me to get out of bed and walk around in the backyard.