

Sleep

by

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I went to bed early.

While actively trying to sleep I thought about many things - my new house - money - album covers - my new housemates - girls - my lecture plans - award ceremonies - guest vocalists -

I thought about other things too - how people fall asleep - what my friends think of me - this cold room - Hindsight - lots of other things -

I decided that thinking wasn't the best way to fall asleep.

I thought about it. What usually makes me sleep? I thought about it some more because nothing was coming to mind because I often have trouble sleeping.

I thought about the different things I'd tried that work for people or that people say help with sleep.

Sheep. Routine. A book. Complete darkness. Hot chocolate.

And then I remember that thinking about these things was not good for sleeping because sleep means not thinking.

So I thought about what would make me not think and I remembered something. It was in a book that I read and I was surprised that it worked because I don't believe those empowerment-happiness books.

A book called the power of now and I thought the title sucked and Oprah's quote was on the cover and my Mom recommended it to me so no way. But later a friend talked to me about it so I gave it a shot. It was overwritten like most of those books but I did find one good thing in it which is a question you should ask yourself if you're always thinking. What am I going to think next?

I thought it was silly but I tried it and it worked. My mind was blank which doesn't happen and so I put the book down and kept asking myself over and over and I enjoyed it for a few minutes.

So I'm in bed last night and I think well wouldn't this be the perfect time to try that since it would stop

me thinking and then who knows I might fall asleep. So I am trying it and it's kind of working and I'm not really thinking of anything. Things are trying to come through the black that's behind my eyes but I'm shoving them away by asking the question again. Answers itch at the borders of my eyes but the question fights it off. It's working.

When I'm asking this question and not thinking anything something else happens. My toes start to freeze but not from the cold room. There is blue freeze coming up my toes and into my feet. It happens if you try and sometimes when you don't if you lie still and think about letting each part of your body fall asleep one by one. This can help you sleep so said my psychologist when I was in Galway but it worked for me only a little when I imagined it blue and saw it move up my body parts when I felt them fall asleep.

I'm feeling the blue freeze come over my body and I'm comfortable I think and it feels good. While it's happening I'm trying to not control my eyes under my eyelids and just focus on not thinking of anything. I keep trying and there's a black window there now and it's my vision like a television screen when it's off. The blue freeze is still working and my breathing's getting warmer and I don't know if I see it in the black but I know I'm moving down. It's like the bed's swallowing me little by little but I know that's silly.

So instead I look into the black and I don't know what it is but I think it's like a hand coming no longer like seaweed but really I know it's the sea. I'm underwater but breathing normally with no bubbles and the sea is holding me like a leaf in a hand but tight but still not crackling me.

Like a lover or like a womb I think and then I think oh what would Freud think of me ha ha ha.

But I'm still going down and the sweater sleeves that are swept around me are sinking down further in the water with me. I cough once but that only breaks a little of the blue freeze and I focus on going into the underwater black.

I'm not a person now I'm small and round and I'm sinking lower. There is a barrel there in the background but not of nuclear waste or anything just to signify that I'm very deep down. I'm there now and I'm a marble or a pearl or something else. Happy like a big iris or maybe it's the pupil whatever bit is the coloured bit. And a purple octopus is spreading its tentacles around me and it feels good or maybe it's not purple is it green. I think and it's definitely purple and definitely not white or silver. I'm in bed and a purple octopus is hugging me as a marble and as these images are manifesting I thought how cool a story it would make.

A story with dreamlike descriptions of the feelings of falling asleep. That would be cool and people would like it. The people who have trouble sleeping will relate to me not sleeping and the people who sleep easily will relate to the things that I hope are me slowly going to sleep. Cool.

But let's not worry about the story let's just continue not thinking because it was working and I wasn't thinking about anything. Sleep is more important because if you could master this and control your sleep think about how great that would be. Don't think about it just get back to not thinking. Besides, you can write it tomorrow.

So I stop thinking about the story and now I'm not a pearl but my black television screen is now a submarine window and I'm underwater and it's slowly going down.

I cough because I have a bit of a cold and that breaks the ice a bit and oh I should write the story. No no focus on the submarine window and what's outside there. Now Gael Garcia Bernal is waving hello at me through the window because he was in a film called Science of Sleep and I'm thinking about writing a story about what it's like to fall asleep. It's a good film. No no I force him to drift away in the water because thinking about films won't help me sleep.

The submarine's not working so I shift myself in the bed a little being careful not to ruin things and instead there's something else. It's a lift or a pulley system and I think they're yellow and it's kind of like a Ferris wheel but not so impressive and I'm in it and looking at it at the same time and that doesn't work in real life. Maybe I'm almost sleeping. And even though it's kind of working I can't keep going down. The yellow dumb waiter is still moving down but not moving at all like a treadmill and it's not as comfortable in bed. My mind is anchoring me up.

OH STORY my mind flashes and that's an idea and even though I tried not to think of the story now I am. What if I wrote the story about me writing the story and kind of talked about how the story itself which the reader will be reading is the thing at fault for not letting me sleep. Wow meta cool.

Oh but wow now I have to change everything from before. The beginning where I say I'm going to bed and tell people what I'm thinking about and how much can I be honest here 'cause even though this really happened I don't want to tell secrets and I thought about Gonzo journalism a bit.

If I'm writing a story I don't want to be too precise about the things I think about because even though I'm honest with people some things don't need to be said and are private and probably they'd rather not know anyway. So I decide that single vague things separated by hyphens would be best (as above).

Then what about the book I don't want to give it free advertising since I didn't like it but it did help me with that one thing so I guess it's only fair since I'll be using some of it to call it by name isn't it. When it comes down to it I don't care that much even though I would say I did if someone asked me.

I think about being smart and saying Eckhart (not Aaron) but that's fucking stupid what am I thinking and I scrap the whole thing.

I don't even think about removing the bit about thinking about my psychologist in Galway because

even though I'm kinda ashamed I won't admit it because you need to be proud of things like that I think even if some people might laugh or mutter under their breath when you're not around.

Besides for the purpose of the story it's important to have some background for the blue freeze since I had background for the question that helped me stop thinking. I write that but I know it's really 'cause I hope girls will find me more brave and attractive 'cause I'm not afraid to be honest and show emotion. And now I'm worried they'll read that and my motives will seem sketchy and oh well they're not their loss.

So now I'm in bed and thinking shit well I should get up and write the story should I. Or should I just try to keep this blue freeze on me and not cough or scratch the itch on my leg and remember sentences I like like my mind is anchoring me up. So I decide I'll try to remember the other images I had and cover all the bases you don't want to have something good in there and forget it now do you.

Don't forget the purple octopus I think it was a purple octopus I can expand on it later. Oh and the eye thing I liked that but is it an iris or a pupil I should definitely research it later.

My body is still still but my mind is running away now and I'm doing that thing of imagining that something I write is successful and famous and how embarrassing if people knew. So I imagine answering an interviewer I knew it would strike a chord with the whole world because everyone knows what it's like to fall asleep but in a funny way not seriously and how witty that would be but then I think that it's not very funny and I should leave it out.

I think maybe since I'm thinking so much now that I can write the story but I know I would be ruining the blue freeze and maybe I'll have more nice little images too. So I'm giving myself the black tv again and just letting things come to me and I'm sure I'm just getting into it but then something ruins it but it's not my fault.

I can hear sounds from outside. I wait and then yeah it's my friends coming back. No party just my housemates good. They're whooping and I don't like whooping but it's okay because I like my friends and sometimes whooping is fun but only when you're the one whooping and not someone else you don't like.

The walls are paper. Maybe my housemate will have sex with his girlfriend and I don't want to listen. That way I'm forced to get up and write the story about sleep and it's not my fault when I'm tired tomorrow and I'll have a short story to show for it. Win, win. (Paul Giamatti shush)

So I listen and I'm trying to keep the blue freeze on me but it's not easy when you're doing other things. They're talking and walking and no sex yet and then some water running (not me underwater in the next room) and someone spits and probably it's my housemate or if it's his girlfriend she spits like a man would spit I think. How does a man spit?

I imagine posting the story on Facebook and it getting loads of likes and comments and people will enjoy it but I don't want to mention that 'cause it's embarrassing to care and I don't like mentioning Facebook because it's free advertising and that's even more embarrassing than caring.

They're moving again but things are getting quieter and not in a sexy-quiet way so I'm trying not to listen any more and focus on a marble or a pulley system or something whatever will make me sleep I don't care. Maybe he's too drunk but that's not fair people don't want sex 24 7.

I think maybe I should get up anyway and write it before I forget all of the inventive things I've conjured up and then I think but I'm comfortable and I want to sleep. And after all aren't writers supposed to invent stuff and aren't I one of the writers.

Stop thinking about it think about something else nice and that's better when I've turned this way and rearrange myself. This time I lay on my front with my fists under my chest and I think about why it's the way I normally sleep maybe something from my childhood.

A blanket shivers me but in a nice way and just my arms a little like a vibration but that's more a feeling that I can't describe so I keep trying. I try to think of the marble wrapped in the octopus sea but it's gone.

Oh I'm in a swing now like a hammock but it's not going side to side it's going forward and back forward and back. Sometimes my chest can control it and when I breathe it swings even higher and I love that feeling when you dip back into the lull that weightless feeling. Even though I know I'm young in the swing I'll never fall. It's like a playground swing but it's not made of rope or anything. It's a human arm and definitely a mother's even though I don't know why. It doesn't have to be my mother's but it feels like I'm a child and it's my mother's arm so maybe it is my mother's. There's one on either side and the seat is two hands that are joined with fingers zigzagging together.

I'm swinging high and then falling back and sometimes my deep breath will send me higher again. I'm going so high that I know I might go all the way over the bar but I know I won't ever fall unless I want to jump.

But they'll know what I'm talking about (the readers) because they've been on swings and that feeling's not really one that you forget about although you don't think about it very often. It's deep down.

So I jump.

And I'm back under the water but this time I look like I'm standing up and I'm looking at the camera (me) even though I'm under water. The bubbles are going up and I'm not breathing this time I'm holding my breath but it's ok.

I'm trying to sink down but it's taking a long time and my nose is itching me I think it's the duvet rubbing against it or maybe just the cold blocking it up.

I think about showing my friend who's a writer and likes meta and maybe he'll say I'm like Charlie Kaufman.

I shatter the blue freeze from my body moving for the first time and my legs drip water as I walk to my rickety desk. I turn on my computer and tell myself I won't check my e-mails I'll just start the story and get it written but then I check my e-mails and there's none and don't believe what anyone tells you it never feels good. So I forget about it and open a new document.

I write down my story but not in a normal English way with commas and short sentences but in a long way because that's stream of consciousness even though I'm way awake because I'm writing this. I don't even write it in the order I thought it I'm skipping to the end and the beginning and all over the place. I check the word count but not as many times as usual and I'm glad look at all the words but that might scare people off oh well.

I read back over my work and I edit it heavily but I don't want people to know that because I want them to like my writing and think I can write in stream of consciousness like James Joyce or someone else good. I worry a lot about which bits should be stream of consciousness and which bits shouldn't like things that I considered should be written concisely and imagined things are messy but the two kind of overlap and it's difficult so I hope I can get away with it. And if you think about it it's all stream of consciousness cause I start in bed thinking. I think about adding commas so my friends who don't read all the time will like it more but then I think about something else quickly 'cause that means I'm thinking bad of them but I like them and they're my friends.

And even though it's not the last sentence of the story because I need that for effect I'm worried about people reading this story because you never know what people might think.

So I check the word count for the final time maybe and I definitely click save and I guess I'm finished. It feels good I guess but I try not to think about it it definitely needs an edit and a really strong ending to wrap up all of the preceding madness.

Fuck I hope I can get some sleep now.

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