



Someone Traquelize Me, Please

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My mission in life is to get enough sleep. I'll do anything for it. It should be easy. Really, you're doing nothing. It takes no special skill or talent. You don't have to be a certain height, like going on an amusement park ride. You don't have to be a certain age, like seeing an R-rated movie. You just have to lie still with your eyes closed and wait. That's all, lie there and wait for sleep to come.

Every night I close the blackout drapes, latch the double paned glass, crawl onto my European pillow-top mattress, pull my 300 thread-count sheets up to my chin, and lie my head down on my Tempurpedic pillow. I have done everything in my power to ensure the perfect night's sleep. I wait. I wait for sleep to come.

Then I realize my feet are too cold. Three weeks ago I read an article that said one of the top reasons people have trouble falling asleep is their feet are too cold. I took a bath earlier to warm up in anticipation of this problem, but apparently in the time I spent listening to that stupid relaxation tape, which my sleep therapist prescribed, my feet have gotten cold. I stomp across the room to make sure my husband is suffering along with me and doesn't have a chance to fall asleep first. I yank a pair of socks from the dresser and pull them on knowing in a few hours they'll make me too hot. In a few hours I will wake up, throw the socks on the floor, push all of the blankets to the side except for the sheet, and try to get back to sleep while lying in a puddle of my own sweat.

I crawl back in bed and give the sheets a hardy pull to further agitate the husband whose breathing is getting a bit too regular. Everything is perfect now. Sleep should be right around the corner. I wait. Then my stomach begins to growl. It growls loud enough that there's an audible rumble. I ate dinner at five-thirty. Some quick math reveals it has been five hours since then. I squeeze my eyes closed and try to ignore the gnawing. Oprah claims her new path to weight loss success includes never eating after six. I wonder if Oprah ever lies in bed at ten-thirty feeling the acids in her stomach beginning to digest her vertebrae.

I give up and head downstairs to find something to placate my stomach.

My hairdresser swears by vanilla ice cream, but by already breaking the six p.m. rule I am halfway down the road to a bean-bag butt, so I decide ice cream is out of the question. I settle for cereal instead, at least the milk will be soothing.

By the time I head back upstairs it is eleven. If I fall asleep the instant I lie back down I will get seven hours of sleep. I usually need eight, so already I conclude the next day will be ruined no matter what. I settle in and feel relaxed.

This excites me. Sleep is sure to be close. I can't wait.

Then I hear a little tinkle, tinkle. Why did we buy that cat a bell? Sure, the animal was dragging home three bird carcasses a week, but that damn bell could drive a person mad. Why does the cat sleep for sixteen hours a day and decide the hours between midnight and two A.M. are the ideal time to attack invisible balls of lint right outside the bedroom door? Already we stack four pillows outside to keep the beast from sticking its paw under the door and trying to dig a hole through the carpet and into the bedroom. What's next? Will we need to throw a layer of caulking around the edges of the door every night before we go to sleep to keep out the bell noise?

Suddenly I understand why people in Vietnam eat cats. During the day cats are so cute you couldn't imagine marinating one. It must have started when a cat dug in the wrong Vietnamese man's fake bedside ficus tree at three A.M.. To save himself from going out of his mind he invented the other, other white meat.

The cat finally runs downstairs and I hope one of the pictures will fall off the wall so he will be pinned there for the rest of the night. It's twelve-thirty and I am not even close to falling asleep. Now I'm tired of lying in bed. Every way I turn is uncomfortable. There's no new position I can think of to trick my body into believing it just crawled in bed and hasn't been lying here for three hours.

I contemplate going to the medicine cabinet for a Tylenol P.M. or a Nytol, but I don't have eight hours to devote to sleep at this point. I really wish I had a giant Nytol salt lick. I would hang it up on the headboard right above my pillow and give it a lick every night before turning in, maybe two if it feels like it's going to be a hard night. By the time I get to the state I am in tonight, I could take it down and suck on it until I fade away into a coma.

I finally do fall asleep at some point, but somehow wake up before the alarm anyway. My subconscious, knowing the day is already ruined, probably figures it might as well get an early start on the pain.