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# Treasures Lost are Found Again

Amy has forgotten how to sleep. It's terrifying. Night after night she lies in bed, struggling to control the fidgets, clear her mind, distract herself, count sheep or clouds or stars or bicycles. She chants *OM* hoping to entice sleep to wrap itself around her like a soft down comforter. No luck. She tries not to descend into that anxiety which permeates the darkness and seeps through the skin. But the night terrors deepen, and, with them, worries about forgetting and aging, about loving and losing love. She is haunted by a mean comment she made years ago that she wishes she could take back or at least forget. It looms large and loud, and makes her squirm with regret.

When nothing works, she gets up and consults the internet, searching for a new miracle cure. Type in *insomnia* and up come 15,300,000 sites! An entertainment for midnight despair. Amy's forage through the internet takes her to the Catholic saints and hagiology (the word a find in itself!). Jewish herself, she never realized that saints were at one's disposal to beg, implore and beseech for any and every passing problem. Fascinated, and more wakeful than ever, she is quite taken with *Raphael the Archangel* who is the

patron against nightmares. *Dymphna* is the saint for all kinds of sleep problems, as well as sleepwalking, epilepsy, insanity, incest and neurological disorders. She is also the patron saint of princesses!

The blue light from the computer screen is not helping Amy get sleepy. She decides to leave the saints and consider what potion to try. The pills, and drops, and tablets—bottles of promises for the naïve and desperate. She knows the purveyors prey on sleepless victims but she wants to believe in them. Maybe reading them aloud, like a mantra, an incantation, a prayer, will bring sleep back to her.

**Lemon Balm**  
**Melatonin**  
**Skull Cap**  
**Passionflower**  
**Valerian**  
**Kava Kava**  
**Gaba and Hops**

And the ones that hide behind mysterious numbers and names:

**R14**  
**5HTP**  
**Cyto-Calm**  
**L-tryptophan**  
**Neurexan**  
**L-Theanine**

And the bottles of mixed potions whose names taunt her with sleep:

**Rescue Sleep**  
**Sleep Aid**  
**Sleep Tonight**  
**Tranquil Sleep**  
**Sleep Relax**

And the prescription pills she loves. She hides them hoping she will forget where they are (she never does), and only doles them out like Scrooge with his pennies:

**Zopiclone, hard and blue**

**Metclazine, small and yellow**

**Lorazepam, tiny and green, an under-the-tongue burst**

In the mornings, Amy's brain is fogged, heavy, cluttered. She can't find things, loses track of bits of her life. Well, if she can't sleep, she can at least get her life in order. Be sure she knows where everything is, have a daily plan, keep lists of her lists, colour code them perhaps.

She is fixated on a reminder she wrote herself on a tiny teal-blue post-it. She's certain it's important but she can't find it. She can't even remember what it's about. Is the forgetting from sleep deprivation? Or a sign of early-onset Alzheimer's? Losing that slip of paper leaves Amy at loose ends, like a tangle of tassels released from the tail of a kite, floating helplessly in the air, despondent, aimless.

She crouches down under the desk amidst the dust and paper clips. Perhaps it has slipped between her desk and the filing cabinet. No luck. She flattens out the crumpled balls of post-its in the waste basket. Nothing. What does it really matter, she asks herself. She probably won't be able to read her writing anyway. Even if she can, it probably won't make any sense. This has happened before.

The long term solution is to make order from chaos. And no better time to start than right now. She begins to rummage through the delicately-balanced mountain of paper on one corner of her desk. Too overwhelming. She settles down on a clear corner of the floor with one of the more modest to-be-filed piles. Soon she is circled by nine smaller stacks, each destined for one of the six filing cabinets or the precarious tower of banker's boxes leaning against the wall. No post-it. Even though she knew in her heart she wouldn't find it here, she thought tackling the long-overdue task of sorting one of the paper mounds would make her feel better, less tired, more focussed. It hasn't. Now the floor has nine new

obstructions requiring yet more careful footwork to reach her desk without disturbing anything.

She knows she is being ridiculous but the missing post-it fills her with a pervasive unease. It opens a floodgate of lost things. The beginning of a deep tumble, a long line of collapsing dominoes. Scrolling through her mind are all the particulars she counts on being able to find. Terrifying is the realization that she may have lost essential things without knowing it. On more than one sleepless night she has catalogued what she must keep track of.

Her friend Marion, a psychotherapist, would maintain that the unconscious will retrieve the words on that post-it at some unexpected and challenging moment, and her friend Harriet, who believes in synchronicity, would be calmly certain that the note will turn up when Amy really needs it. But obsessive as she is, Amy can't shift the feeling of loss at the edge of her consciousness, the border of an abyss. She writes herself a note to find that lost slip of paper. At least she won't forget about it. She considers appealing to *Saint Anthony of Padua*, the patron saint of lost and stolen articles. How does one speak to saints? Does such communication only work inside a church? With a lighted candle? Kneeling, perhaps? Ridiculous, really, a Jewish atheist invoking a Catholic saint!

She slouches in her office chair, trying to turn her mind to a definitive strategy for tackling the office clean-up. Instead she finds herself contemplating the significance of larger and smaller losses. Her mind turns to the existential question: what makes life matter? Suddenly she notices, taped to the top of her computer screen, that teal-blue post-it note, lost but found again. Despite the completely wasted morning, Amy relaxes into relief. Absurd as it seems, she feels back in control. Maybe it doesn't matter that she can't sleep.