

“Box Spring, Cold Jeep, Testosterone, Sleep”

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It's only 9 A.M. and I'm already sound asleep. Listening to the drone of my classmates' voices as they read aloud is better than even the best bedtime story, it seems. I am in the clouds, my head far from the task at hand. Occasionally I get the sensation that I've hit a brick wall and burst into alertness for a couple of seconds. I catch a word or two from Mr. Shula but soon fade back into the clouds. The day is young for many, but I have been up and about for hours. Let me rewind a bit.

5:00 A.M.: My alarm, blaring, wakes me up just enough to punch the snooze button and fall back to sleep for another glorious 10 minutes. These 10 minutes seem like 3, and that's really unfortunate because they are GREAT. It feels like my bed has been upgraded from a cheap box spring to a top-of-the-line Tempurpedic. After a couple of rounds of snooze, my conscious tells me it's time to get up and be productive. I crawl out from underneath my covers and embrace the cold. Our house is heated with a mini-split heat pump that is on another floor, so on mornings where it's minus-10 degrees outside it's a solid 45 degrees in my room. This temperature is well suited for Patriots games and hunting trips, stereotypical New England activities, but I can confirm that it's definitely not well suited for a bedroom, especially so early.

Physically getting out of bed is always interesting. It seems like my floor is always in the same state of haphazardly-placed sharp things strewn about, but these items always seem to change position and I can never remember where they are. I stumble over to grab my sweatpants and trip on one of 3 computers, 2 large boxes, a table, a TV, a broken keyboard, and perhaps even a bottle of sunblock or a cellphone car charger. Suffice to say, by the time I hit my bedroom door I've navigated a minefield and already endured a day's worth of annoyance.

Opening the door is like jumping out of the ocean and into a sauna. The heat feels great and reminds me why I'm up at all. I tiptoe down the stairs so as to not awaken my parents, who easily get agitated when I carelessly tromp around at ungodly hours. There's an older style lamp at the base of the stairs to the left. Half the time I forget to turn it on, but I try to remember much more now as I've stepped in cat puke/hairballs far too many times.

I clomp across the laminate living room floor, tapping away on my phone's geiger-counter sounding keyboard. By now, it's probably close to 5:45, and the microwave's digital clock reminds me to get moving. If I was smart, I would lay out all of my gym stuff the night before, but I almost never have the motivation to do so. Rushing to the laundry room, I grab whatever is clean and will fit (typically the same pair of black sweats and a casual shirt of sorts) out of the dryer. On days when I am careless, I slam the dryer door. My parents are always sure to remind me of just how loud this type of carelessness is when I get home from school.

5:50 A.M.: I'm trying to get out the door, already a couple minutes late, but it'll take at least another 10 to get everything ready. Once I'm positively sure I have everything I take a look again and realize I've forgotten a towel, deodorant, shampoo, underwear, and probably a multitude of other things. Five more trips up and down the stairs and I'm set. This, without fail, awakens my parents if they haven't already been awakened by the alarm clock/previous trips up and down the stairs/dryer door.

I grab all that I can physically carry and open the front door. The porch steps are very icy, so I proceed with caution as I make my way to the Jeep. With all of the storms we've had this year, the doors are probably frozen shut, prompting me to drop all my belongings in the snow and yank with all my might. If I'm lucky enough to get the back door open, I shove all of the stuff into the back seat (which is a mess in itself) and head back in to grab the rest. On days when I am not lucky and the door DOESN'T open, I have to force (and I do mean *force*) everything through the front. If I make both trips in and out of the house without slipping/dropping something crucial/breaking something, I really think I'm ahead of the game.

6:00 A.M.: I turn the keys, crossing my fingers and praying the engine turns over. It hasn't failed me once, but the anemic growl it lets out always makes me worry. On a typical morning, it's not unlikely that a headlight will be out or the gauges will be acting funny. I go with whatever's working and hope whatever else will fix itself by tomorrow. Turning on the defrosters, which are truly awful until you get up to something like 40 mph, I get outside and scrape off as much of the frost as I can. On some days I can manage to scrape off just barely enough to see through, but I'm in a rush so this is normally adequate. I'm sure my parents would love to know how much I conform to "safety first", especially as a young teen driver.

Most of the time, I've spent the night before poorly managing my time, so I remain up until nearly midnight to do homework. As I start on my daily journey to Belfast, I have to take measures into my own hands to stay awake. I leave the heat off (all but the defroster) and turn the radio as loud as I can bear. Coming out of the top of my road is interesting. There's always ice everywhere, making it really difficult to get out into traffic without spinning the tires/taking 10 minutes to get into the road. Fortunately there's rarely much traffic, so I have all the time I need. The ride itself is pretty boring, not helping the whole lack-of-sleep issue, but the pulsating of all the interior lights every time I hit a bump (something is clearly wrong electrically) is fun to watch. As I end my 15 minute drive, I pull into the gym and proceed up the icy driveway, trying my hardest to avoid landing in the ditch. Rear-wheel drive tries its hardest to make sure I do end up in the ditch.

6:20 A.M.: The gym is a huge, green building that looks sort of like an enlarged self-storage facility with windows. It has the distinctly sweet smell of sweat and is usually pretty lively even at this stupidly-early hour. I take all of my shower stuff with me, but the backpack I use to carry it in is too small so half the time I'm fumbling around trying not to drop towels/clothes/soap bottles everywhere. I'm not a morning person so I try to avoid too much social interaction with the rest of the testosterone-filled bunch. I'll spend the next 40 minutes or so working out. By this time I've had more than enough and hit the showers. Twenty minutes later I'm back on my way out, this time fumbling wet towels and wet soap bottles everywhere.

7:30 A.M.: The rest of my morning is pretty lackluster. I drive to school, and usually make it a solid half an hour early. I spend this time hanging out with friends who also show up early and trying not to fall asleep. For whatever reason though, the sleepiness never fails to return. The bell sounds and I rush off to English. By now, whether I had breakfast or not, I'm starving, so I typically down a very nutrient-packed box of donuts during the first 15 minutes of class. This, once again, wards off the sand bags under my eyes, but its effect is only temporary. By the end of class, when we're quite often reading aloud, I am done. Out. Gone. I am lucky if I pick up every other word. When I'm called upon to read I usually get a beefy slap in the face from my "friend" who sits beside me. My face turns red and I apologize to my so-far reasonably understanding English teacher (who's only once threatened to send me to the nurse, "my desk

is not a bed, but I assure you you'll find one there," he sneered) and try to figure out where we are. Reading aloud awakens me just long enough to survive the last couple minutes of class and the bell rings once again. My morning, an ongoing battle against tiredness and clumsiness, mercifully comes to a conclusion.