

# Ode to the Wonders of Sleep Deprivation



The Editorator

*Disclaimer (8 point Italicized Verdana): For those of you who might be wondering, just for the record, while HSP is generally a satire magazine, these letters from the editor are not necessarily meant to be satire in the standard sense. Nor are they necessarily meant to be pure comedy, although some people may accidentally fall into the laugh trap, kind of like assuming something must be news since it happens to be printed in a newspaper. But seriously, we mean it. Although most HSP text blurs truth and fiction like an overzealous Photoshop filter, occasionally fooling our readers' boyfriends' moms, this disclaimer is not some attempt to mislead you. For extremely funny articles, please refer to pages 6-15. Some say the back cover (pg. 16) of the issue is also kind of funny, but that's not important right now. Also feel free to re-read any or all articles and laugh at the volume of your choice, at your leisure. All in all, these letters are meant as rants, sometimes HSP meta-related, sometimes not; sometimes taking the piss out of the grad student way of life, sometimes not. We would have loved to explain in detail the reasons why this disclaimer was written, but we simply don't have the space. In any case, please enjoy the issue and do your best to find truth in fiction! We certainly do. – The Editors*

Like many grad students experimenting permanently with the vampire schedule, for me, all-nighters are par for the course. Recently, in preparation for my general exams last month, I had the good fortune of pulling no fewer than three such REM-state sabbaticals over the course of about two weeks, doing separate stints of around, 28 32, and 43 hours without hitting a pillow. Not only do these unhealthy, wide-eyed marathons lead to an exponential increase in short-burst productivity, making up for previous procrastinatory periods of even greater duration, they also can occasionally include general disorientation, obsessive compulsive fits, and – everyone's favorite – visual and auditory hallucinations.

I've actually had some pre-grad school, pre-HSP experience with this. In my undergraduate astronomy lab at Berkeley, a 40-plus hour/week course that expanded to consume every nanosecond like some bizarro time-eating space monster, we had to complete 5 giant lab reports, each upwards of 30 techno-babble filled pages, writing our own software, operate telescopes remotely, and effectively reinventing the wheel (and its lesser-known counterpart, the Frisbee) every three to four weeks.

During one of these wondrous experiences, in a relatively standard last-minute crusade, I found myself having eschewed sleep for a whopping period of approximately 52 hours. Sitting in front of the computer screen, sporting some headphones, and listening to one of my favorite Jimmy Eat World CDs, upon the end of the last track, I had an interesting revelation. The CD, it appeared, was playing again, although I didn't remember having restarted it. Evidently, the player was set with repeat as the default, I thought. What really confused me was when the CD still hadn't stopped playing *after I took the headphones off.*

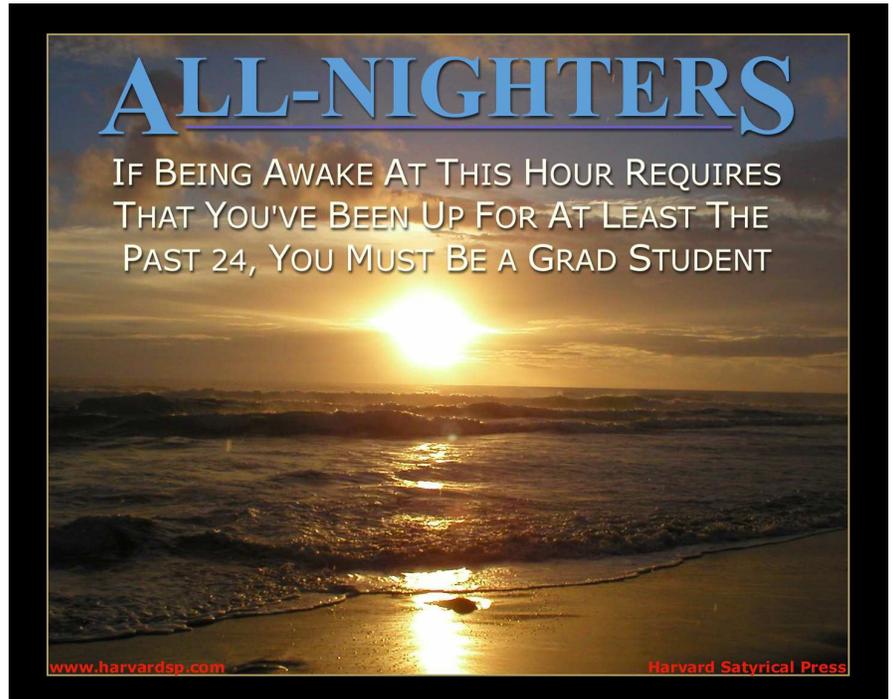
Turning to my buddy Jim, I said, "Hey Jim, are you listening to music?"

Lifting the helicopter style set off of one ear, Jim replied, "Yeah, why do you ask?"

"Well, you're clearly listening to music, but I'm not exactly sure if I am," I said, headphones dangling from my uncontrollably shaking fingers, clearly going berserk from nerve trauma.

"Andy, I think you should get some sleep," said Jim, as I nodded weakly, still enjoying the perfectly reproduced mental playback of the album's third track, "The Middle".

Evidently, your brain actually does record every such detail and can recall it all with high fidelity under stress. I'm taking about every beat, every lyric, every guitar solo, and with timing that would make an atomic clock proud. It was unreal. So, basically, I've had some opportunities to enjoy the wonders of sleep deprivation.

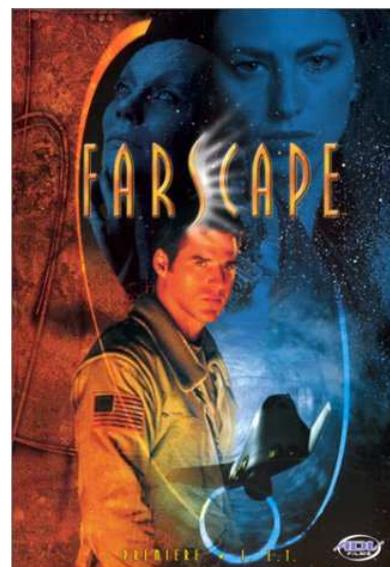


## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

So I'm back at it again at Harvard, in hour 41 – having spent the last 20 hours coding up equations with *LaTeX* and being incredibly anal about individual word choices in a 45 page scientific paper – and I decide that finally, it's about time to take a break. Kindling my astronomer's harmless Sci-Fi addiction, I pop in a DVD of *Farscape* – one of my favorite TV shows – a Jim Henson productions epic filmed outside Sydney, Australia about an astronaut shot through a wormhole to a distant galaxy. Great, time to relax. Except I notice something is funny. The timing of the DVD playback seems off somehow, making my eyes go apeshit just to keep track of the action. Same with the audio, as I find myself tilting my head spasmodically, searching in vain for better acoustics in a dorm room of all places.

Having become accustomed to smooth, high-quality, playback on a relatively new laptop, (courtesy of the astro department grant), and having also spent many hours *not* recharging my brain, I began to get worried. I wasn't just questioning my sanity; I was interrogating it. Had I stayed up too long this time? Was I fundamentally losing the basic ability to watch motion pictures due to the depletion of some crucial neuro-transmitter that could no longer be replaced? These were the thoughts that ran through what was left of my mind as I struggled to enjoy the show despite the annoyingly out of sync jumpiness.

Then it hit me. My computer *had* been running a little slowly that day. After nuking the problem with Norton, enjoying the rest of the episode in peace, sleeping 16 hours, and waking up to a refreshed, fully-restored sanity confidence index, like a good, self-motivated grad student/science slave beast, I made a quesadilla for breakfast at 3pm and, without hesitation or delay, began preparing to do it all over again. 🇺🇸



**Sleep deprivation can be transformed into a wormhole from Wednesday to Saturday, claims new *Science* study**