

I always feel like I am half asleep no matter what I do. I guess I lost whatever hypersensitivity I used to have so everything doesn't feel new anymore. But that indescribable feeling of experiencing newness is really all I am chasing in my life, or maybe specifically in THIS life. I've been on an unintentional autopilot and I am tired of feeling "half asleep."

These illustrations explore hypnagogia, a mind-altering state between sleep and consciousness. Although brief, this period of time warps reality into a hallucinatory transition that occurs before entering the zone of dreams.

I incorporated film photographs with surrealistic drawings to illustrate my experiences with this hypnotic transition. While in this headspace of drifting in and out of consciousness, I sketched characters in black ballpoint pen and black watercolor. At times, it was hard to stay fully awake to draw all I was seeing, but the very process helped me to record some of these visions that occur during this period of feeling half asleep. The photographs are intertwined with the drawings to represent how our minds morph events of the day and how our imagination creates atmospheric memories. The film images depict my fully alert side during the day but since I am easily zoned out in the daytime, it shows how reality can appear surreal.

Since this state of mind is imaginary, the muted black ink illustrates its limited dimensions. The colors mimic the dull feeling of hallucinations that do not live up to reality. This state draws most of its content from past events and, in that way, it can be nostalgic to relive those moments. I recreated these emotions by illustrating scenes from my dreams that have been based on places and faces seen or experienced while here in Napa. By exploring more into our hypnagogic hallucinations, we can find meaning and understanding of how the subconscious interprets reality.

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All that I Want is Something Missing

Alexa F.





Writer's Note:

There really isn't any right way to illustrate those indescribable feelings and unexplainable events that seem to be present within all of our lives. I cannot seem to find the words to portray that emotion of experiencing something for the first time because it's so individualistic and otherworldly that there aren't enough or even the correct words to express it. What is even harder to define is this craving of being immersed in newness and trying to preserve its novelty. There are so many feelings and occurrences that remain amiss since none of us have a full understanding to the significance of why we feel these certain ways. It could be new perceptions of our surroundings or possibly both a physical and emotional feeling that is beyond what our universe can comprehend.

In this work, I attempt to make sense of these indescribably compelling feelings and how they tend to alter our perception of life. Obscure events such as deja vu episodes, out of body experiences, and even sleepwalking all connect back to these unintentional (or potentially intentional) behavioral elements of our mind that seem to occur out of nowhere and don't make much sense to our relativity to reality. I wanted to explore these connecting themes of consciousness by trying to explain this sensation of inexplicability to my mom in a recorded interview where she also communicates some of her accounts of a similar feeling. Juxtaposed to the conversation, I combined pieces of scientific definitions and short research analysis for these odd metaphysical experiences that have very little backup studies to come to any conclusions their importance. I chose to intertwine and switch back and forth between both myself, my mom, and scientific writings to observe the differences in how we try to uncover and produce significance into sensations we cannot grasp. All that we want is to find meaning in the unknown and fill that missing "something" of consciousness with a feeling of vivid newness.

Readers' Guide:

The piece you are about to read is a transcribed phone call between my mom and I that took place on November 7, 2018, while I was in Napa (attending school) and she was in San Francisco (my home city).

Ciriaco-Fisher, Macy. Interview. By Alexa Morgaine Fisher. 7 Nov. 2018.

the italicized words with indented paragraphs are my speech
the regular font words with non-indent paragraphs are my mom's responses and stories
the researched background passages are in regular font and have indented paragraphs

The call begins on the topic of what is newness and why it is something we feel that we have to chase a lot of the time. From there the conversation jumps to multiple smaller themes that build off one another, yet still connect back to that overarching desire for novelty in new experiences. I used the phone call between my mom and I as the main form of an analysis of my topic because I want to convey how, with little known factual data of what these feelings are, we

try to connect the dots to our past experiences and present perceptions and theorize its personal relevance to our lives. I think trying to understand more about the metaphysical side of why we perceive and experience the indescribable helps us become more immersed and aware of our life. We may never find that something that feels missing but trying to discover the meaning behind what we don't fully understand might be the best way to experience newness in life more often.

I. New

1. having recently come into existence¹
2. unfamiliar or strange to someone²

{phone call begins}

I am constantly searching for this sensation of newness. I'm not sure as to why this "feeling" is so crucial to my life. I think the reason why I want it so badly is because it rarely happens anymore. When you feel something like that, the rest of time and the world is perceived so muted and almost half asleep. Things are constantly changing, we are experiencing newness every single moment in our lives, but why is it that I only can reach that vivid and climatic sense for specific situations?

My thing is even though you are searching for newness all the time, it has still feel exciting. It has to have that 'woah, I can't believe something like that exists' sensation.

That awareness of newness is so temporary, so short and I can't recreate that euphoric moment to something that I am now fully aware of. Even though the world is so vast, that feeling can only apply to so much since the selection of things we haven't experienced shrink quicker as we get older. But then you realize how much more there is to experience and I feel stuck in a transitional state of coping on what will never be able to felt for again.

II. ½ Asleep

I always feel like I am half asleep no matter what I do. I guess I lost whatever hypersensitivity I used to have so everything doesn't feel new anymore. But that indescribable feeling of experiencing newness is really all I am chasing in my life, or maybe specifically in THIS life. I've been on an unintentional autopilot and I am tired of feeling "half asleep", if that is what it is characterized as.

More scholarly known as, "Hypnagogia", refers to this state between sleep and being awake. Although brief, this period of time starts to warp reality into a trippy transition right before our dreams. We are conscious of our hallucinations but are unable to snap out of them.³

¹ "Merriam-Webster Dictionary." *Merriam-Webster*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/new.

² "Oxford Living Dictionaries." *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/new.

³ Bell, Vaughan. "The Trippy State between Wakefulness and Sleep." *The Atlantic*, 20 Apr. 2016, www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/04/deciphering-hypnagogia/478941/.

III. Spaced Cadet

Hey, space cadet! What exactly are you thinking when you are zoned out?

Oh I don't know, nothing, well not exactly. I am thinking about everything but something, can't really describe the feeling, fades out all the things but puts it in the back of your head so you're still thinking about it but numbs half of it and the other part is just foggy, but it's a very neutral feeling

Well...alrighty

Do you know the feeling?

Not really, but I catch you doing it pretty often

Yea I could do it all day...but it doesn't feel like a waste of time.

Do you have a lot of things you are thinking about?

I guess so, the closest feeling I can allude to it is when you are dreaming but fully awake.⁴ When you are dreaming you aren't thinking intentionally but stuff will pop up. But its muted hallucination, nothing is really intensely detailed and you kind of just let it happen. I will be laying in bed and start seeing a bunch of green swirl displays onto my bedsheets. Sometimes shadowed figures looming around my room but I don't think anything of it because subconsciously I know it isn't real, or at least I think it's not. I am generally just zoned out all the time.

True but more so there than back home, because you are always going, but not willingly. You know what I find with you, I think you connect more with the metaphysical world. That's probably why you sleepwalk.

IV. Sleep Drifter

Sleepwalking occurs during an NREM sleep, a rapid eye movement or dreamless sleep, where one unknowingly drifts while fully unconscious. Scientists have speculated that it may be caused by the brain attempting to transition directly from deep NREM sleep to wakefulness, rather than going through the subsequent stages of the sleep cycle. People who sleepwalk can be both a danger to themselves and others around them. They do not realize their actions and are not awake to fix the damage created.⁵ "Drifters move from place to place...once their problems catch up to them, or they've had what fun they can get out of the place they are at, they move on again. They are but simple wanderers, for whatever reasons they have to be one. A person, with no real place to call their home. They wander sometimes looking for something. Sometimes because it's the only way to get away from everything that made them become drifters in the first place. We all have our reasons for it."⁶

Drifting while asleep and awake makes it hard to decipher when I am dreaming and not. If drifting means wandering, what exactly am I looking for?

⁴ Hypnagogia

⁵ "What Is Sleepwalking?" *Kid's Sleep Health*, kidshealth.org/en/parents/sleepwalking.html.

⁶ "Urban Dictionary." *Urban Dictionary*, www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=drifter.

V. Out of Body

I keep on getting these out of body experiences, like just a couple days ago I was looking at my thumb straight on but for some reason, I don't know if it was my mind or eyes but they dissociated and I was seeing my thumb on the outside from about four feet away. It was almost as if my soul was trying to escape and get away from my body for the slightest bit. I used to get that feeling a shit ton when I lived in the old apartment. I remember once I was staring at my feet and they were grounded but I don't know if it was another half of me but my feet were on the wall, haha that sounds sort of like a song lyric..but yea so that was strange.

Spontaneous out of body experiences are most commonly reported as occurring just before falling asleep or just prior to waking. They are more likely to occur when sleep is not particularly deep, whether it be from noise, stress, or illness. Physical activity induced out of body experiences have been reported following or during extreme exertion. Near death experiences are closely linked to OBEs⁷ because the amount of energy exerted is close to life draining.

VI. Too Close

There are a few incidents that I can think of at the moment. The first one was when I was in my early 20s and I was driving my friend, Amy, to the airport. It was dumping rain and this truck was going to hit my car, so I swerved to the side since there was soft gravel. My car did a 360, no I should say a 180, so I was facing traffic on the freeway. So there was this big diesel truck that was about to hit me, but I saw it and it swerved around me. But this whole time I was staring at this truck, I saw my whole life flash before me. When everything flies; it went that fast, it was like a movie from when I was little to a grown up; almost as if someone fast forwarded a movie very very fast. Yea you know when people say, "My life flashed before my eyes?" Well, it really did. It's weird. From when I was little to that specific point and thank God that truck swerved around me. After that, I pulled to the side to catch my breath and was freaking out. It was almost like a movie projected in your mind but with a fast-forward remote. I seriously thought I was going to die that day. Another incident happened when I was still a kid back in Merced, we had this ax that was hanging on the wall and I happened to touch it and I was bending down and it almost sliced me dead, but it didn't. It really should have hit me.

The most common characteristics of a near-death experience include "feelings of calmness, out-of-body experiences, traveling through a dark region or void, a bright and vivid light in the distance, communicating with otherworldly agents, and traveling to a mysterious and unearthly realm."⁸

VII. Multi-Verse

⁷ Out of Body Experiences

⁸ Jaekl, Philip. "Turns out Near-Death Experiences Are Psychedelic, Not Religious." *Wired*, www.wired.co.uk/article/near-death-experiences-psychedelic-religious.

I think there's a bunch of different universes that we are living in different ways. *these alternate universes and how at times they overlap creating the perfect outcome for the time being. Because seriously, there have been many situations that I have somehow been placed in, where I feel as if it isn't real because of how random the circumstances are and how unlikely the odds are of it occurring.*

VIII. Déjà Vu

I stumbled into this woman at the Polk Street Fair, who had a sign that said she read palms, so I went into her tent to check it out. She bombarded me with a ton of questions while looking at my palm. A particular question she asked was, "Do you get déjà vu a lot?" and I'm like yea I guess I do. She said that "Well it seems to me that your life that you were supposed to have already had happened and you are kind of playing catch-up, that's why you keep getting this déjà vu because it really did already happen."

Or maybe it's just a hiccup and the universe gives you glimpses of lives that you are living in. So maybe one specific universe and the one we are in now are very similar and seeing them happen. For some odd reason, you have experienced all these things but specific incidents blow everything out of proportion and they are so unworldly that the feeling carries no matter what or how many alternate realities are taking place. They are the few consistent occurrences that are emotionally too much for just one universe to contain so it thrashes into all of them.

Yea well I guess it does? I haven't experienced that feeling to the extent you put into detail but maybe you are just looking for something not of this world? Like a newness that doesn't exist in this time but it could in some other reality maybe?

I mean déjà vu practically seems that you continually live out the same situation in infinite alternate realities until you get the ideal outcome. If that is the case then déjà vu is the metaphysical universal radio signaling, telling all universes that you still haven't reached the all-time perfect formula of how the events are to supposed occur and that is why you have felt that the situation in a previous life because it indeed has happened before. Speaking of which have I told you that...I am constantly searching for this sensation of newness.

{phone call ends}

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