

**WRITING**

# The Insomniac's Escape

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**TYPE****NARRATIVE****GENRE****GRADE 8**

*Tying your shoes in the dark is hard, but you eventually get used to it.*

I tie my shoes slowly, the same way I did when I first learned, with the bunny ears and everything. You memorize how to do it after repeating it every night. I stand up and check that I have everything. Phone? Yeah. Headphones? I pick them up from the kitchen counter and put them around my neck. Keys? I reach in the pocket of my hoodie and take them out, checking that they're the right ones. Okay, check. I look at the time on my phone. It's 3 a.m., the time I leave every night. I listen for footsteps coming down the stairs, but I don't hear anything.

The first time I snuck out, it was because I had so much stress building up from different things. I was getting bad grades, ignoring my mental health, and doing a lot of other things that were generally frowned upon by people. My house was making me feel so

cooped up and trapped, so one night, I had to take a break. Just an hour outside at night helped me calm down, and I've been doing it almost every day since. My grades went up, I felt less depressed and overwhelmed, my life generally improved in so many areas. It just made me feel so calm.

When I don't hear anyone coming down the stairs, I pull my headphones over my ears and try to find something to play. I always try to play a playlist or artist that fits the vibe of the night. My music taste is pretty erratic; it ranges from soundtracks, to Mitski, to the Beatles, to literally anything. I eventually press Shuffle on my favorite playlist, open the door, and step into my back "yard." I say "yard" because it's more like a small slab of concrete, only big enough for us to park our car on. As I walk down my back steps, the opening to "Bluebird" by Beach House starts playing, and I shove my phone in my pocket with my keys. I cross the road behind my house, then pass a few buildings until I get to the field.

The field is just a random patch of grass that people sometimes take their dogs to when they don't feel like walking them. It's pretty small but big enough that I get tired running across it. By the time I reach the other side, "Fireworks" by Mitski has started playing in

my headphones. The field is gated in on three sides, with the fourth side bordered by a brick wall. It's not a very big wall, so I climb over it pretty easily. I jump down and land on the other side, where the dirt makes a little mushroom cloud at my feet. I turn around to face a road flanking the wall, barely lit by the singular streetlight and the stars. A car drives by, which is pretty rare for this road, but as soon as it's out of sight, I cross.

On the other side of the road are the woods. There's a trail going straight into them that used to be for cars, but it's too worn and overgrown, so you can only take it by foot. The woods are pretty dark, but I use my phone to light up the trail. The walk down the trail isn't very long, only like five minutes, and it's mostly downhill. Halfway down, the song changes to "Night Time" by Superorganism—which is pretty high-energy but a great song, so I don't really mind. I know I'm getting close to the end when I see a sign nailed to a tree saying that there's a dead end ahead. I turn off my flashlight and shove my phone in my pocket again as the trees clear out and stars start to fill the sky. Ahead of me is a grass clearing and then a drop. About five feet from where the trees end, there's a cliffside that I would definitely die from if I fell off, but I never do.

The thought of death has always been interesting to me. Not in a creepy way or anything, but more like, Where do we go? How does it feel? Whether I knew it or not, I've come close to death so many times, like I'm doing now sitting near this cliff. But I've come to this cliffside so many times, it only feels natural to sit with my legs hanging over the edge and lean back. The cliffside drops about sixty feet, and then underneath, a huge city spreads out so far that I can't see all of it. The city is about a twenty- minute drive from my house, so other than the road behind me, no cars even come close to my clearing. "Jerusalem, New York, Berlin" by Vampire Weekend starts playing, so I turn the volume all the way up and put my headphones around my neck. I check the time on my phone, and it's 3:10. I set it face down next to me and take in my surroundings.

I come here every night, but this place never makes me feel bored or anything but calm, content, and happy in general. I close my eyes and sit for another hour. As my playlist ends, I stand up, shuffle the Beatles, and walk back into the woods.

## **PLAYLIST**

- Night Time – Superorganism
- A Huge Tree in the Tsukamori Forest – Joe Hisaishi
- Fireworks – Mitski
- Life on Mars? – Seu Jorge (Original by David Bowie)

- Take a Bite – Beabadoobee
- My Mistake – Vampire Weekend
- Beaches – Beabadoobee
- Blue Bird – Beach House
- Ever Seen – Beabadoobee
- Real Man – Beabadoobee
- Boxer – Lovers
- Lucid Dreams – St. Beauty