

On early birds and their perpetual tragedy

Renata Echanis Rojo*

There is no greater violence against the human soul than the command to wake up before it wishes to. The alarm going off, imposing its brutal tyranny upon us mortals, comes not to rouse us into life, but to wrench us out of our state of pleasant delight. Waking up early is not solely the act of opening one's eyes at an unreasonable hour, but of being exiled from our refuge of dreams. It strikes one as being thrust into the social theatre of parading before a blazing sun that seems to rise purely out of spite. We are told, without irony and with disturbing confidence, that rising at dawn is virtuous, even noble. Yet for me, it has always felt like divine punishment: a sentence served with yawns and bleary eyes, for a day that has not yet earned the right to begin.

The first battle of the morning is fought against the bed, the most demanding partner. For she pleads like a desperate lover, clinging anxiously and refusing to let us go; whispering that no hour is too late and no task too urgent, that our place is there, with her. She calls with that usual intoxicating softness, offering one last dream if we only stayed. And we, still lying in it, reply with pitiful excuses. We claim that the last few nights have not been quite satisfying, that life beyond her sheets demands our presence, since responsibilities surpass her embrace. But we, lacking resolve, always choose to give in. We bargain for just a little more time, silencing the alarm in exchange for one last embrace, one final fantasy. We argue that it is only temporary, that soon we will rise, that duty awaits. But both sides know the truth, deeply in their hearts: we are willing participants in this toxic affair, and her arguments are almost too convincing to resist. To my mind, if it were not for the blaring alarm I would remain with her forever, content with our hopeless co-dependence.

Then comes the cold. Awaiting those who are brave enough to leave the bed, ready to punish such betrayal. The very moment your left foot attempts to touch the floor, the body is doomed to bear an agonizing cold that creeps from your toes upward, numbing our legs. The mat we never bought seems to mock us in its absence, conspiring with the cold to make our suffering complete. Soon the arms feel it too, and an automatic shiver takes hold of us, as if the body were desperately trying to summon warmth by shaking uncontrollably. It is in those first shuddering seconds that one cannot help but wonder whether it was worth having argued with the bed at all. Thus, the next ordeal we must face is getting dressed. Our clothes, stiff and indifferent, as if they had just returned from an expedition to Antarctica, are resentful of having been recalled only to consume the little warmth that still remains in us. But even this has a price: the fee we pay for leaving bed includes the loss of our warmth. We are not simply dressing but giving frozen fabrics the vitality they so avariciously take from us.

Breakfast provides very little consolation to the tragedy. Two sad pieces of burnt toast stare at us from the plate, with a dab of butter that does nothing to conceal their defeat. The boiling tea does not offer any comfort either, as it is quickly swallowed out of necessity rather than pleasure: a hurried exchange with the body to keep it upright. There is no time to savour any of it before the morning carries us on its ruthless path.

The final act comes at last: stepping out into the coldness of the morning. The shoes are tied, the coat is firmly in place. The door clicks shut behind us and we are suddenly, once again, part of the world. The warmth of bed is now a distant memory, one that fades swiftly, like a dream you try to remember but fail to grasp. Just like any other extra character in the day's play, we walk anonymously towards the morning stage, which, we

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are told, is the reward of the early bird. The idea of success, discipline and virtue: a sleep-deprived, slightly paranoid and lonely bird. The morning routine has come to an end, but only for today. Tomorrow and the days to come will follow. The cycle will be repeated, faithful and merciless.

Early risings have already buried a batch of dreams, even before they had the chance to live. Especially for those whose conception of mornings was deluded by some cultural hallucination imagined to be a golden hour, rather than the grey grind it truly is. They soon found their romance replaced by resentment, as they were forcibly reduced to becoming serial 'wake-uppers'. These cold and drowsy mornings are often the price for a long, joyous night, paid in yawns and regret. For many, coffee has come to play the faithful rescuer role, as a first warm hand that pulls them out of their drowsiness. But its daily presence tells another story: one of betrayal. I personally suspect that those who cling to a brief daily romance with their cup of coffee are just trying to mask their broken bond with their bed, to which they seem reluctant to commit. A relationship now held together by caffeine and denial, as if sleep was no longer enough, or perhaps never has been.