

somnia

for Susanna

first night

- You awake, Julie?
- Well I am now, what is it this time?
- I just understood about getting to sleep. Why we can't get how to do it. Wanna hear?
- Don't think I have much choice, Amos. But it's 2 AM.
- Well, when you can't get to sleep you just lie there and you think about ways of getting to sleep. What else? Things you can do with your mind. Counting sheep doesn't work, but you could think of the houses you ever lived in, or make scenes in your mind, or tell stories, or try to remember names. One of these is gonna work. And one of them does work, because you get to sleep eventually even if it's just before the sun comes up. But then you can't remember what the trick was, because you were falling asleep when you thought of it. That's what I've just understood. You forget everything just as you falling asleep, so the tricks you remember are the ones that *didn't* work and the one that did work is like forgotten by the morning. And the next night you have to go through the whole business again.
- *zzzzshzzzzzzooowhiiiirrrrrrzzzzz*

second night

- Hey Julie, this is interesting.
- Okay okay, just quickly.
- Well, it's when you're trying to get sleep. You think of all kinds of things that might work to get you there, and one of them does work, but you've forgotten it in the morning.
- Forgotten, forgotten, you forgotten that you told me that last night. Just go to sleep, Amos, for chrissake.
- Ah, so it sort of works. But you lose it further back than I was thinking. Gotta fix that.

third night

- I am walking through a forest and there is an owl on a tree and I look very carefully at the owl and it turns into a cat. Then the cat sees a mouse and chases it down a hole but I follow, and then we meet a snake so I go yiiiikes!
- What on earth, what on earth? It's 3 AM now. And I was deep asleep. It's never so easy to get back to sleep when you wake up in the middle.
- I was hoping you would remember what I was saying so you could tell me in morning. Then if I couldn't remember it, that would be the one that worked.
- I'm not going to remember if I am asleep.
- But you heard me and you say yourself you're not going to sleep now, so you'll remember it.

- I won't remember if I run screaming out of the room. And how am I supposed to remember all the damn things you say?

fourth night

- That house we lived in when I was 14. There was a lovely stream just behind the house with willow trees. But there were no windows in that direction. There was a big picture window at the front facing a miserable dirt road. So suppose we put big windows at the back. Then you'd have to move the bathroom. You could put it at the front as long as you made a new door of the entrance hall.
- What is that, Amos? What for God's sake is it now?
- It's not for you Julie. Just go back to sleep. Ignore me. I have a tape recorder there and I'm going to listen to it in the morning. The last thing on it will be the one that worked.
- And I'm supposed to sleep, while you go on and on loud enough for a tape recorder on the other side of the room to pick it up??
- But some people sleep best with the radio on. A little quiet talking is just what they need.

- But the radio isn't full of stuff about how to get to sleep, that's just gonna wake you up and make you worry about sleeping so you can't.

seventh night

- And the theme of the sixth Symphony which movement is it is like dum dum da dum dum but at the end of the ninth it goes da da da dum dum dum dum dum dum
- Again, again, again!!
- But I'm just whispering. I've moved the recorder right by the bed. I don't think you are very good sleeper.
- Yes, I'm kept awake by thoughts of how to dispose of your body. Or maybe I could just tell everyone I was acting out a bad dream.
- Okay, okay. I'll think of something else.

eighth night

- *oooooo, whaaaa, aaaahhummm*
- Quick quick, Julie, speak to me.
- But I just got to sleep.
- That's it! You're just asleep so you might not have forgotten yet.
- Forgot what, for fuck's sake?
- What you were thinking just before you drifted off. Tell me, tell me: it will be what works.

- I can't remember. It feels like ages ago. But I was having a nice dream about marrying my divorce lawyer
- I guess I left it too long. I'll have to ask you earlier next time.

ninth night

- *aahhh, sssss*
- Quick Julie, tell me tell me. Then you can go back to sleep
- No I won't. It will take hours now. But I'll make sure you don't sleep either.
- *HuuuhhhHuuusssssshvuuuuuh*
- Wake up, Amos, wake up. Tell me all about it.
- Wazzat Julie? I just got to sleep.
- I know, I know, don't I just know. But if I'm not going to sleep you're not going to sleep.
- But I'm the one who has trouble getting there. I'm going back to sleep.
- *zzzooooochroooschzzzz*
- Amos, Amos, I've just had a thought.
- Whaat, whaaat. Where are we? What's going on?

tenth night

- And if, what dog cake, I told her don't do it again.
- You're talking in your sleep, Amos. Wake up and tell me all about it.
- It's gone now. So what were you thinking about?
- About what kinds of thoughts keep you awake, and wanting to tell them to you. And now that you're awake I can. Here's one: the back door might be unlocked so anyone could come in. Here's another: your bladder is just beginning to feel full so perhaps you should get up and go to the toilet now, but it's nice and warm in bed, yet still ...
- Dammit, Julie. I'm never going to get back to sleep now. Perhaps if I got up and walked to the bathroom then afterwards I could check the back door. But it's so comfy in here, even if I'm wide awake.

fourteenth night

- I've got it! I've got it!
- What? What!?
- The secret of getting to sleep! And it's all thanks to asking you.
- But you're not asleep. Believe me, you're not asleep.
- But I can be asleep whenever I want. Here's the trick. I think of ways of finding out how you get to sleep so easily without waking you up to find out. That's a hard one, since you will have forgotten in the morning. It's so hard that it sends me to sleep.
- Something to tell you, too. I have found a better way of getting to sleep. But perhaps I better not tell you.

- Oh please, please. Could be something I can use.
- Well, I think of ways I can wake you up just after you finally got to sleep. Without you knowing it was me. Like just now I scratched your buttocks with my fingernail. And by the time your new trick has got you to sleep I will have thought of something else.