

# Christian Bell vs. Sleep

by Christian Bell

Christian Bell couldn't sleep so he went to Wal-Mart, bought Beck CDs. 6:30 Sunday morning, bleaching summer light. He purchased "Mutations," "Odelay," and "Midnite Vultures." He used to own them but his former girlfriend had taken them before leaving. She hated Beck, as she'd said repeatedly, so she was a common thief. She, like Beck, was never conducive to sleep.

\* \* \*

Bell can't sleep in/on the following: airplanes, car trips, couches, first nights in hotels, jury duty holding area, commuter train, work breakroom, tent, park bench, the ground.

\* \* \*

Bell went to bed for what should've been restful sleep. Ten minutes in, the phone rang. Wrong number. Two hours later, the cat clears the nightstand of books, pens, alarm clock. Two hours later, thunder and rain. An hour later, the cat jumped on his chest. Then, as he finally hit sound sleep, the alarm clock shouted him awake. He sat upright, thought, I can't stand it. The cat at his feet, head tilted, like, what's up?

\* \* \*

Bell gave up caffeine, alcohol, chocolate, television, food after dinner. He exercised, listened to sleep CDs, took pills. He read Henry James books. Yet he still couldn't sleep.

\* \* \*

Bell renounced sleep. Staying awake, 24 hours became 36, delirium. Beyond two days, he was still awake. At 74 hours a little green man appeared before him. A cross between Gazoo and Stewie Griffin. You ninny, he said, this isn't how you do it. What do you suggest, Bell said. The imp, finger lifted, prepared to speak. Just then, Bell fell into dreamless sleep.

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Three hours in, the phone rang. Bell, in zombie state, answered. The ex-girlfriend: I want to return your Beck CDs. He hung up, felt

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the old panic. He shouted, come back, green man! But nothing.  
The cat curled up next to him, fell instantly asleep.

