

# Uncomfortable and Uncommitted

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MANAGING EDITOR

I've slept with my feet hanging off the end of the bed, sticking out from underneath the covers, for as long as I can remember. I know, of course, that I couldn't sleep without any covers at all. I realize that. Even in the summer, the room is too cold, and I am too warm. But in the middle of the coldest of winter nights, or on an early spring morning with the window open, I can't close my eyes without sneaking at least one foot outside the comforter.

The thing is, it's very difficult for me to get comfortable. It's very difficult for me to commit to the bed. This unease, this disability, leaks into every facet of my life.

When I was young, I paced the hallway in the downstairs of my house during the summer. I was too young to go swimming unattended, too old to play in the sandbox. What I needed, what I wanted more than anything then was snow.

I longed for summer to be over and for school to begin again. There was nothing to do in these months. Suddenly I had the whole day to fill, and nothing to fill it with. In the winter, I spent my time in school and at recess. I filled my days with organized sports teams, YMCA swimming lessons, and Friday afternoon ski-school.

It was hot outside in summer. Too hot. Hot enough to melt a Swedish Fish in your hair. Hot so that the grass grew stiff and the dock got too warm for bare feet. The sun made the air coarse and uncomfortable and still. Any movement past a jog reduced me to a wheezing crumple. In the middle of summer, at the height of my youth, I would have traded my entire collection of Hardy Boys adventures for a single snowball.

When winter finally came, when the first snows of November buried my front yard and the snowplow piled the stuff high and deep against the Eastern corner of the barn, I was quick to wish instead for the freedom and warmth of June and

prepare myself for class each day. I stow extra mechanical pencils and pens in the pockets of my binders. By midterms, the gloss of these new things has faded.

At this point in my semester, I am ready to go home. I am tired of

change; a life there is an eternity without it.

I've never finished a puzzle by myself. I usually get most of the outside done, and then abandon it there on the table, with an unfinished border and a jagged hole in the middle. Often my sister, who has patience for things like puzzles, comes along and completes it, but just as often it stays there on the table for days. In time, I put it back in its box.

I have stacks and stacks of books I haven't finished, whose spines are cracked only to page 137.

I used to make models, plastic ones with hundreds of pieces. I built cars with painstakingly recreated engines and drive shafts, and airplanes with realistic pilot controls and gauges. And I tried to be faithful to the directions, tried to piece the molded dull red plastic radiators and cooling fans together and lower them into red plastic engine compartments. Invariably, I abandoned the innards of my models, abandoned the directions, and stuck on instead the large, satisfying outer panels until the models looked right. Until they looked like the box. By the end of my childhood, I had close to a dozen empty, unfinished shells. Little red reproductions of GTOs and aircraft carriers.

I built these again and again because I enjoyed building models. I enjoyed the beginning, anyhow, which, really, is what I enjoy about most things in life. Life is dull without changes and beginnings. And it's meaningless without middles.

And this, I think, is why I cannot get comfortable. Because to be comfortable I would have to commit to the familiar, and to do that I would have to bring my foot back into the covers. And I have been sleeping that way for a very long time. Almost twenty years, without fail.

“Man is never content with what he has, he strives for more. Man climbs mountains and explores the outermost regions of space. Man discovers continents and tames savages and invents better, faster, more efficient toasters. As human beings it is our job to be dissatisfied.”

July. Winter was dark; I rose for school every morning before the sun came up, and rode yawning with eyes closed and my head thumping against the bus window to school while the barren countryside lightened around me. My time in the classroom was spent hoping the white landscape would turn brown and then green, wishing for the mud of spring and the grass of summer. I spent winters pacing the same downstairs hallway, hiding from chapping winds and freezing cold, and dreaming of bare feet and mosquito bites.

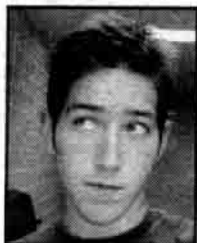
It's been years, but I still follow this pattern, this ritual, every season. Labor day is scarcely over before I set my sights on Thanksgiving. I am consistently disappointed and dissatisfied with my life because I lean too heavily on the future. I know this.

This semester, or any semester for that matter, is no different. In the beginning, in the excitement of new classes and new people and expensive new textbooks, everything is shiny. Every professor is interesting and engaging. Assignments make sense, and I, naturally, set aside the proper time to complete them thoughtfully, and

my classes, and I am tired of the endless cycle of week and weekend. I am tired of eating food that was prepared for 200. It drives me absolutely crazy to know where I'll be at 1:42 on Tuesday, and the Tuesday after, and the Tuesday after that. I am ready for a change.

And I don't think I'm alone here. I think what I'm describing is a universal condition, a phenomenon. Man is never content with what he has, he strives for more. Man climbs mountains and explores the outermost regions of space. Man discovers continents and tames savages and invents better, faster, more efficient toasters. As human beings it is our job to be dissatisfied. Man has an overarching, all-encompassing, inherent fear of commitment because, by my logic at least, committing to anything isn't easy. It is dangerous, and boring at that.

To be honest, I'm not sure if I could handle a world that didn't change every three months. I think that's why people vacation in equatorial paradises that are sun drenched and hot year round and don't live there. To live there is to commit to one season, one temperature, one island. A vacation in paradise is a



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