

EPISODE 04: HYPNOPHOBIA

[INTRO]

NARRATOR:

Francis Forever. Episode 4: Hypnophobia.

[RECORDER CLICKS ON]

FRANCIS:

Diary of Francis Webb, August 16th, 1 pm.

I haven't slept. I don't know if I haven't slept at all, but I don't remember waking up since Saturn left. I've been thinking a lot, but none of the thoughts are worth saying. That's true for a lot of my thoughts, actually. Just incoherent rambling. I don't know when I set an alarm, but I guess I did.

Went off at one o' clock. We were supposed to leave now, Saturn and I. Or maybe they were just supposed to arrive. I... don't remember. I guess that means Saturn's late. I'm not mad, though. Maybe I'm too tired to feel anything. I don't know *why* I haven't slept, I know it sure isn't helping anything. I guess I'm afraid. God, of *course* this is when my hypnophobia makes its reappearance. It's ironic. You avoid anything that feels like death, and it just brings you closer.

I'm so scared of dying in my sleep, of slipping peacefully into an endless slumber, so I stay awake. But do you know how unhealthy sleep deprivation is? I might as well put out a welcome mat for death. Stress, hallucinations, impaired memory...

[FRANCIS SNORTS]

Got that down already. There are some truly *fascinating* side effects of sleep deprivation, and I... I want to experience all of them. Well, most of them, anyway. I don't want permanent organ damage or anything, I just want to *feel* it. Why? I guess at one point I just got sick of not feeling enough. So now I sit here, eyes closing, shivering... waiting. Waiting for Saturn to... waiting for Saturn to what? Waiting for them to listen to me. To understand. Or maybe just anybody. I feel like I'm floating. And it's not just the sleep deprivation. I don't know if I have a single human connection. I guess there's my mom, but she works all the time and I just stay in my room. I

mean, it's Sunday, she should be off of work. But I feel like I haven't seen her in weeks. Is she even here? When was the last time we talked? And I talk to my dad *sometimes*, but we mostly just send each other dumb texts and talk about TV. Don't think I've ever told him a single feeling

I have. It's okay, though. I don't really want to. As for my mom...

[FRANCIS GETS UP FROM THEIR CHAIR]

[SHOUTING]

MOM!!! MOOOOOOOM!

[PAUSE, A FEW MOMENTS OF QUIET]

[FRANCIS SIGHS AND SITS BACK DOWN]

Huh. Maybe it's my brain being scrambled, but when was the last time she was even home? I guess I could call her, but [giggling slightly] I don't really care. I'm going to drive across the country with—with Saturn, and nobody can't stop me, because I'm Francis, and I'm an adult now, and nobody can tell me what to do.

[PAUSE]

WOW that sounded childish. But y'know what? It's my journal. My tapes, or whatever. There's nobody here that can make fun of me, or judge me, or tell me that going on a cross-country journey with an acquaintance to hunt a magic book to make me immortal is a "bad idea." Even if there was, I'm over caring about what people think. I don't care if people dislike me, if they think I'm a bad person, if they cut me out, or stop talking to me, or—or talk about me behind my back. I don't care. I don't care. I...

I'm tired. I'm exhausted. I want to go to sleep but I don't want to be unconscious. I just want... huh. I don't know what I want. I mean... I want to be immortal, right? Live forever, watch--watch the world die.....

[PAUSE]

Yeah. That *is* what I want. Just to experience everything. It sounds nice. Well, not *nice*, but I still want it. I still want it. But right now... the book. Right, the book. Maybe I could look it up...? Why haven't I thought of looking it up before. I guess I could do that.

[FRANCIS TYPES ON A COMPUTER]

Huh. God I wish I kept taking latin. But I don't see any results for a book, much less any book like... like that one. Some poems, mostly just latin dictionaries. But nothing about m... the book. Fucreaking *nothing*. God *damn* it. I feel even more curious than I was when Saturn first told me their story. The anticipation has just been building up, and it's all I can think about. That.. that *book*. What is it? Where did it come from? Where is it?

[PAUSE]

I'm getting ahead of myself. The first thing I need to figure out is if the book is actually *real*. It would suck if Saturn and I drove halfway across the country just to find an old house and a kid with serious issues... which is probably exactly what's going to happen. How exciting. I think this is the first... "paranormal" thing that I've ever heard of from a...an acquaintance. I mean I guess I didn't exactly disbelieve the supernatural, but I didn't—don't—actually believe in it. It just seems too good to be true, like unconditional love, or good presidents.

[FRANCIS LAUGHS AT THEIR JOKE FOR A BIT TOO LONG]

I want to believe in the supernatural. Life is just so *boring* without it. Maybe that's my problem—too much escapism. I don't want to live an average life, just settle down in the suburbs or something. And I don't want to live in poverty, or in a mansion. I've said this already, but I have no idea what I want to do with my life—not if I can't do... what I'm trying to do. I used to have a lot of plans to go to college, get a career that I liked, whatever. But then it all became too much, and I realized I didn't know what I actually wanted to do. Then... I guess I started losing interest. Burning out. I couldn't motivate myself to do anything—still can't—and so I just decided that I couldn't do anything. I'm a jack of all trades, master of none. And I *hate* working.

Sometimes I wonder how other people see me. My old therapist told me that I had to look at myself from an outside perspective, but that just caused me even more disconnect between myself and everything else. I hate sounding whiny and depressed, but honestly it *does* feel like I'm alone with my problems. And not just because I don't have friends. But because when I did have friends, nobody... well, nobody really understood me. I've never met a single person with the same problems as me—or, well, if they do, they probably bottle them up and refuse to talk about them to other people. Like me.

[PAUSE]

Ignore what I just said. I don't care. I forgot what I was talking about.

[FRANCIS FORCES A LAUGH]

...Maybe I should start taking my meds again. I mean it's nothing too bad, just antidepressants, but I didn't like the side effects. At least I didn't feel like this, though. Whatever. At this point I might even take a nap. I wonder where my hypnophobia came from. Actually—I can guess. Losing control, right? Not knowing what's going on? The idea that something could happen, that the world could end and I wouldn't notice? Yeah. Sucks. I guess I *might* have control issues, but they aren't normally so... they don't normally interfere this much. At least I know it's not nightmares, which is the most common cause. I just wish it was easier to deal with. Falling asleep terrifies me, but sleep deprivation makes my anxiety worse.. it's never-ending. And it didn't even hit me until after my... birthday... either. Like I was fine one night and then the next I couldn't bring myself to close my eyes. I don't *understand*.

Sleep deprivation doesn't feel great. But there's a comfort in it. I like to lose myself sometimes. It's easier than dealing with the world. It's nice. Or... I like to think it is. Most of the time I just don't want the world the way it is. Escapism, I guess. Let my brain get fried just enough so that I detach. I've always been good at avoiding things. It's impressive, honestly. I guess part of the reason I'm even staying awake is just to prove I can. Fear and stubbornness. Two of my strongest motivators.

Thinking about it, that's my motivation for living, too. Not just living, of course, but living forever. Even exhausted as I am right now, I know I'm not going to live forever. I can't, right? But I said I was going to, and I'm terrified of dying, so I'm going to try. And that's—that's ridiculous. I don't know what I'm doing. What am I doing? I feel like I've had this same conversation with myself thousands of times already. Have I? It's not like I remember it. Of course, I'm scared, and tired, and confused, but underneath it all I'm *excited*. I want to live forever. And the idea that it's possible—that *anything* is possible, according to Saturn—is too much for me. Even if it's unreasonable, unhealthy, whatever. It's stuck in my mind and I can't get it out. I could live forever. I could just—not die. It's incredible. And it's been underneath every thought I've had for days now. I just keep thinking—if I was immortal, what would I do? I don't know if I like the answer my mind is coming up with. I don't think it would make me a bad—a worse person, exactly. But losing the ability to die? Disconnecting myself from the world? Those things aren't known to improve people—at least not on TV.

[FRANCIS SIGHS]

I don't even know why I care. It's not like I've ever succeeded at being a "good person." At least now I won't have to try to be.

[PAUSE]

I have nothing left to say. I'll... be back when Saturn arrives.

[RECORDER CLICKS OFF]

[RECORDER CLICKS ON]

FRANCIS:

Well, Saturn's here now. I don't know what time it is—I can't really read my clock, and my vision is a little more blurry than usual. Honestly my internal clock's always been screwed up, so it could've been ten minutes or like... hours.

[SATURN KNOCKS AT THE FRONT DOOR ONCE]

FRANCIS, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE KNOCK:

THE DOOR'S UNLOCKED!

[FRONT DOOR OPENS]

SATURN, DISTANT:

Hey Francis, are y—

FRANCIS, YELLING:

I'M UPSTAIRS!

[FRONT DOOR CLOSES]

[SATURN WALKS UP THE STAIRS]

[THE DOOR OF FRANCIS'S ROOM OPENS]

SATURN:

Hey Francis, are you ready?

FRANCIS:

Yeah, let me grab my keys.. they're somewhere...

[FRANCIS RUMMAGES AROUND, CRIES OUT IN PAIN]

SATURN:

Are you ok?

FRANCIS, SHAKILY:

I have no idea where anything is.

SATURN:

Did you, uh, get enough sleep last night?

FRANCIS:

Um... no.

SATURN:

How much sleep did you get?

FRANCIS:

Hmmm. Zero.

SATURN:

When... when was the last time you slept?

FRANCIS:

I haven't slept since I last saw you, I think. Not sure. It's been blurry. 50 hours? Maybe?

SATURN:

Please do not drive. Do you know what that means?? It's like you're drunk. I—listen, Francis.

you can't drive like this.

FRANCIS:

I'm not drunk.

SATURN:

No, it's like, when your brain doesn't get enough sleep it doesn't work properly. Reaction time is

slowed and everything. You're not drunk, it's just... you shouldn't be driving. It's okay, don't

worry! I can drive. But you might want to sleep in the car.

FRANCIS:

Sleeping in a car is probably the worst way to sleep. I mean, what about car crashes? That

worsens the risk of me dying in my sleep by, like, 100.

SATURN:

You don't have to sleep if you don't want to, but *please* let me drive.

FRANCIS:

Yeah ok, I just gotta find my keys.

[FRANCIS LOOKS AROUND, PAPERS ARE RUFFLED AND THERE'S A MUFFLED

JINGLING]

Keys! Here.

[FRANCIS TOSSES THE KEYS TO SATURN]

SATURN:

Do you have all your stuff?

FRANCIS:

Sure. I don't really know what I need. I'm just bringing my backpack. I have like one outfit? Oh
and also what I'm wearing.

SATURN:

I mean I guess that's good, I have extra stuff if you want. Are you ready?

FRANCIS:

Uhhh yeah sure ok cool. Oh yeah so I'm recording, do you mind if I keep this on? I know it's
kinda weird, but I want to record our conversations.

SATURN:

I'm fine with that, I mean it's like a journal, right?

FRANCIS:

Mm-hmm. Let me get my shoes on and then I'll actually be ready.

[FRANCIS TIES THEIR SHOES]

SATURN, OVER FRANCIS'S SHOE-TYING:

So I'm going back home, huh. It's weird. I know I lived in that house, but I really can't think of it
as "mine."

FRANCIS:

I mean childhood's like that, right? Kids... I don't know. We're different people now, I guess.

[FRANCIS FINISHES TYING THEIR SHOES AND STANDS UP]

Yeah! Let's go! Mystery awaits!

SATURN, CONFUSED:

Huh?

FRANCIS:

Listen, you said it yourself! I forget what exactly it was, but something about sleep.

**[THEY WALK DOWN THE STAIRS TO THE FRONT DOOR. THEY OPEN AND CLOSE THE
FRONT DOOR. BIRDS CAN BE HEARD CHIRPING OUTSIDE]**

Damn. I forgot to put my sunglasses on, one sec.

[FRANCIS PUTS ON THEIR SUNGLASSES]

SATURN:

Sorry, but why sunglasses? It's so cloudy?

FRANCIS:

Light hurts.

SATURN:

Oh, ok, cool.

**[THEY WALK TO THE CAR. FRANCIS AND THE RECORDER GET IN FIRST, AND
BIRDSONG IS CUT OFF BY THE CAR DOOR CLOSING. SATURN GETS IN RIGHT AFTER,
BRIEFLY LETTING IN THE AMBIENT NOISE. THEY CLOSE THE DOOR AND IT'S QUIET]**

[SEAT BELT BUCKLING]

FRANCIS:

How.. how long is the drive?

[SEAT BELT BUCKLING]

SATURN:

7 hours.

FRANCIS:

Oh. Okay. That's ok.

[CAR ENGINE STARTS]

SATURN:

Will your mom mind if I leave my car here?

FRANCIS, MUMBLING:

Doubtful.

SATURN:

Okay, good.

[THE CAR STARTS DRIVING]

[PAUSE, AMBIENT DRIVING NOISES]

You're allowed to go to sleep, you know.

FRANCIS:

I wish I wanted to. I'm just glad you're not a terrible driver.

SATURN:

Just close your eyes, maybe you'll fall asleep naturally? Either way, you should rest.

[PAUSE, DRIVING]

Do you mind if I turn this off?

[FRANCIS MUMBLES IN CONSENT]

[RECORDER CLICKS OFF]

[ENDING THEME]

NARRATOR, OVER ENDING THEME:

Francis Forever is a podcast created and written by Leo Zahn. This episode featured Leo Zahn as Francis Webb and Bee Watchorn as Saturn. If you want to support Francis Forever, consider subscribing, telling a friend, or following it on twitter @francispodcast. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, our email is francisforeverpod@gmail.com. Transcripts, credits, and content warnings can always be found in the show notes. Thank you for listening.