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## **Dreams and Abilities**

### **Preface**

Scientists state that dreams do not occur during deep sleep; I have consistent dreams every night. Scientists also state that people are unconscious about their dreams; I know very well what my dreams from the previous nights and can recall most of them by themes. Bring me to a sleep researcher, and he'll kick me out of his sample group as an outlier. Bring me to an oneirocritic, and he'll spend days laying out the elements and analyzing my dreams.

Owning this very special ability, dreams permeate my life. Many ideas of my stories come from a medley of dreams; familiar people and scenes make their appearances in my dreams, and their interactions with me can change my opinion of them in the real world. But, throughout my childhood, my dreams were suffused with monsters and ghosts.

### **I. The Era of Monsters**

Amid the darkness of my parent's bedroom, something evil was moving. I thought I'd seen a pair of eyes.

The windows of the living room were in an alcove next to the bedroom door. I took a large step away from the bedroom's hollow towards the windows. Luckily, they were open.

As soon as howling came from the bedroom and the creature inside lunged out, I climbed up the windowsill and leaped.

The master bedroom of our old apartment was a popular spawn point for all creatures, even me. No doors or curtains or adults could block them from entering the living room, and they moved fast, except me. I had tried hitting a spawned giant tarantula with a chair, but as soon as I lifted it up, my arms turned to jelly, my grip started to slip, my eyes flipped to the ceiling, and, ouch! I was stung on the right shoulder. I didn't die, as always, but getting captured by a tarantula was more awful than death. Since my dreams forbade me to fight back, I soon learned to run away with the quickest move: jumping out of the windows.

What does it feel like to hit the ground from the third floor? No idea, because I always fly up. It's simple: imagine the air surrounding you is the sea and the sky is the surface, then push off the ground and start treading water, as if you are rising from the briny deep; when you're about the height of a two-floor building, feel the winds around you and join the "currents." With plenty of practice, I could easily glide above the treetops and soar into the air even without fancy wings. When I lunged out of the windows, it only took a second to catch the wind and fly into the air, landing on top of another apartment building fifty meters away.

Flying seemed to come naturally to me once I started escaping. It saved me multiple times from the claws of bizarre creatures. Yet it was not so helpful indoors when the ceiling was only ten feet high and the monster was seven feet tall. After many failed attempts, I evolved again with invisibility, an ability that was harder to operate and depended more on your mind.

Suppose you are running away from a ghost along the corridors of a hospital, but as you turn around the corner and see that more ghosts are coming up the stairs in front of you. Immediately you retreat into a storage room, but there is no other way out.

You can feel the dark creatures hovering outside the door. *They can't see me. They can't see me.* Inside your brain, you repeat it as loud as you can.

The doorknob turns. *They can't see me, they won't see me,* you assure yourself.

The door screeches open, and shadows are at the threshold.

*They won't see me, I am invisible. They will not see me!*

You shout out the last few words in your mind as the swarm of ghosts rush in. They scan the limited space, see nothing, and rush out. Sitting ten feet away from the entrance, you let out a relieved breath.

Soon invisibility became another default ability I owned in every dream. Occasionally there would be cooler powers, such as controlling elements, but flying and invisibility would always come in handy when I needed to "cheat". Somehow it felt normal for me, when escaping in my dreams, to rise in the air and turn invisible. There were also some innate abilities that assisted my fleeing: the ability to detect monsters near me, the "Peter Tingle" when a ghost was about to spawn, the stamina to run for long distances...

Gradually my dream world realized that, with my powers, these stupid creatures were no longer threats to me. I needed a stronger, smarter, even crueler opponent.

So into the dream world, humans came, bringing tricks and wars with them.

## **II. The Era of Minds**

Starting from middle school, the dark creatures lost their jobs as villains in my dreams, and were replaced by people. This resulted in more realistic and daily-life-styled peaceful dreams, but also made nightmares more desperate.

To be honest, I usually won't count dreams of monsters as nightmares; I've grown used to them. However, when dreams become more relatable to reality, they leave a deeper impression on me and mingle with some painful memories to evoke intense emotions that linger around even after I wake up. It can be as simple as a dream of school life, except that there is a final pop exam, and I have no clue what all the questions are asking about.

Flying and invisibility fail before humans. First, they move around too much and love to check every corner of the room, sometimes bumping into me while searching. Second, they know how to find allies and use their brains, so I had to look out for ten people at the same time and to avoid moving in a predictable path. Third and the most frustrating of all, they like to keep hostages.

If you are lucky enough to become a villain in my dream, and right now are looking for the invisible me in a market, just yell that you would go after my family or friends. All at once, I would appear right in front of you and snap, "You'd better not dare."

It is foolish to react like that, but I would catch the hook almost every time and immediately disappear afterward. When my friends or family were captured, I'd always risk saving them and fail most of the time.

And here's another strange behavior. Theoretically, dreams are a free place to do whatever you want, unrestricted by society's norms and natural laws. However, if it is a school dream and the clock reads 7:55 am, I will be truly worried that I might be late to school, not even considering skipping classes. I always follow the rules of my dream world and only seek loopholes inside its structure. Only when the school starts at 4:00 am, when the story becomes too unacceptable, will I start ignoring its plot and going with my own principles. It could be that, for me, dream is just a version of reality that is weirder than daily life.

The memories of failed fights in early dreams reminded me to never resort to physical conflicts, so I turned to mental powers. Invisibility already opened a door for controlling dreams—when I spoke inside my mind, I was actually ordering the dream world to change accordingly—and all I needed was to find the right "spells." Like a researcher, I began to experiment with different commands in my dreams. The "I think I can go through the walls" bug, the "I don't

like this ending I should be winning" revocation, and the "time stopped" command worked out the best, but the process of calling them was even harder.

Let's go back to the hospital corridor where you are chased by several ghosts. Somehow one catches up with you and a bony hand grips your shoulder. You fall to the ground. While struggling to stand up before the others arrive, you think grudgingly, *No fair, I definitely run faster than a dead spirit. I was twenty feet ahead. I should be winning.*

Inside your mind, a video begins to form. You are ahead of the pursuing ghosts, but they are apparently slower. You can see the room numbers on the corridor passing in the background. When the clouds outside the windows become visible, suddenly you are in the video and the ghosts are twenty feet behind you. A brand new ending is created and you successfully switch into this storyline.

I am the administrator of my own dreams, but using admin rights is still extremely hard. My mind needs to be fully concentrated on commanding and my imaginary scene extraordinarily vivid to override the current plot. I also discovered that, sadly, my "Peter Tingle" was an indirect result of my admin rights; when I thought a ghost was about to appear, my mind unconsciously evoked the dream world to spawn a ghost near me. Anyways, mind power gave me access to almost every ability, but since this discovery was fairly recent, I would still rely on flying and invisibility under most circumstances, and only occasionally remembered my admin rights. I would be stuck in a tiny room with the entrance blocked, only realizing upon waking that I could either teleport, change my size, or walk through the walls to get out.

### **III. The Era of Swords**

After COVID hit, more violence-related scenes started appearing in my dreams. Sometimes it was a gunfight between mafias; sometimes it was modern warfare; the most frequent theme was medieval battles on an open field. My dream world lifted its ban on physical strength, so my body no longer feels like a noodle when fights happen, and invited me to join the conflicts.

As a child, I always wished I could learn sword fighting skills; that wish was accomplished ten years later, in my dreams. I still had no idea how to correctly swing a sword, but when the enemy charged towards you waving his weapons amidst a battle, whatever saved your life became the correct move. First, do a horizontal block that slows down your opponent's headward slash, then swing it to the right to shake off his sword, step to the left, and finally, swing back your sword for a deep stab into the stomach. Of course, it doesn't work most of the time, but since I wouldn't die in my dreams, I have more opportunities to try out attacks than my opponents.

When the dream world still restricted me from physical conflicts, I would be a sniper in unusual battle dreams. It was a clean and safe job; my admin rights ensured headshots, and I could always retreat first from the field. Nevertheless, when I found myself capable of fighting back, I switched to a warrior that can smash enemies in the frontline. Flying and invisibility increased my mobility and unlimited life made me unstoppable. It could be an act of revenge for all these years of disgrace running away from the villains, or an addictive thrill in surviving an imminent death. No matter what, I enjoyed those dreams like a Viking; I learned double wielding.

Even then, battle dreams were still a rarity, and most of the violence was actually from the common villain stories; except this time, the villain chose violence. I usually didn't have a proper weapon (a new form of restriction by my dream world), but, hey, everything could be a weapon if you were desperate. Therefore, in a defensive battle against some aliens, I stood at the door with two pencils, a rolled-up A4 paper, and a table leg, and the amorphous aliens had no weapon except a sting that would turn you into one of them. The outcome was kind of obvious.

I was already sixteen when the pandemic happened and my dreams were far more than just glory in fighting. In one of the war dreams, the enemy country conducted a surprise attack against one of our allies but fell to their strong defense. As a result, the allies poured their troops to push them back into their capital. But when I, an allied soldier, wandered into a courtyard hunting for two enemies, I saw a cradle at the bottom of a collapsed wall next to two slain bodies. Although his parents somehow protected him with their own life, the baby still starved in the debris. And as I searched around the house for survivors, the war ended with the surrender of that enemy state.

To this day, I still can't fully understand the meaning of my dream.

## **Epilogue**

Not all dreams are dark, but the dark stories are more memorable. They throw a challenge at me, watch me explore methods to solve it, and when that challenge becomes a piece of cake, come up with another one. Through my struggle with these dreams, I develop superpowers, use mind control, and finally pick up physical skills, but still can't promise full victory over the plots. It's like a game where you'll fight the boss again and again, but as you grow stronger, the boss evolves, too. To outrun the boss, you have to keep developing and keep thinking. Maybe, as I understand more about the boss, I will own more power over him.

Will there be a day when I can gain full control over my dreams and always win?

Well, that'll just deprive all the fun of striving for victory.