

“Tomorrow”

Pilot

By Ethan Vue

Vue 1

I never have nightmares.

It almost feels like I'm cursed. I guess it's great that I don't. Whenever I sleep, I only have dreams—happy dreams to be exact. For my entire life, of 16 years, I've had no nightmares whatsoever. Yep. Really. What do I dream of? Well, I dream of my mom and me happily in our home enjoying dinner. Sometimes it's me working on our field or feeding our ox. Or me making a table out of trees and twigs. My dreams are always in the day and never in the night. I do find it strange sometimes-

“Chee,” my mother shouted, “Come out of your room and collect more logs. We're running out.” Great, now I can't remember what I was thinking about.

“Kay, Mom,” I shouted back. No response. Hopefully, she heard me.

“Chee! Go get new batches of logs!”

She didn't hear me.

“I said KAY, MOM!” I walk out of my room and enter the kitchen- um, living room? Everything is everywhere honestly. Our house is made of planks of wood and a roof covered in piles of hay. I guess you can call it a hut-house? For privacy, our rooms are separated and the rest of the house is a space for anything. Lounging. Cooking. Spirit calling. Family gatherings. Anyways, I enter the kitchen where my mom was preparing something for a meal. I hug her.

“Happy 43rd birthday Mom!”

“Awe. Thank you, Chee,” she places her hand on my cheek, “But don’t remind me that I’m 43.” She then slaps me.

“Ow!”

“I didn’t even hit you that hard.”

“I know hehe, just kidding!”

“Go get the logs.”

“Uuuggghhhhhh.”

“Do you not want dinner tonight!?”

“Dinner? It’s only morning.”

“Well, I’m preparing something for dinner. We can start cooking when you come back with those logs. You know it takes you until the afternoon to collect a full batch.”

“Hmm, smart. Alright, I’m off.”

“Be safe, Chee. Love you.”

“Love you too. Happy 43rd birthday!” I ran straight out the door. I’m sure I heard my mother bang the table and groan.

I carry a small wooden cart and head to town. It's a bit of a walk since my Mom wanted to live at the far edge of the village. That way we had room for our farm. As the sun was rising, the temperature was increasing. Good thing there was a cool wind blowing. It's a nice but long walk. Really scenic I'd say. The village is made up of other hut-houses. The dirt street runs throughout the village. Some families who are rich owned horses and used them as a form of transportation. Wish we had a horse. Actually, we have an ox! Better than a horse in my opinion. On the horizon are large mountains. The trail I take swirls down a hill filled with tall grass and it dances with the wind. I take a deep breath and sigh. As much as I dread the walk, I have to say it's pretty relaxing.

I make it into town and walk through the vendor street towards the forest. Here, a bunch of people have their own small businesses. There's no currency. We just pay with what we got. Basically, we barter. Usually, it's a bunch of older people selling things. And they actually have some good stuff. Some are even from a different country. Kudos to those who traveled far for their business.

"Chee. Right? Here, please take some water. The shaman says it will be very hot today," said a lady vendor. She looked much older than Mom.

"Sorry, I don't have anything on me."

"No worries, dear. Just take it. I know you work very hard for your mother. It must be very difficult since your father passed away. Such an unfortunate incident."

"Yeah. Uh, thank you for the water. I'll get going now."

“Alright dear, stay healthy for your mother.”

“Thanks, I will,” I said. I resume my journey.

Yes, my father passed away. But, a few days after I was born so I never really knew the guy. Mom talks about him from time to time but that’s about it. From what I heard from the village people, he went hunting with a few friends. They all were able to return but not my father. They encountered something horrifying. They said they saw some sort of ghost. They ran as fast as they could and didn’t think twice about checking if my father was okay. Some friends they were. Ahem, but enough of that sad biz. I’ve got logs to collect.

After a few more minutes, I arrived at the forest. Time to chop some wood. I start axing away. Each swing echoes throughout the forest. Sometimes, the noise of the ax made some birds fly away. I like that it isn’t quiet in the forest. The cicadas are buzzing, the birds are singing, and the leaves are waving their branches with the wind. It makes me feel like I’m not alone. Noon arrives and I’ve finished collecting brand-new logs. Seems like enough. I head back to town. Turns out collecting logs for the majority of your life really increases your physique and endurance, so carrying a full batch of logs doesn't phase me anymore. I’m back on the vendor street and the man that sells jewelry waves at me.

“Hey Chee, I’ll trade ya this necklace if you give me a couple of the logs you’ve got,” said the man.

“I don’t know, I usually don’t wear any accessories, sir.” I really don’t since I’m always working.

“Well, maybe you’d like one to gift your mother. Isn’t it her birthday today?” he said. It doesn’t surprise me that he knew Mom’s birthday. Village so small mostly everyone knows each other.

“I suppose so...” I said thinking. Mom does like jewelry. The one she has at home has rusted and its color had faded. “As a gift it is! Here are two- no four logs for ya.”

“Thanks, Chee. Pleasure doing business with you.”

“No problem. Thanks for the necklace!”

I return walking home. Each step I took burned the underside of my feet. The dirt was scorching. The lady wasn’t lying, it really is hot. I look ahead and I’m not even close to the edge of town. Of course, it had to be hot on the day I carry logs. No matter. As long as I make it home. I wonder what Mom is preparing. Probably chicken soup with rice and peppers. Or maybe roasted pig! My stomach cries. Maybe I shouldn’t have thought about food. Finally, I reached the edge of town, drenched in my own sweat. Okay, a little more to go.

Wait.

What?

When...

...did it become...

...night?

It was the afternoon just now but...not anymore. The birds were no longer chirping and the wind had stopped blowing. I look around me and can't see anything. It's pitch black. Not even a star in sight. It's strange but the only thing I can describe what's happening is nothingness. Absolute, complete nothingness. I look in the direction where the village might be. Luckily, a person from a distance is holding a lamp. I can kind of sketch out their face. It's the guy at the jewelry vendor! Thank good-

He fell to the ground.

It seems like he's struggling. Something just tackled him, but what? It looks like another person. No. NO!

It.

It just.

It just ripped his neck off.

I saw the strings of flesh pull from the figure's mouth. The blood sprayed all over as if it was watering the ground. I turn to the side and vomit. I pant and look back.

It's gone.

Adrenaline kicks in and I started sprinting. I have to get back! Back to home. Back to Mom! I have to get back to my mother! I can't see a damn thing! Not even the moon was there to help guide me. My feet kept on moving. Whether I stepped on a rock or get a splinter, I knew I had to keep running. Behind me, I could hear faint screams which I don't know even know how to describe. Worse than anything that I heard before in my entire life. I run up to what felt like tall grass. It's the hill! My legs were burning from the incline. There! I see another lantern! It's Mom!

“MOM, GET BACK TO THE HOUSE!! MOM, RUN BACK!!” I shouted at the top of my lungs.

I don't care if my feet were getting injured. I don't even know if I ever even blinked. In my head thoughts just kept repeating. What the heck is going on!? Why is it suddenly night and why are there strange things eating people??? I'm close to home but I see the lights inside flicker like crazy. Is mom scurrying our things? Maybe she's packing our clothes so we can run away? Smart thinking, Mom! Don't worry I'm almost there! I see the door open. Mom walks out and stands. There are no clothes packed.

“Mom! We have to run away as far as possible! Don't wait for me! Just run and I'll follow you!” I take a moment to breathe. “I said don't wait for me! I said don't...I said...”

She fell to the ground.

The lantern drops and the flames landed on her. As the flames grew, its light revealed another figure standing over her. From the faint illumination of its face, I saw blood. But worst of all, a smile. Its eyes stared dead into mine. I stopped right in my tracks. My eyes widened. My breath...I couldn't even hear it...or anything. I couldn't hear anything. I didn't know whether to scream or cry or be filled with rage. Not a single sound was made by me.

If you think what I'm telling you is just a nightmare, I'm afraid to inform you it's not.
Because like I said in the beginning, I'm cursed. I never have nightmares.

END