**PROLOGUE**

“Dreaming occurs when a relatively specific neural network located primarily in the limbic, paralimbic, and associational areas of the forebrain is activated in the absence of external input coupled with a letting go of control by the self. The importance of limbic structures in dreaming and the repetitive nature of dream content suggest that the “emotional brain” may be one basis for the repetitive nature of much dream content, including the nightmarish dreams.”

Rain.

The sound of water trickling down, drowning out the voice in the class.

Each droplet of water creates a sound-like melody– calming, more than any song I have ever heard.

It was almost time to go home.

It was the last class of the day.

It was noisy.

Students were talking left and right.

I couldn’t seem to focus on anything.

All I could hear, was just water pouring down.

The rain was loud.

Had someone talked to me I wouldn’t be able to hear a thing of what they would say.

No one’s going to talk to me either way.

I’m not very noticeable in the class.

I don’t really talk to anyone much.

I’m just another student amongst the class–

My eyes felt heavy.

My eyelids kept falling down each time I try to pull them up.

My body felt imbalanced.

Going in an up and down motion, as if agreeing to something.

It felt as I’m about to fall at any point.

Falling down would probably hurt.

It’d also attract a lot of attention.

I wouldn’t want that.

I rested my chin on my arms.

It wasn’t a very comfortable position, but it keeps me from falling down.

Fortunately, I’m seated far from the front, just behind someone with a bigger stature.

I’ll be using you as a wall, hope you don’t mind.

I stared at the clock in front of me which had been conveniently placed above the blackboard.

It was placed there for the students to keep track of the time.

The teachers would often go past the lesson time and so the students would remind the teachers that it was time.

Although, some teacher would just get annoyed and it would end up being a longer lecture for us.

I followed the arrow head as it ticks around.

Each ticks tells the seconds passing.

Each tick felt slower than the ticks before.

Each tick pulled me closer to the world of dreams.

Everything started to squiggle around.

If I were to describe it, it would feel as if I am drunk.

Not that I would know what being drunk feels like.

My eyes which had been blinking every second started to blink slower.

My consciousness slowly fades away.

As time passes by.

As the rain pours down.

As the voices echoed.

Before I knew it, my eyes closed its curtains.

I went to sleep.

It was dark, but it’s different than that of a unlit closed room.

I could hear faint sounds in the background.

Sounds of the rain.

Sounds of my classmates talking.

Sound of my own breathing.

Moments had passed.

How long has it been?

Has the school ended?

Thoughts kept popping up with questions upon questions.

Should I go home?

Will there be someone waiting for me at home?

Do I have a home?

Strange.

This feels like a dream, yet I am conscious of it.

What are dreams?

I felt calm— no, relieved.

The more thoughts that pops up, the more relieved I get.

Why is that?

“—up.”

Shake\*

“-wake up.”

Shake\*

“–wake UP, HOO–Y!”

A loud sound had pierced through my eardrums.

Like a gunshot, piercing trough.

It had inevitably woke me up.

“That fucking hurts!”

“Fully deserved!”

“What did I do to deserve this?! Fuck!”

“What? Gonna cry? Want me to call mommy to comfort her dear little baby? Uhuu–”

“Fuck off!”

“All right, all right. Just hurry up and sort your stuff out. I’ll be at the gates.”

He left.

I sat there trying to calm myself down.

It was quiet.

Looks like the rain had stopped.

I stood up as I watched my surroundings which were full of students now empty.

There was nothing but chairs neatly lined up.

The voices which had filled the room with laughter now gone, not a laugh to be heard.

All I could hear was just my breath and the sound of friction my clothes made.

I picked up my book which had been used as a pillow for my arms to rest on, store it in my bag, and left the classroom.

I walked along the hallway filled with puddles of water.

Watching my steps and carefully walking so to not slip.

I met up with him at the gates and we head home.

Together.

Time passed, before I knew it, it was time to part ways.

“See you–”

I raised my arm as a sign of goodbye, held it in the air for a while then slowly lower it down.

Alone.

Again.

Arriving at my home I took my keys and opened the door.

Clack\*

The sound of the door lock opening, echoed.

No one was there– as usual.

I entered my room, put my bag down, and lay on my bed.

I closed my eyes

I slowly witness the sight as the ceiling slowly fade away.

Until finally–

My eyelids closed.

Ch\*

I heard a feint sound.

Chk\*

A familiar sound.

Tchk\*

The sound got louder.

Tchk\*

Is that the sound of clock?

Tchk\*

Had I ever installed a clock in my room?

Tchak\*

**CHAPTER 1 PART 1**

*I wish I could dream on forever.*

Nothing.

Absolutely nothing.

It was dark.

There was not a sound.

Moments passed.

How long has this been going on I wonder.

I think it’s about time I wake up.

Bright.

Like opening curtains to let the sunshine in, I opened my eyes–

It’s so quiet.

Everything is a blur.

…

I blinked a couple of times trying to regain my vision.

I looked through the room.

Not a soul was seen.

Chairs and desks were lined up neatly.

It was silent.

Not even the ticking sound of the clock.

“Huh? That’s weird.”

My eyes immediately fell on to which something was supposed to reside on.

The clock, which was placed above the blackboard, was missing.

“Wasn’t there supposed to be a clock there?”

Someone must’ve took it and forgot to put it back.

I tried to get up– slowly.

!

“Agh! My head hurts.”

I felt a sharp pain.

It felt as if my head were being squeezed.

…

It finally calmed down.

“I must have overslept. That guy didn’t wake up again, must’ve had enough of trying to wake me up.”

I slowly got up, picked up my book, store it in my bag and head for the door.

Strange, I feel like this had happened before.

I opened the door—

Immediately a breeze of cold air gushed through, blowing my hair everywhere.

Cold.

I could see my reflection through the window, meaning that it was dark outside.

I took a step closer to the window.

Lightly touching my face on the window, I try to see through it.

I stood there quietly, trying to process what it is that I am currently seeing.

A sea of darkness lightly lit up by the shine of the moonlight.

There, reality hit me.

“Crap!”

I ran.

Slightly struggling to keep my balance, I carefully went down the stairs—

My class is on the highest floor so I had to walk down some flight of stairs.

I finally reached the lowest floor.

The front gate appears to be shut.

I tried opening it–

Its locked.

“I’ll try going through the back.”

Shut and locked again.

Sigh\*

“What am I going to do–”

I try to calm myself down and try to think of ways to get out of this predicament.

I took my phone out.

Scrolling through my list of contacts which weren’t that many, I tried calling my homeroom teacher—

Buzz\*Buzz\*

Buzz\*

No answer.

Buzz\*Buzz\*

Buzz\*

No answer.

“Just my luck.”

…

…

“Okay… deep breaths–”

huff\*

huff\*

huff\*

I tried to calm down.

I slowly breathe in and breathe out.

…

It didn’t work.

“AGH! FUCK! I DON’T WANT TO SPEND THE ENTIRE NIGHT HERE! I WANNA GO HOME!”

Adrenaline pumped in my head causing me to panic.

Without realizing, I shouted my thoughts out.

“WHY DIDN’T YOU FUCKING WAKE ME UP?! I SWEAR I’LL GET YOU BACK! FUCK!”

It went on for a while.

No matter what it is that I am thinking at the moment, I just blutter it all.

“Haha– it’s fine, it ain’t as Bad as it loOks– I mean, what’s the WORST thing that could happen. There’ll probably BE rumors going on about a STUDENT getting locked inside the school because they overslept. But it SHOU—LD be okay, as long as they don’t know WHO it was, I am A-Okay. Yeah, I’ll just sit here quietly waiting for someone to open the gates and I’ll just go straight home. Yeah!”

…

“Hungry.”

**CHAPTER 1 PART 2**

*Let me sleep some more.*

“Its ‘been hours since I woke up…I think? How the fuck would I know, there ain’t no way I could tell the time except for the night sky and the moon chilling out there. Escape from the window? I’ve tried it. Every window is locked and dare I not break them, ain’t got no money to fix ’em.”

Trying to stay calm I talked to myself.

Giving questions and answers for myself.

Instead of waiting by the school entrance I decided to go back to my classroom.

I stacked the tables and created a fortress.

Since I am going to be here for a while, I thought why not create a comfortable room for myself.

“You know what– this might not be so bad after all. It’s like a camping trip, except instead of sleeping outside, you get to sleep indoor with an air conditioner nonetheless, also there’s almost no bugs here, what more is that you get to enjoy a very spacious room instead of a small stuffy tent.”

Using tables formed to create a bed and using my bag as a pillow I lied down and got comfortable.

While I was ‘happily’ chatting with myself, I noticed a sound coming from the halls.

It was the sound of someone walking.

Did someone entered the school while I was having a conversation with myself?

I got up from my amazingly well-built bed and get close to the door.

The footsteps slowly got closer until it finally reached the door.

…

I stood there silently—

…

There was a brief moment of silence–

Clack\*

The door opened.

A silhouette of a man can be seen, slowly walking into the classroom.

Tap\*tap\*tap\*

For some reason my body instinctively moved to hide the moment the door opened.

I hid under the piles of tables–

I could see a pair of legs, walking around the room.

Tap\*tap\*tap\*

I tried not to make any movement.

For some reason, my sense of danger is telling me not to show myself.

Tap\*tap\*tap\*

My body is shaking.

My heart rate is getting faster.

The sound of footsteps which shouldn’t be that loud screamed by my ear.

Drops of sweat slowly formed from my forehead and flow down to my neck.

I feel cold yet I am sweating.

Tap\*tap\*tap\*

I tried to remain calm but my body think otherwise.

My heart rate keeps getting faster and faster. It’s getting to a point where I felt as if it’s trying to escape my chest.

I try to breathe in but nothing comes in, at this rate I might faint.

I’m starting to lose my vision.

Tap\*tap\*tap

…

..

.

Gasp\*—Sigh\*

It finally left.

That was the most terrifying experience I’ve ever had.

Still trying to catch my breath I tried to stand up.

My legs are shaking.

It’s telling me to not move, but I ignored it.

“Alright.”

I stood up and try to peek outside, trying to see if it was still there. Slowly walking as to not make any sound, I arrived at the door. I braced myself and took a peek–

There it is, showing its back while walking slowly, wearing what looks like a security guard’s outfit.

I lightly walk to the front gate, carefully going down the stairs.

Arriving at the gate I tried to open it– it was locked.

“Huh?”

To my surprise it was locked.

I tried to go through the back to see if it’s also locked, but the moment I turned my back, I heard steps coming closer.

My heart instantly jumped.

I quicky try to see if there was any place to hide–

Trying to find cover around me I decided to hide behind the shoe lockers, just barely visible, hoping to not get spotted.

Tap\*tap\*tap\*

It got closer.

My heartbeat rose, my entire body is shaking.

I feel hot, it’s like my entire body is about to explode.

I feel lightheaded.

Tap\*tap\*tap

…

It stopped.

I tried going through the other way, slowly–

Taking one step at a time, making sure to not hit anything in the way.

…

…

…

Crash\*

My left leg gave up and I lost my balance.

“Fuck!”

I quicky get up and ran as fast as I can to the stairs trying not to fall.

I can hear another pair of steps other than mine running behind me.

I dare not look back and just run as fast as I can.

Sweat flow down my face, my breathing wasn’t controlled, I can’t think of anything but to not get caught.

I’m running out of breath.

**CHAPTER 1 PART 3**

*Let me be.*

I’ve been running and running.

I don’t know how long have I been running for.

It feels as if I’ve been running for hours.

The gap between me and the steps behind me doesn’t widen.

I think I’m almost at my limit, yet my feet doesn’t seem to slow down.

It keeps swinging forwards and backward.

My body follows the rhythm of my legs.

My throat is freezing cold.

Cold, yet it stings like it’s burning.

My breathing is getting ragged.

Not enough air is flowing through.

I’m running out of breath.

Drips of water hitting the ground.

Sweat keeps getting into my eyes.

I try to wipe them away but to no avail.

Tired.

I’m so tired.

Please.

Stop it.

I can’t control my thoughts.

AGH!

THIS IS SO STUPID!

WHY DO I HAVE TO GO TROUGH THIS!

WHY ME!

PLEASE!

JUST LET IT END!

I HAVEN’T DONE ANYTHING WRONG!

IT’S ALWAYS ME!

JUST LET ME BE!

All my sense of reasoning is gone.

I’VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS SHIT!

BANG!

I slammed the door open.

Entering one of the classrooms.

YOU WANT ME, COME GET ME!

I’VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS!

I grabbed a chair and prepare myself.

Hiding behind a cover.

The sound of steps, running in the halls.

Getting closer.

Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\*

Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\*

Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\* Tap\*

Tap\* Tap\* Tap\*

It’s so noisy.

The sounds of footstep’s not the only thing I’m hearing.

Noises emitted from myself.

It was loud.

Ecstatic.

I felt. EXCITED!

HURRY!

HURRY!

DON’T MAKE ME WAIT ANYMORE!

The sound got louder and faster.

I felt excitement I’ve never felt before.

I felt like a child waiting for the time to open his Christmas presents.

Tap\* TAp\* Tap\* TaP\*TAp\* TaP\* TAP\* tAP\* tAp\* taP\* TAP\* TaP\*

TAp\* TaP\* TAP\* tAP\* tAp\*TAP\*TaP\*TAp

tAP\* tAp\*TAP\*TaP\*Tap

My head is spinning.

Round and round.

Round and round.

Round and round and round and round.

Round round round round round round.

Round round round round round round round round round round round.

ROUND!

TAP\*TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\*TAP\*

TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\*TAP\*

TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\* TAP\*TAP\*

…

..

.

.

.

.

ring\*–––

––––––

–––––

–––

–

.

gasp\*

…

BANG!\*

He fell to the ground.

BANG!\*

….

…

..

.

ha.

Ha-ha.

BANG!\*

Ha-ha

BANG!\*

BANG!\*

HAHAHAHAHA!

BANG!\* BANG!\*

BANG!\*

AHAHAHAHAHA–!

BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\*

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA–!

BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA–! BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA–! BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA–! BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA–! BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\* BANG!\*

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA–!

…

…

…

BANG!\*

…

…

BANG!\*

…

…

BANG!\*

AH–

I felt.

Relieved.

All the worries.

All the anxiety.

All the weight suddenly went missing.

Calm.

I felt very calm.

I fell and hit the wall.

Slowly sliding to the floor.

My body felt weak.

My eyes felt heavy.

Sleepy.

I’ll rest up a bit.

The next time I wake up everything is going to right as rain.

When I wake up next time, everyone’s going to welcome me with bright and warm greetings.

The sun will shine and light me up.

It will be–

.

**CHAPTER 1 PART 4**

*Sunshine!*

I woke up without the alarm setting off today.

That’s and achievement worthy of being put in my list of amazing achievements.

I get up from the bed and opened the curtains.

Sunshine lit up the entire room.

It’s so warm.

I opened the window one by one.

Fresh air flowed into my room.

What a beautiful morning it is today.

Oh.

I better hurry or not I will be late for school.

Uh–

Where’s the clock again–

Oh well.

I’ll search for it later.

For now, I got to hurry.

For some reason I feel excited to go to school today.

I’ve never felt this before.

Today, I woke up pleasantly

Must’ve had a good dream.

I wonder what did I dream about.

I can’t seem to remember it.

I can’t really remember most of my dreams anyway but I should be able to remember at least a good dream.

It’s not every day that I got to experience a good dream.

Hngh–

Nope. Can’t remember.

Clack\*

I opened the door.

Breeze of air gushed in, blowing my hair everywhere.

What great weather we have this morning.

I step out of the house and closed the door behind me.

Clack\*

I walk along the side of the road.

On the way I found some roses.

Sniff\*

What a nice smell.

Is this how roses smells?

This is my first time smelling one.

It’s a bit wet.

Someone must’ve watered them just recently.

I want to touch them.

I grabbed one of the roses–

Ouch!

I touched one of the pricks.

That hurts.

I took a look at my finger which had contact with the prick.

Small drip of blood formed.

It flows down my fingers.

The color is similar to the roses.

Red.

…

Red

….

Red

Everything was red.

Blood flowed on the ground.

Making its way toward me.

“Wha– wait.

This has to be a mistake.

I didn’t mean to– No it was self-defense.

It’s not my fault.

I’m innocent.

It was his fault for chasing me.

YEAH!

HE tried to attack me.

I only defended myself.

I’m not in the wrong here.

YEAH!

You believe me, right?

I’m not wrong right?

Please believe me!

I’m innocent!

This is a mistake!

PLEASE!

SOMEONE!

HELP!

HA!

HAHA!

HAAAAA–!“

I quickly get up and ran.

I ran with all my might, leaving the scene.

Like a true *murderer*.

NO!

I’M NOT A MURDERER!

IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!

Again, I ran.

Like always.

Running from everything.

Thinking I would be safe as long as I’m not involved.

Not looking back, I ran toward the stairs.

I jumped down.

Flying through the air.

Landing with both feet.

Slamming the floor.

Loud echoes throughout the halls.

My heart.

My legs.

My arms.

My body.

My entire existence panicked.

The stairs are like an endless loop.

It felt like an eternity.

Everything felt slow.

I kept on going downwards but there was no end in sight.

Finally.

I’m almost there.

…

One more jump and I’m on my way to the gates.

I jumped.

It felt strange.

It felt as if I was gliding.

I want to get out of this place.

I want to go home.

I can’t stand it here.

This place is driving me crazy.

Let me out.

LET ME OUT!

Thump\*

I could hear my heart beat.

It was loud.

Thump\*

As I was reaching to the ground, the adrenaline which fueled me this entire time ran out.

I misplaced my foot and slipped down the stairs.

I’m falling.

It’s like the world is telling me I’ve ran enough.

…

I guess this is it for me.

..

.

CHAPTER 2 PART 1

*What can I even do.*

Chirp\*chirp\*

The sound of birds chirping signaling the coming of morning.

Each bird chirping with their own pace, creating a natural alarm.

There I was, sleeping, on the hard and cold floor.

It wasn’t a particularly hot day, yet sweat poured down, soaking my shirt.

I lay there as I calm my ragged breathing down.

What happened?

I look around me.

It was my room.

The very room which I have occupied since I was very little.

It was a strange feeling.

I know I’m in my own room, I know the very feeling of my floor room, I know the smell of my room, yet everything feels alien to me.

After a while I finally calmed down.

From what I can tell, it looks like I had a nightmare and fell from my bed.

Luckily my bed wasn’t very high or not I would’ve cracked my head open.

I get up and opened the curtain that was blocking my window.

It was bright.

…

I opened the windows to let some fresh air in.

Gust of wind flowed in, cooling down the entire room.

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

Today is Monday.

I have school today.

I haven’t really introduce myself yet.

I am Rai.

A high school student. Currently a 2nd grade of class b in xx school.

I like rains, the sound of dropping water from the rain calms me down and help me focus on my thoughts.

I dislike crowd. I prefer a small group.

Today I start my first day of the week.

High pitched noise of water boiling\*

Click\*

I opened the lid of the jar which had store bought coffee in them.

Taking a couple spoons of them and pour it in to a cup.

Closing the lid back on I took the boiling water and poured it down.

I mixed the coffee and the water together for about a minute and took out the milk from the fridge.

I opened the lid and poured it down.

I put the lid back on and store it back in the fridge.

Taking the cup of coffee which I had made to the kitchen table.

I stir the coffee mixed with milk until it creates this light brown color and took a sip of it.

I take my phone and look at the time.

I still have about 10 minutes.

“I guess I’ll sip it slowly.”

I was on my way to school.

It was crowded.

If you aren’t paying attention to the road you might hit someone.

Tap\*

I felt a light tap behind me.

“Morning!”

It was “x” my childhood friend.

“Morning.” I replied.

We walk side by side to school.

She had been my friend ever since grade school.

Arriving at the gates a teacher was gate watching duty.

“Looks like Aki sensei is on duty today.”

Ryo Akiyama, our pe teacher.

“Good morning!”

“Good morning! Rai, we’ll be having a meeting today discussing the tournament coming up next month. Make sure you attend today! Also, don’t be late!”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

I head toward the lockers.

“Will you go?”

While I was changing my shoes a sudden question hit me by my sides.

“Dunno... Depends on my mood I guess.”

“You should go. It’s been a while you know– since I’ve seen you attend.”

Back in middle school up to first year of high school I used to frequently attend the badminton club.

I was very ambitious about it back then.

Every day spending my afterschool time, practicing. Trying to get better day by day.

Sometimes even till it gets dark I would still be practicing.

And “x” here would always watch me train.

“… I’ll consider it.”

“Promise?”

“…”

“…”

“I won’t make a promise I’m not sure I would be able to keep.”

We took the stairs and head up to our respective class.

Entering the class full of students, chatting amongst their circle of friends.

I head for my seat.

There, MY circle of friends grouped up.

For some reason, they always gather up at my desk.

I put my bag down and sit down.

They were discussing about something related to one of our teacher.

“Hey Rai, you heard?”

“About what?”

“Ozawa-senpai, apparently he got into a fight with some uni students!”

“mmhm.”

Ozawa-senpai, he is popular for being a trouble maker here. No matter who you ask, be it the third up to the first years, not a single person who hasn’t heard of him. I don’t know him personally, but I have had some encounters with him before. From what I can tell he isn’t necessarily a bad person. Honestly I kind of respect him… in a good way of course.

“Though, this time it was the uni students who hit him first.”

“Really? I for sure thought it was ozawa who hit first.”

“Haha, I bet it was actually him who hit first.”

“Really? And what do you base it on?”

“I don’t have any. It’s just a fact that he causes trouble everywhere he goes. Ask anyone in this school and they would answer the same.”

“Hmm.”

“Why are you trying to defend him anyways? Does he have some dirt on you or something?”

“”

“I’m not defending him,”