He had been dreaming.

Dreaming, that she is sitting by his side, close by, snuggling up into his arms, her head on his shoulders. The lights of the bus had dimmed, but to him, her face was glowing, with purity, sanctity. He had dreamed of her quite often, but this relative closeness was rather absurd. In this dream, he dreamed that she had been accepted into the family, without a hitch. He dreamed that they were headed home, their home. And yet it all felt so real. It felt like he remembered everything. It’s funny how the subconscious plays tricks on a tired mind and body.

So he sat there, in the bus, with her sitting next to him, her head resting on his shoulder. The windows were drawn, and the curtains too. The bus was moving almost smoothly with little shudders every now and then. It was warm. He knew it was a dream, but still wanted to live in it. He put his head lightly on her head. But then, he opened his eyes. Found himself lying in his room, alone, on a bright white morning.

He felt nothing. The date read 13th March, Saturday; clock said it was about 9 am. No pain, no memory of the dream he had been seeing just before he opened his eyes. But then, we remember morning dreams, don’t we? It was a quiet morning. Birds were chirruping; his mother was busy with her kitchen, father reading his morning newspaper in the garden, and his dog, lazing there in the corner in the morning sun. He brushed his teeth, switched on the television, and yet felt nothing of it. It was being all too normal. Like a memory had been wiped off clean. He wasn’t thinking much, just doing a chore. A quiet nice morning, on a worry free weekend.

He was having breakfast, on the couch, watching something on the television without interest and eating meanwhile. He just had a hiccup, gulped down water, and it was the same old morning again, smooth and quiet. He was relaxed, totally, surprisingly. He talked to his parents, joked, laughed, spent time sitting on the mowed lawn near his father’s chair, playing with his dog who was rolling near him and then running all around the lawn to come back and roll again. Mother was chiding him for being careless and that the dog would dirty him, but laughed along with everyone else when the dog crashed into him after taking a round of the garden at full speed and then spread out before him so that he may scratch his belly.

He was on a stroll in the neighbourhood. Dog’s strap in his hand, he was moving around lazily. Distilled sunlight showered from between the trees along the footpath. People were moving, just like any other day. Known faces, memorized smiles and gestures, and a lively carefree gait. The dog stopped every now and then to smell bushes and then mark his territorial boundary by urinating, every time he had to jerk the dog to move on, it felt like hiccups again. Suddenly, the dog lunged forward and with a snap, he opened his eyes.

There were dim lights, and a faint humming of the engine. The face close to him was familiar, glowing, and pure. She was readjusting the shawl around his legs, it had fallen off some time ago when the bus had hit a rough patch. Seeing him awake, she smiled. He returned hers with a similar expression.

Dreaming, wide awake.