

# Chapter 1

## Dream sequence

I was 7 years of age when my fear of sleep first developed.

A child should sleep on their bed, not under it.

But that - that's all in the past and this is my story. Of a different world - and a different time. When, the night was ghost-quiet except for the crack of dawn and when problems started as quickly as they vanished. Hey, I'm a lot older now and a lot of things have happened. I no longer feel compelled to record every minute detail, but I feel as though it's my duty to write down everything. Perhaps, this story will suit someone, someone who was just like me.

The alarm bell rang

Rring Rring! Rring Rring!

Two giant arms and two steel fists were cocked back like a revolver; ready to fire their empty rounds - into empty space.

Rounds ricocheted of blank walls and bounced around into my ear; rattling the ins - and outs of my skull.

Post-it notes.

Tacked to the wall and decorated with detailed drawings fluttered towards the floor; taking a bow as the ringing reduced them to mere rubble.

Glass bottles.

Clanked and clanked as they rolled past each other. Their insides swashing up and down like a ship's rum on a stormy night.

And a glass picture frame.

Another victim of the alarms tirade. It could have been any other of my rooms decor minding its business, when it to was made to walk the plank. My ears were met with a loud thud. Then a gristly crunch. And the wind cleared away the crime scene, sweeping away any loose shards of glass.

I could have only been praying for my torture to stop, as I felt each and every vibration creep its way up my spine. I lay wide-eyed, with my eyes and body facing the side. Waiting. Waiting for the ringing to subdue.

It never did and my bed which had been sitting in the furthest corners of my room soon began to give into the alarms demands.

Stretching.

Sinking.

And slumping to the alarms metronome.

I was soon to follow.

*The city's surrounded itself. Mute-grey sky-rises, clad with concrete armour and tattered with windowless stares. They litter the streets at regular intervals - but never seem to end. Busy bodies and airbrushed faces brush past you - only to disappear, past the bend. A whistles been blown; it slices at the thick blanket of day. A cloud starts to brew, deflecting thick golden tridents of ray. A taxi arrives - going round a busy street that the driver knows wont end. The honk of a horn. Red light. Red light. And a cop car quickly arrives - only to disappear past the bend. Follow this maze of streets*

*and you'll discover the web of veins pumping vitality to its heart.*

*I flick through this map on my phone, taking the occasional upwards glance to confirm my whereabouts. When, my eyes accidentally lock with a thin bespectacled man walking down the boulevard in a striped suit. Hoping he could direct me to where I need to go, I decide to match my pacing with his.*

*He walks faster.*

*I walk faster.*

*He walks faster.*

*I walk faster.*

*It goes on like this for a while, before I stop to see a thin bead of sweat trickle down the mans forehead. As I aim to resume my following of the strange man I notice he's stopped abruptly.*

*"Hi, I was just curious if you knew wh-*

*"And what business do you have tailing people" he snaps cutting me off. "Do you get a kick out of it", now digging his pointed finger into my chest. "Oh God, you better not be one of those perfume people.*

*"Oh, no no no" I chuckle. "Just wanted to ask if you happen to know where Silver Solicitors is?".*

*A look of annoyance furrowed his brow and he begins to let out a lengthy sigh. "Why yes, I happen to be their president and would you like a guided tour" he sarcastically scoffs while walking of.*

*"No, I work there" I reply, smiling idiotically.*

*Whatever, I had said seemed to struck a chord with the strange man. The expression begins to leave from his face and the*

*curls of his lips begin to purse up. His suit cuffs remain glued to the side and I can hear the starch in his suit begin to shrink. A moment passes. Then another. I'm tempted to interject but before I can, I hear his shoes make a quick 180 degrees turn and I'm face to face with the man.*

*They say eyes are the windows to the soul, but for me his eyes are just bags of bleach and his face shrunk to the bone. His nose is sharp and his hair brushed to the side. As our stare-down continues, I can almost make out the sharp shrill of a woman and the sudden screeching of a car. "Look, if you don't know it's okay thanks anyway!" I gleam back.*

*"What, no you can't be here I-I-I watched them b-b-bury you!".*

*"Bury?" I chuckle to myself. "Well, how can that be I'm here, look you seem to be in a rush it's nice to meet you and I'm sorry for the emm tailing" I say, reaching out to shake his hand.*

*I reach for his hand, but its stapled to his side, I reach for the other one and find it unstapled. I swing it merrily up and down. A look of horror consumes his face and white threatens to swallow him whole.*

*Screeeeech.*

*There's that screech again.*

*My eyes scan the scene, but there's nothing to see. I return to my handshake, when I realise I was holding on to nothing. As my eyes return to meet the mans, I see a thin angular frame become a dot in the horizon as a man begins his frantic run.*

*The fuck was that about, I mumble relived that I can finally drop the nice-guy act.*

*No wait, forget that thought.*

*What did he want to say? Letting curiosity get the better*

*of me, I chase after him for a second time.*

*Tightness begins to build up in my suit and I can hear the click-clacking of my shoes against city tiles. "Wait, what was you gonna say" I yell out, my voice fading in the distance. As the dot becomes smaller and smaller, my breathing becomes heavier and heavier. I think I see him and the-*

*Smack-Bang, like a bowling ball to the face. My nose is swarmed by a rancid smell and my eyes begin to water. Sealing my mouth shut, my eyes are met with a horrid bright blue neon sign.*

*WELCOME TO SMOKERS LOUNGE! Smoking prohibited outside of lounge.*

*"Smokers lounge" I tut to myself forgetting all about the strange man, "anything but a lounge". It was one of those dingy locations I had seen highlighted on my phone, so I knew I had to be close. "Filthy, filthy, filthy" I mutter as I walk towards the sign. Mist forms above my cold breath and I backtrack a few steps.*

*All around me are different walks of life, huddled together in one large group. Blue-collar, white-collar, red-collar yep they're all here. To each their own, I say but if it wasn't for their wide-eyed smiles and gigantic grins I wouldn't have made anything of it. Large groups of men and women are sprawled across a single small patch of grass. Each of them huffing and puffing large bellows of smoke out their mouth's. Office worker, construction worker, office worker, sanitation worker. The ties on their suits and tool-belts on their waists all flap fitfully in the wind as their owners continue to smoke. They're huddled as if they were a colony of penguins clinging to the last remains of winter warmth.*

*Yet....*

*This crowd...*

*They're so happy!*

*I can make out their middle aged banter and chuffed expression through the waft of smoke and there doesn't seem to be a care in their eyes. They all seem so happy, so young, so yout-*

*Honk!*

*No I say to myself. They've got yellowish stained teeth, black lungs and a burning hole in their wallet.*

*Honk!*

*Another car speeds slips through a closing green light and the final waft of smoke disappears before my eyes.*

*"Filthy, filthy" I mutter.*

A ballad of branches sat lurking amidst shadows. They crawled and floated up into the air, clattering their skeleton bones against each other. Their boney fingers scraped against the windowsill, each time the wind came by.

Tip-tap. Tip-tap.

It was like a signal and the wind was on cue. It weaved through the crowd and wisped past needle-like branches, slipping an eerie-lullaby through the window gaps.

Rain pounds at the grass and an animal with a cloven hoof walks upon it. The ground gurgles and burbles as its hoof sinks into the bequeathed ground and the creature gives out a deathly scream as it realises its fate. A crow caws and simply watches from a distance.

Rring Rring! Rring Rring!

The alarm rang for the final time that night.

*"Thank you oh so much" I gleefully reply, waving of a kind stranger who had walked me to my workplace. I didn't know as to why I had forgotten my office's location but I thought it*

*had something to do with last night's drinks. As I feel a drop of rain on my lapel, I quickened my pace and slipped through closing company doors.*

*Once inside I put on a smile and casually headed for the elevator. The air inside was warm with a hint of perfume and I pressed the 23rd button for the 23rd floor.*

An ordeal through hell itself; 10 rounds with the king of the nightmare world and an unstoppable alarm. "A silly smile snuck its way onto his". "What caught the eagle's eye?" he mumbled.

Thump!

Falling ever so gracefully onto the cold hardwood floor he remained. Oblivious to the past sounds of the alarm, he remained. Still muttering those same lines.

I lie still.

Breathing in slowly.

Breathing out slowly.

"How long was I out for?"

Morning's arrived. I hear a faint clatter of dishes and a jingle of keys. Yonder and a ritual silence. I let out a deep moan as I begin to feel the stiffness manifesting in my neck.

Rain, rain go away come again another day. It poured horribly last night, worse than the previous nights by far, I presumed from the splash-splashing I could still hear from outside. I can't remember the last time it hadn't rained and it seems to have been an eternity since I've heard the birds sing.

"How long was I out for?"

And why was I on the floor... Last night at the bar... Did I really drink that fucking much I didn't feel hungover. I thought

the others would still be hungover from last night's rounds but I guess I was wrong. I know my room's less shielded from the elements. It was built that way. Still, it felt like this weather's got a particular vendetta against me. Maybe that sums up why I've been struggling to get a full night's rest. Well that coupled with my: drinking habit, manga addiction and my need for long hours of scant internet pornography.

Gently leaning to my side, I felt the smooth-cold touch of the hardwood floor against my bare skin. My eyes began to drift around vaguely as I recollected the events that transpired last night. I let out a sombre yawn and ponder as to what the time is. As I raise my arms triumphantly to mark the start of what was sure to be a busy day I feel a frail and long hand gently lower them. He turns my chin. I meet a pair of blackbird craning over eyes

"Did you lose your sense of sight to, when you fell?" a familiar voice coldly inquires.

"No I can see just fine!" I reassure the voice, beaming back but squinting ever so slightly so I didn't give away I had no idea who I was speaking to.

"Good, good".

A minute passes. Then another. He sits and gently shifts thorough my wreckage of a bed. The floor, still cold beneath his feet. He's taller and his clothing much darker than mine. 30 seconds pass and he pivots to the side. Light seeps through shutter gaps aligning itself in perfect panels on my hardwood floor. He slips a smirk and gravitates towards me. Another 30 seconds go by and he taps at the floor. A smile crawls up the sides of his face and he quickly purses his lips.

" Ermm sur-.

Before I can finish, I feel my phone screen being squished between my face. As I wrestle with the voice, I feel the shutters



of my eyes go mad, as the glaring screen comes closer, burning  
the edges of my eyes

“Aaah fuck off” I yell.

“Read it!” he snaps back.

“Not until, you get of me”

Thump!

A fuzzy neon hue melts into my eye.

Seven. Fourty five. AM “HOLY SHIT”.



# Chapter 2

## School

It was a woeful early winter morning. The busy town of Solstice was mute-grey and void of all life; except for the scurry of morning delivery. As I trudged through heavy wades of snow I chuckled to myself.

*Why did Akbar have to be such an early bird? And why did it fuckign matter if I was late or not - its not like we go 2 class together*

Then again if he hadn't been my personal alarm I would have definetely missed my first class of semester and I didn't want to get in my teacher's bad books on the very first day either. Shame, he couldn't chauffer me to class though. I'll make it up to him. I'll buy him something from the convenience store, probably a cola or iced beer. But that thought would have to be put on hold.

A stalker. It'd been tailing me for long enough. It circled around my small frame in a figure of eight. desperate to break into my balloon lungs, it blew a huge gust of gritty gale into my mouth. I gagged involuntarily as I felt each and every corner of my lungs filling with shards of winter air.

*Less than a month. The cute weather girl said winter would be over in less than a month. I'm gonna write about it. Want something to remember it by*

As I was induced into a coughing fit, spluttering like a weak engine, I picked up enough conviction to want to leave this horrid weather. It wasn't the unwanted kiss with the wind, but it was enough for me to want freedom. Burrowing my chin deep into mybrest, I made one last push to escape this gory wind. "Its just the usual forecast" I reassured myself, as I lunged for the closing door handle. As my skinny frame, slipped through the closing glass doors, my marble eyes took one last peak.

An army of one patrols the street. Smothering the unlit skies, it marches towards us. A carpet of thick black smog is soon to follow. Inch-by-inch. Inch-by-inch, thats what I told myself. The smog and the wind they seem to twirl heavenwards, like they're stealing souls of people caught out in this hellhole

"Just the usual forecast" I repeated, more firmly this time. The heated corridor air was far more palatable than the grit left in mouth and the hallways were illuminated by a streak of shining lights. My first day of college, yet I still felt like a highschooler who'd wondered onto campus. Its not that I hadn't been here before. I came on induction day, so the layout of the school was still vaguely familiar to me. Without wasting time, I headed to the library. As I navigated my way down the corridor I was halted by a large blockade.

"Huh, what's the hold up?" I inquired, conscious of time.

"Didn't you hear what happened at the printers?" replies an anonymous voice.

"Yeah, I couldn't believe someone like her could pull something like that off".

"You think she was set up".

"Could be, but I wouldn't shrug the idea she was behind it".

"Last time I heard someone did something that scale, they got a whole years worth of detention!"

“Shit dude, she’s totally gonna get expelled then” “Last time someone did something like that, I heard they received a whole years worth of detention”.

“Dude she’s totally gonna get expelled it was worth it though!”.

AND THE CROWD OPENED UP ENOUGH FOR ME TO GET A CLEAR FIGURE As I stood on my tiptoes surveying the stampede, my eardrums were met by a loud BANG.

A glass office door was thrown open at such force, I thought a grenade had went off. Emerging from the carnage, was a heavysset man in his 40s. Huge droplets of sweat clung to his brow and his flabby face fitfully flapped, soaking in rage. A streak of posters of posters tacked to the wall sank to the ground and our spirits were shook to the core. Gathering his breath he let out a roar.

“Yuki, get your fucking ass in my office this instant!”.

As my mind struggled to make heads or tails of what was happening, I saw a small figure in the corner of my eyes.

“Woah, she’s cute”.

“Yeah definetly”.

A small girl approached the office door, clutching a bundle of papers tightly to her chest her eyes trailed the floor, avoiding **their** glaring glaze. Walking under the hallway lights, my eyes met her porcelain-pale face. Her teardrops ran down the sides of her cheeks, illuminated by the light they formed heavy droplets - yet too shy too hit the ground the clung desperately to the sides of her face. As she brushed past me, I saw a glimpse o her, her poker straight hair was mesmerising. Partly braided it cascaded down her pales kin like midnight waves on a Caribbean beach creating soft shadows down her cheekbnes. I swear I could hear the virgins in the crowd fawning over her.