She - Restless Nights

Converted to 3rd person.

pages ∙ words

She closed her eyes and pretended that she didn't know what would happen next. She was just too tired and a weight had settled on her like a lover. She wanted to cry because this was how it always started. An inescapable pressure plunged her body into the paths of sleep but cast her mind adrift. Merciful oblivion floated beyond her reach, an impenetrable sea. She twisted, she writhed, but every move only loosened the contours of her private universe. Every sensation became cleaner, sharper. A razor edged sensation sliced through her, searing and electric. Her body unraveled into smoke and her mind flowed off into an endless, cold abyss.

*I know this… and I know I can't escape this.*

She turned and glimpsed a faint image, a reflection haunting a darkened glass. She was only separated from it by a twist of the imagination. At first she did not comprehend what she faced; then she was inside her reflection, outside the world. The space she inhabited was a pale echo of the realm she had been cast out of, carved out of darkness by the light that spilled in through the mirror. The same instinct that told her that her mind was on the wrong side of the glass assured her that she must not attempt to leave the darkened room. She swallowed hot, burning despair as she realized that she could be trapped there—or rather, nowhere. The instant she stepped out of sight of the glass, the connection to her body would be broken.

*Oh goddess*.

She felt herself drawing a breath and she knew what was coming. Something—the void itself—tore through her, and she screamed; or she would have, if she could have found her voice.

Her mind hovered on the edge of the abyss. The thwarted impulse filled her, silent, brilliant. It shivered across the threads of her soul, transmuted into piercing illumination. An instant glimpse of understanding, filled with terror, awe, agony, ecstasy—but the epiphany seemed inexpressible. Unbearable. She coiled around another scream but the echoes reached her before she could start.

The sound reached a shattering pitch. The howling wind of a torn world streamed into her abyss. She writhed with a seething hatred, a devouring hunger, a destructive fury willing to shatter reality to tear at her own throat. Like hate incarnate, she struck. She could not move to defend herself in her confusion. Something flashed in the corner of her eye. The embodiment of that which loved shuddered, somehow now between her and destruction, and crumpled. For a moment she did not understand. A cold blade penetrated her soul and the blood of rage welled up, exploding out of her. A pent up breath she had forgotten she had held. The piercing sound took root in a real moment in time, venting pain her reason could not measure, annihilating all thought of hatred. And she could not stop. The fury transcended her and tore into the unraveling interface between a world of dreaming and a world of waking. It consumed her and ripped into the vault of heaven. Abruptly, almost redundantly, the sound snapped silent and her dream, her world, her mind erupted into shreds and tore violently away from her. Her universe exploded in pain. Her every nerve was torn out of her and seared in a blinding flash. This lightening storm swept through her, tracing the map of her body and brain; recapturing her essence and slamming it back into its cage.

She absorbed the shock, not at all sure if she was awake or still dreaming. She refused to open her eyes, crying silently into the vault of her stinging mind. She tried not to think about it, but she was never strong enough to stop herself. She don't know how long she groped in the dark after an answer. The fleeting glimpse at something more was smoldering in her. She wanted to understand the meaning of it, but she didn't know how. She wrestled with it silently until she began to slip unnoticed toward the kind of dreams people are supposed to have—most of the time. *Please, let me sleep. Let me forget.* She could not sleep. She could not forget. She dreaded the coming day. This dream had always done terrible things to her perception of reality. She nursed an insane fear that she would see some annihilating flaw in her reality, afraid that maybe it wasn't just a dream. As she realized this, she snapped back, fully awake, hands clutching over her heart.

Night was almost at an end.

She gazed blindly into the false light of dawn. She remembered. A scream, like a white-hot nail driven into the center of her forehead, had pierced the dream, shattering it. A sharp chill tracing her movements, she shuddered. Experience told her that she would be haunted until she could somehow sleep and forget again. She would find herself transfixed by a sight or sound or scene that felt unbearably familiar but would be utterly wrong. She knew that ahead of her would be a place that belonged in her dream. A little piece of insanity slipped innocently into a quiet corner of reality.

The thing that truly frightened her was not knowing how she had been evicted from her body.

She had no time. She strained to reach out in the fractured moment when she was almost in sync. She felt the singing ache as her mind touched another's and recognition flickered. The gentle murmur of a rich life caressed her as she slipped deeper into her reflection.

*Me.* Whatever this was, it was far more complex than mere reflection. She could feel herself trapped on the other side of the glass—she grasped the impossible image of a world divided and inverted. She reached a hand up to the glass, but her reflection refused to meet her half way. She was standing nowhere, cast upon the face of an abyss; and yet she somehow also stood within the image. She felt as if she had escaped herself and she dared not cross the line.

She watched herself in the mirror, struggling—with all her love and all her hate. She touched the not-surface of the divide. Delicate. Much too fragile. The sound of her scream was growing in her ears. Suddenly her reflection stepped toward her, stepped through and touched her. The threshold shattered. The image of the world—the dream—began to devour itself. Her reflection split, sundered by the violation of the divide. She… *we* confronted... *her*… each other on her side of the glass. Me, her lover, her nemesis.