

= Dark Fantasy ( song ) =

" Dark Fantasy " is a song by American hip hop recording artist and producer Kanye West from his fifth studio album , My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy ( 2010 ) . The song serves as the opening track of the album , and was written by West , Ernest Wilson , Jeff Bhasker , Mike Dean and Robert Diggs . It features an opening narrative delivered by rapper Nicki Minaj , and singers Teyana Taylor and Justin Vernon contribute to the song 's hook and provide background vocals . The track is built around a sample of " In High Places " by Mike Oldfield . The song introduces several of the themes presented on the album and features numerous pop culture references , a gospel @-@ inspired production style , and piano @-@ driven composition . The song received acclaim from music critics , who praised the song as a strong opener to My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , complimenting West 's vocal delivery and the song 's production .

Despite not being released as a single , the hype generated by the release of My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy caused the song to enter the Billboard Hot 100 at position 60 . It was the opening song of West 's 2011 setlist at the Coachella Music Festival , and was performed with Taylor at the ' Vevo Presents GOOD Music ' musical venue . " Dark Fantasy " was utilized during the opening sequence of West 's short film Runaway , during an extended scene with West driving down an atmospheric forest .

= = Background = =

Like the majority of My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , the song was recorded in Oahu , Hawaii . Following several media controversies , West decided to record his next album in a reclusive manner only working with artists he considered himself familiar with . The song features vocals delivered by singer Teyana Taylor , a musician who initially met West at his Glow in the Dark Tour tour in 2007 . West was an admirer of her fashion sense , and the two frequently talked about clothing and designing , to the point when they eventually became friends . West called Taylor down to his recording studio in Hawaii under the pretense of checking out some pieces of clothing designed by Pierre Balmain . While the initial reason for her being there was to look at some clothing for him , she was determined to appear on the album . While at the studio , she purposely hummed loud enough for West to hear her . West was impressed by her singing ability and by the fact she was signed to producer Pharrell Williams , and asked her to do backing vocals on the album . On the recording process of the song , she commented :

" So then he tells me to do ' Dark Fantasy . ' At the time it was pretty empty , just verses . He put me in another room by myself and said , ' Go . ' I came back with a whole intro and chorus . I did all the scratches and the cuts myself with my voice . That ? s not a DJ thing when you hear my voice go like that . I was so nervous when I played it for Kanye . I hadn ? t been in the studio for so long . I was so excited to be trying out for that song . Rihanna was there . "

According to Taylor , when the song was being recorded , it was three hours before the album 's deadline when it had to be turned into the record company . West was so impressed with her performance that he signed her to his label GOOD Music , because of issues she was facing with her current label Star Trak Entertainment . Justin Vernon of the group Bon Iver appears on backing vocals of the track and is the first voice heard on the album . West was a fan of Bon Iver 's album For Emma , Forever Ago and invited him down to Hawaii to record with him . While working there , the two became friends and reportedly produced 10 songs during their sessions together . Vernon described the process as highly artistic in nature , stating that the fourteen @-@ hour day recording schedule allowed for a lot of fun and creativity .

The song features production by RZA of the hip @-@ hop group Wu @-@ Tang Clan , who commented that " Dark Fantasy " was one of the many compositions that he and West collaborated on . According to him , West had a " stack of beats " and that he tried to be as productive as possible with so much material already recorded . The style of composition is deeply influenced by producer RZA , who introduces his " bring @-@ the @-@ ruckus " aesthetic to the song production . Nicki Minaj was asked to open the song with a spoken word introduction , a favor she was excited to

perform because she was a fan of Jay @-@ Z , a rapper who West was recording with at the time . Minaj described both Jay @-@ Z and West as " icons " , and stated that she was blessed to be working with them .

Producer No I.D. spoke about the history of the beat , and noted that it was offered to both Drake and Jay @-@ Z before West finally decided to use it himself . According to him , producers RZA and Pete Rock had already recorded certain portions of the song , and that him and West recorded the chorus parts . Following that , he mused " then Nicki did the intro and it went crazy . That ? s one of my favorite records , just because of all the emotions that came with it . ?

= = Composition = =

The song is introduced with a narrative by Minaj , speaking in an English accent , that serves as a retelling of writer Roald Dahl 's poetic rework of " Cinderella " . West begins his verse with the refrain " I fantasized ? bout this back in Chicago " . It introduces themes referenced on the majority of My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , including comments on decadence and hedonism , with West musing how " the plan was to drink until the pain was over / but what ? s worse , the pain or the hangover ? " . His lyrics on the track contain numerous musical and cultural references , including those to the song " Mercy Mercy Me ( The Ecology ) " , the Lamborghini Murciélago sports car , rapper Nas , fashion designer Phoebe Philo , short story " The Legend of Sleepy Hollow " , the band the Kings Of Leon and their song " Sex on Fire " , singers Celine Dion and Leona Lewis , and television character Steve Urkel . The song contains the line " too many Urkels on your team / that 's why your wins low " , a double entendre . The " Winslows " were the family Urkel lived with on the show Family Matters , with the alternative meaning touching upon how his opponents ' " wins are low " . The chorus contains the line " can we get much higher ? " , another inquiry that is brought up during much of the proceeding album . The song samples a portion of " In High Places " by Mike Oldfield , a pop rock song from 1983 from the album Crises .

West raps in a highly melodic manner , almost singing some of his verses , over the brooding production style . The production style has been defined as having several similarities with West 's prior composition styles . AbsolutePunk 's Drew Beringer stated felt that the song sounded like West was " sampling his own source material " on the song , and felt that West embraced a " baroque instrumentation " on the track .

= = Personnel = =

Kanye West - vocals , production  
Mike Dean - piano , additional production , mixing  
Jeff Bhasker - keyboards , additional production  
Chris " Hitchcock " Chorney - cello  
Nicki Minaj - background vocals  
Justin Vernon - background vocals  
Amber Rose - additional vocals  
Teyana Taylor - additional vocals  
RZA - production  
Andrew Dawson - mixing

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

" Dark Fantasy " received acclaim by critics . The Washington Post 's Chris Richards described the song as having " mutant gospel crescendos " and called it epic in nature . MTV News praised the delivery of Minaj 's verse , calling it structured like a nursery rhyme , musing that it " sets the tone for

the song ( which is intense and hallucinatory ) and the album " . Rolling Stone writer Rob Sheffield praising the lyricism , describing it as witty , and wrote " in ' Dark Fantasy , ' West rhymes " mercy , mercy me , that Murcielago " with " diablo , " " bravado " and " My chick in that new Phoebe Philo / So much head , I woke up in Sleepy Hollow . It 's some genius stuff . " David Amidon of PopMatters felt that West 's vocals were " layered a baker ? s dozen different ways " and described the production as synthetic in nature .

Dan Vidal of URB stated that he enjoyed Minaj 's verse , describing it as a " pseudo @-@ cockney @-@ accented opening narration " and praised the song 's arrangement as " spine @-@ tingling " . David Browne of Time wrote " tracks like ' Dark Fantasy ' and ' So Appalled ' are built on rumbling tanks of pianos and strings that sound as if West is marching into the apocalypse . " Andrew Martin of Prefix Magazine stated that the song restored his admiration for West , and that the track lived up to the hype behind it , writing " most of it is rather epic and damn good , especially this track with its classic RZA production and assistance from No I.D .. " J. Tinsley of The Smoking Section commented that the song served as a successful opener , viewing it as a " boisterous firestarter combining sharp lyrics , a spurious Nicki Minaj English accent and an enormous chorus . " Chris Martins of Spin complimented West 's lyricism and use of double entendres , and mused that the track was the album 's " beyond luxe opener " . Jonah Weiner Slate commented that West pulled off an impressive balancing act , and cited the song as an example of " his marvelous , hungry ear " . Andrew Barber of Complex compared the impact of the beat to that of a cannon , calling the production team of the song a " dream team " , describing the track as powerful in nature .

= = = Commercial performance = = =

Due to the hype generated by the anticipation of My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy , Dark Fantasy debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 at 60 , without actually being released as a single . The second week it dropped to 83 , and by the third week it exited the chart . The song performed similarly in Canada , charting at 67 on the Canadian Hot 100 . Other than the four singles released from the album , ( Power , All of the Lights , Monster , and Runaway ) " Dark Fantasy " was the only song off the album to chart . The song debuted at position 10 on the Bubbling Under R & B / Hip @-@ Hop Singles as reported by Billboard . It also appeared at position 80 on the South Korean Gaon Chart , and at 189 the following week .

= = Marketing = =

At the ' Vevo Presents GOOD Music ' musical presentation , the song was performed by both West and Taylor . The performance began with West 's silhouette pressed against a glowing background , dressed in all black . Taylor joined the performance and sang her portion of the song . During his set at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival , West performed " Dark Fantasy " as the opening track .

The song was also featured as the opening track in Runaway , a 35 @-@ minute music video directed by West set to music from My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy . The scene which the track is played during features West driving his MTX Tatra V8 through the forest when he crashes into a meteorite , which according to GQ , paralleled West 's car accident that was the inspiration for " Through the Wire " . The song was used in advertisements for the film The Hangover Part II . Taylor commented that she heard the song performed at a basketball game she was attending , and saw the trailer for Hangover II which featured the song . She reported that she was very excited to see that the song was becoming popular .

Most notably , the song is featured during the farewell montage at the climax of The Hangover Part III , particularly the verse " The plan was to drink until the pain over , but what 's worse the pain or the hangover ? " as it coincidentally relates to the story arc of the trilogy .

= = Chart positions = =

