



REAM OF A SONG

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Dream of a Song
by Terence Morais

I am necessary. The strangeness lies not in my profession but the land I serve. The Dreamland-1, it used to be called until a new glowing Dreamland-2 was built, up in the sky, shining down on us as the only source of light. The Dreams used to be birthed in Dreamland-1 (now known as Deadland) until the administrators realized that Dreams have a high mortality rate. No one wanted their houses built between tombstones, so they built a place up above closer to Earth, for logistical purposes, they said (Who were they fooling?), and named it Dreamland-2. Dreams are born and cared for until the assigned human holds its hand and leads it to salvation. Dreamland-2 contains incubation chambers and Care chambers filled with glowing, effervescent Dream Babies that shed light upon the Deadland's graveyards and morgues. I would rather have their light as far away from Deadland as possible leaving it pitch dark. Deadland has a way of life no one wants to shine a light upon.

Dreams unattached to humans either fortunately die or live their remaining chastised life out in Deadland as undertakers, like yours truly, or as grave diggers or as Dream Collectors. Some dreams stoop down to live as grave robbers, stealing... I'll spare you the bleak details. They steal things from Dream-graves which allows them to live forever. Who'd want to live forever, right? The Grave Robbers are crazy like that.

Long, sturdy tubes from Dreamland-2 transport the dead Dreams to my land. The Dream Collectors transport these dead to my morgue. I dress them up for their graves or set them up at houses between tombstones to serve the Deadland's purpose. That used to be my job until the day a Dream of a song came down the pipeline.

Haydn, the dream collector of my morgue, knocked on my door. I was having my required rest because it had been a busy month. I opened the door with groggy eyes, stroking my nervy beard.

'You've got to see this!' Haydn was almost jumping on the spot.

I grabbed my coat and followed him to the morgue's main chamber. He opened the door for me and what I heard confused me more than what I saw. Lying on the metal slab in the middle of the room was a blue ephemeral body of a Dream. I pushed past Haydn to the new arrival's slab. I looked at the tag tied to his big toe, his name was written in the usual calligraphy of Dreamland-2's administrators. Javo was his name. What sounded as murmur

from the chamber's threshold, was amplified now. Javo's lips were moving gracefully emanating a melody that almost rocked me to euphoria. I would have stood there listening to it for the rest of my life, if Haydn hadn't shaken me back to my senses.

'What do you think?'

'He's not dead.' I replied, running my hand over his translucent blue skin that revealed his bioluminescent nerves that glowed a fiery orange.

'He's not alive either.' Haydn sat down on the plastic chair by the slab. 'Have you seen anything like this before? He's half rotten and half alive, almost blinking in and out of existence. Almost like a... like a...' Haydn rubbing head trying wake up his vocabulary.

'Like a dream?' Both burst out laughing. I examined his nook and cranny at a loss, knowing not what needs to be done. 'Uncanny' I said, lost in admiration of the Javo's state of being but mostly that song. I reached for the recorder microphone hanging above the slab and pressed the record button.

'This melody is the best I've ever heard from any Dream.' Haydn laid his head back on the backrest stroking his nervy beard.

The Dreams sent down to Deadland are either fully alive or surely dead but never dwindling between both state. The Dreamland-2's administrators would've never sent it down if they hadn't already tried every life-saving procedure possible.

'The administrators must be deaf.' I lifted up Javo's chin. 'Look, the beard has started to grow.'

Haydn leaned forward from his chair. 'Look closer, the scalp is opening and closing. The beard's hair is going in and out of the scalp like a tongue moving in and out of a mouth. You are becoming ancient, man.' He tapped my back.

I had to squint my eyes to notice what he pointed out. The growth of a beard on a Dream's face meant he has been abandoned by his human and had to live out his withering life in Deadland. But this was new.

'Javo must have been like this for ages. His muscles have atrophied.' I sat down on the chair by Haydn. Both our eyes were upon Javo.

'That explains why he was sent down the tube.' Haydn said.

'Are we supposed to bury him like this?'

'No way, I'm going to let you.'

'What do you think we do with him?'

'I don't know. Just don't send him to the grave yet.' Haydn said.

‘Where are his files?’

Haydn reached for the compartment by the slab, pulled out a file and handed it to me.

‘Did you read it?’ I took the files from him.

Haydn nodded.

Javo belonged to a female human being called Harini and he was birthed in Dreamland-2 when Harini first heard Stairway to Heaven and wanted to sing along. After being cared for in the Care Chamber of Dreamland-2 by Harini’s bathroom singing, Javo was teleported to Earth to tag along Harini when she stunned an auditorium full of students with her angelic voice. Since then Javo had followed her with utter loyalty (or vice versa?). A year ago, Harini had met with an accident, in which she had lost her tongue. As the absence of her voice began to haunt her, Javo began to rot. Harini attempted suicide by hanging but she was unsuccessful. She slipped into a coma with a broken neck and a half-dead brain. Harini’s soul had untwined itself from Javo, sending him back to Dreamland-2. As she teetered between life and death in a coma, Javo faced the same. The DL-2 admins were unable to cut the cords connecting him to Harini, so they sent him down to Deadland to meet his eventual death.

‘Poor girl!’ I closed the file.

‘Poor Javo! The humans torment us, don’t they?’ Haydn stretched his legs.

I chuckled. ‘We do return the favour, my dear Haydn. Look at what happened to Harini. She was ill-prepared for life. There’s a saying which my human used to say.’ It took some time for me to utter the words lodged in my throat. It had been too long since I thought about my human. He had abandoned me for a constant, secure job. “‘What are we if not dreams? Alas, it’s only torment disguised at times.’”

‘That is profound, Kale.’

‘He wanted to be a writer but here I am.’ I sighed, stroking my nervy beard.

We sat in silence listening to the song of Harini being sung by Javo. My thoughts swirled in accordance with the cassette recording the melody. Eventually, we walked out of the room leaving the recorder on. I saw a few grave robbers a few yards from my house, but the echoing melody in my head distracted me from them.

Several years had passed, Javo remained on that center metal slab of

my morgue, singing. I had set up seventy-seven Dreams in houses and dressed up fifty-nine Dreams for their graves. The song from Javo was comforting and it perked up what used to be a sad job. It was a melody I could listen on a loop all day long and never grow tired of it. I had recorded the melodies on several cassettes that could fill up a broom cupboard. One day, the singing stopped. Javo had died. I dressed him up and rode the hearse with Haydn. We dug a grave and buried him.

The following days were empty without the melody echoing across the morgue's main chamber. I borrowed Haydn's Walkman, which he had acquired from a grave robber, and played a Javo-cassette a day. It kept away my loneliness.

A week later, when I raised my hand to stroke my beard, my finger closed on nothing. I ran from the main chamber to the restroom and saw my reflection. My knees almost gave away when I saw my beard was almost gone. There was only a 5 o'clock shadow where there used to be a forest of hair. When you're in a world where you expect nothing to change, where you've accepted your fate, you don't easily notice the changes when they happen.

'This is like a... like a...' Haydn was turning my face from one side to the other examining my diminishing beard.

'Like a dream?' I said, smiling so wide, the back of my head hurt.

'Yeah!' Haydn said. 'Do you know what this means?'

I nodded enthusiastically.

'I think this is goodbye.' Haydn's eyes were welling up.

'Not so fast.'

I explained to Haydn what I had in mind and Haydn was more than happy to obey. The next day an army of hearse stood in front of my morgue with funnel-shaped speakers attached to their roofs. I stood on top of my morgue's stairs beside boxes of Javo-Cassettes. The Dream Collectors queued up and I distributed the cassettes to them. Hearses travelled the Deadland blasting the melody to everyone who would listen. The Song of a Dream became the new layer of atmosphere of Deadland. Every Dreams' beard diminished except for those Dreams whose humans were dead since abandoning them.

The tubes which were being used by Dreamland-2 like a garbage chute, served a better purpose now. It was now carrying the resurrected Dreams back to Dreamland-2 and eventually back to Earth. Haydn left Deadland the

second day the tubes opened for upward transportation. A month later, I travelled the tubes to DL-2 where I was cared for in the Care Chambers, with written word, until my human was ready to accept I was functioning again.

My eyes welled up when I saw the buildings and administrators whom I had assumed I would never get to see again. A white light engulfed my beardless face as I was being teleported back to Earth. Pictures of Javo lying on my morgue's metal slab flashed through my mind and I tried attaching a face to the name Harini but who would defile such a divine being with a face.

Before I knew it, I was standing beside my human. He had lost his hair and the remaining strands were squiggly grey lines.

Hello, old friend, I thought, as I watched him write hunched over a piece of paper. He was humming a familiar tone which brought a smile upon my face.

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