Dream Catcher

I reach for the dream, grasping it tightly in my slender hands. As I touch it, the dream stops moving and settles down into my palm. I view the scene of the dream as if looking through a circus mirror; it is distorted, but I can still see a bright daisy meadow and a grinning child’s face. I smile at the scene. I release the dream, allowing it to float lightly down to the child in the bed below. Her face lights up as the dream dissolves into her mind, releasing its myriad of colors and scenes and happiness.

I wait, the dream stretching out longer than I would have guessed. The dream-sender must have been a strong one. Then again, my child is so young and innocent, happiness would have no problem extending its life in her mind. Teenagers are harder. They have seen too much for their minds to hold on to a happy dream for more than a few hours. Those dreams have to work the hardest.

The next dream is not to be had for my child. It tries to race past my extended arms, but with dexterity that exemplifies my long years as a dream catcher, I catch hold of it. Only the worst nightmares fly so fast, trying to dispel their malfeasance into the child before the dream catcher can stop them. Once they get to the child, it’s too late. Nobody can remove a dream once it has settled, not even the most experienced dream catcher.

I press a single fingertip to the writhing dream, gritting my teeth as the fear tremors its way into my skin and through my body. I am made for this; my body dispels the nightmare in a harmless spray of putrid green mist, mist that will forever remain unable to reform. The dream has settled down under my ministrations- I watch as the vampire who once dominated the dream
transforms into a gentle fairy king. I smile as the nightmare is completely rid of its dread and transformed into a pleasant, soft dream. I release the dream, but it chooses not to stay, instead flitting out the window, no doubt off to some other child in some other home.

I adjust my woven gown, the beads at the bottom rustling as I straighten it out. The weaving is intricate; it never rumpled or creases. I move to the other side of the bed, stretching out muscles that haven’t moved in hours, to study the face of my child. Her brown curls fall slightly over her face. When I reach down to move them, my hand brushes not only the hair, but her forehead as well.

Much more alert than most five-year-olds, her eyes pop open, pupils dilating to account for the light that radiates from me. She stares at me in awe before I quickly place my hand on her head, releasing a wave of pure slumber. She sinks back into her pillows, her hazel eyes closing like window shades on a bright day.

I imagine what she must have seen. To her, I would look like a fairy, a nymph, even. With the light that I expel every night to discourage all but the most intrepid nightmares, I would have appeared to be glowing. The ethereal sight would only have been magnified by my silver hair, violet eyes, and unearthly pale lavender skin. I imagine the only thing she might have recognized- the pattern of my dress. I know she has stared up at her dream catcher multiple times. I only hope her mind does not make the connection.

I am a lucky dream catcher. Most of my kind do not make it past their first use, but I have become an heirloom, passing on from mother to daughter for the past four generations. I have escaped injury by fire, water, and babies’ chubby hands. But if the girl tries to convince her
family that her dream catcher is a person, I will most definitely be disposed of as a threat to the
girl’s sanity.

Suddenly, movement stemming not to, but from the girl catches my attention. I watch as
her mind slowly but surely releases a new dream from its depths. Not only is the girl a new-
formed dream-sender, but I recognize what her dream is about. Me.

Compassion, more than I have ever felt for one of my charges, washes over me. The
pretty young child is a dream-sender, and a good one to boot. As the dream detaches from her
head and floats out the window, I marvel at how fast it had appeared. She will become a
prodigious dream-sender, though she will never consciously know it. A large smile creeps
across my usually stoic face. She will create the dreams of thousands of children around her.

A new dream-sender is a rare occurrence, requiring celebration and reward. I know what
her inaugural reward will be even as I watch her slumbering form produce more dreams by the
minute.

The common topic of conversation for this girl has lately centered around one question. I
have watched her wake every morning to ask her stoic-faced, sadness-hardened mother one
query: “When is daddy coming home?”

Her mother has always had to respond, with tear-filled eyes, “I don’t know, darling.”

It is the child’s most intense conscious dream, her most wished for, and now that she is a
dream-sender, I can grant it.
I close my eyes and reach out with my mind across the world, looking for her father, a soldier missing in action who might never come home. I find him asleep, cold and shivering in an enemy cell. Gently, I touch my hand to the dream-sender’s forehead, using her energy to make her dream come true. It is a grueling effort that takes two hours and promptly stops the output of her dreams, but I know it will be worth it. I can feel my time running out, but I complete my task just before light shines through the window.

I open my eyes to dawn colors peeking through the window. Already I can feel my essence being pulled back into the form of a harmless ceiling hanger. I let go and completely transform, transmuting from a lithe humanoid to a wovencatcher with beads hanging from the bottom.

As the sky lightens, the man on the floor groans and turns in his sleep. I smile in my mind’s eye as his eyes flutter open.

At first he thinks he’s hallucinating, but his senses convince him otherwise. He smells the mint soap that she used in the bath last night. He sees the pink cushions and the stuffed unicorns. He knows.

With a shout of joy, the soldier hoists his tired body off of the floor. His demeanor transforms from that of a beaten warrior to a triumphant father. He hoists the sleepy five-year-old out of the bed as she sleepily rubs her eyes before realizing who it is.

At the moment that the girl recognizes her father, dream catcher and dream-sender are united as one in joy.
Enigma

Run without moving.
Scream, but no sound.
Nobody’s listening;
I see them around.

Fall without hurting,
Speak, no one hears.
Seeking the meaning,
It all disappears.

What does it come to?
All in my head.
And trying to solve it,
I wake up instead.
I woke up in a cold sweat. Being eight years old, I hadn’t ever woken up in that manner before. It scared me. I had dreamed something. But I realized, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t remember what it was.

The fragments of the dream were slipping away, and all I was left with was a menacing premonition and a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. I fell back asleep, my muscles aching because of how tense I was. The dream was gone.

“Get a move on, Cambio!” the hoarse voice yelled at me. I deliberately slowed my steps, getting a firm slap across the head for my impudence.

The captain of the guard was waiting at the door of the dungeon. The sudden sunlight burned in my eyes after two days in the dark, and I scowled, annoyed with the world for locking me up because I did something less acceptable than what they did. I did a considerably large amount of less-than-acceptable things, and the stomach of the castle was no stranger to me. I was brought to the captain, who looked me over critically.

“Some people never change,” he began. “But I once had a delusional hope that you would.”

“You know what I am,” I said. “No one else is any better.”

“Better than a thief? Hadrian, there’s only so many offenses you can make before we’ll punish you like we should.”

I stared at him coolly, though the prospect of death was terrifying. And death was the punishment for a thief. That or having your eyes taken out. But I wanted to die in one piece, so neither was extremely appealing.
The captain sighed. "Go home," he said. "But next time you’re caught, the noose will be your grave."

I was escorted out of the courtyard. It was like any other day; the market-reaching into the side streets, unrestrained from the main pathway—was bustling, as all the debased civilization of Shackele went about their ignorant, devious lives. Brutes. All of them. Yet for some god-forsaken law, I was locked up, as all their infringements were accepted.

I had seen the corruption at a young age. Only after the Dream did I notice it. I spent hours trying to remember what the Dream was, but I only remembered the ache. I connected the fact that I began seeing my world in a new way, but the depravity didn’t bother me. I just knew it was there.

I saw it as I was released into the wild of the market. Unfair prices. Duplicious merchants. Sleight of hand. Every boy under ten was a pickpocket. If anyone was smart enough to not keep their coins in their pockets, they weren’t there. I could have made a fortune off of loose money.

As I weaved through the crowd, I studied the faces with second glances. Anger. Disgust. Discontentment. If there were satisfied folk in the village, they must have locked themselves indoors all the time. The looks I saw were normal. The demeanor, familiar. As I turned off the main path, I opened my fist to count how many coins I had claimed as I had walked through. Not much. But enough to get me out of there.

The guards were through with me. I had to move on. Stopping the cause of trouble was unthinkable. If I treated the symptoms, I could get rid of the friction.

I left. No one was there for me. Shackele was a den of well-dressed demons, and no one cared. I didn’t care.
I walked the Northern road out of the village and into the forested country. There were mountains, but mostly plains; and the farther I got from the foothills, the plainer it got.

When the forest disappeared behind me and there were only tall grasses to keep me company, I realized darkness had fallen. I stopped and slept- or tried to.

It struck me odd there was quiet. No yelling women. No drunken men. No crying children. I lay awake half the night. The quiet was too loud.

As soon as there was light enough to cast a shadow, I set out; but as I traveled, I grew cautious. I had never left the village. I had never traveled this road. And yet, I felt déjà vu- a sensation that I had been here, or seen it- but that was impossible. It was like a dream.

Or the Dream.

I didn’t understand the Dream. But it was my déjà vu. Not that I had dreamed about this place. I hadn’t dreamt a thing. I dreamt a sense.

Later that day, I entered the town of Esaele. As soon as I entered, I perceived the difference. There was a dominant feeling of peace residing here. It was calm, even though it was noisy and bustling with activity.

I followed my nose to the bakery, where loaves and rolls and such were laid out in abundance. I sidled to the back and saw what I’d been hoping for. Three loaves were cooling in an open window.

I reached out to swipe one. Suddenly pain seared through my hand, and I stumbled back. I gasped and grabbed my arm trying to soothe the pain, but it was gone. The Dream. It was the Dream. I don’t know how I knew, but it was undeniable. The Dream was my pain. But why? I stretched my arm out towards the loaf. No pain. But the second I touched it, the pain returned, stronger.
I ran down the alley, afraid of what was happening to me. I didn’t even see the boy sitting on the side of the road before I tripped over him. He grunted.

“Ow,” he said, crawling to a wall and leaning against it.

I turned away and was going to move on when I saw a basket of apples, unguarded, on the step of a small house.

I walked towards it shoving down the Dreamish apprehension. I stopped for a moment before snatching an apple. The pain seared again, and I involuntarily dropped it back into the basket. I grimaced and determinedly ignored the pain as I grabbed it up again and started running. I thought maybe, if I got far enough away, I could outrun the pain; but with every step, it multiplied. I had only gone a few yards before my knees buckled with pain, and I fell down. The apple rolled from my grasp. I looked at it in disdain. I felt a terrible ache, and I realized it wouldn’t go away until I returned the fruit.

Before I could work up the nerve to return the apple, the orphan boy I had tripped over ran to it and scooped it up. For a second, I feared the ache would stay forever, but with each bite he took, my ache dissipated. When he threw the core on the ground, I had recovered completely.

I understood the Dream, or at least thought I did, now. It wouldn’t let me thieve.

I swallowed the fear rising in my throat. I knew nothing but thievery. Where I came from, thieving was more or less the same as the work those rats did in their professions. Now I was faced with the realization that the Dream was ruining my hopes of survival.

I tried stealing a candlestick to sell so I could buy food, but the Dream stopped me. Every time I attempted to take something, the pain increased. Then I, unfortunately, overheard an apology. I understood what it was. But the concept of responsibility for your actions and remorse
when you wronged someone was foreign to me. It wasn’t long before the Dream shackled me until I apologized for stealing - or, trying to.

I began avoiding people, but I was starving. The only time I ate was if I found something discarded, which in a village with poor and needy folk, meant if they didn’t want it, it wasn’t edible. The Dream tortured me. I was ill-fated enough to hear manners, and before the day was out, I was saying pardon me, please, and thank you, just to keep myself from keeling over.

I was humiliated by my inability to look after myself. I had never depended on others. Kindness was alien to me, and to depend on it from strangers was aggravating. But if I didn’t, I starved. So I began feeding off their sympathy.

Weeks passed. I broke up fights between children. I assisted old women in carrying their things. I helped the baker fix a broken wheel on his cart.

I didn’t want to. But the pain was always there, and it began to hinder me, even when I was doing what it told me to do.

Nearly a year later, I helped a child stand after tripping over her own feet, and as she ran back to her mother, I heard the sound of someone crying. I followed the sound down the nearest alleyway and saw, to my surprise, the orphan boy I had run into a year ago. I stepped towards him, but he didn’t hear me.

I clenched my fists habitually against the searing pain that would attack me. But it didn’t come.

I paused. Maybe it was that the Dream knew my intent. I stepped backwards, to see if the pain would come. It didn’t.
The boy shuddered with tears. My mind turned to the boy and away from the Dream. I felt a strange ache, but not in my body. I recognized it as a feeling others had, but I had never experienced.

They called it compassion.

The Dream never came again. It didn’t need to. There was no need to force me to help others, to make me apologize. I did those things not to keep myself from pain- but to help others out of theirs.

Some people never change. But I did.
Retrospect

When I was young I thought I had
A plan, a dream, to make me glad.
To save me from the place inside—
I thought that evil place had died.

My dream was really mostly good
I tried to do the things I should
But what I wanted took control
And I forgot I had a soul.

I broke a promise and a heart
I pulled the bonds of trust apart
I turned away when anger grew
I cried for hope I thought I knew.

The light was there, unrecognized
It burned and scorched my darkened eyes
A danger lurked beneath the veil
Behind my face a mangled tale.

My mind hid all it knew from me
I couldn’t trust my honesty
I grasped at only empty air
Then laughed as if I didn’t care.

Shall shadowed fragments feed the fire?
Shall broken memories crush desire?

Shall all I want and all I boast
Be what is killing me the most.
Royan and the Dream

The elevator whined and creaked as it slowly made its way to the top floor of the apartment building. I clung on to the rails, eyes closed, as the elevator jolted for what seemed like the 100th time.

"You don't like the elevator?" my companion asked with a hint of sarcasm in his voice.

"No. How old is this bloody thing? It feels as if the whole machine will come crashing down at any moment. Why didn't we take the stairs?" I replied between heavy breaths.

My companion laughed a hearty laugh and, although my eyes were still closed, I could sense that he was flashing his charming world famous smile.

"Those are all good questions, my dear Pinkerton. I would say the elevator is about twenty years old. 'How?' You may ask. The answer is simple: It was put in when the apartments were built. I only assume this because of the sign on the front door that tells me that the building was established in 1925. As to why we didn't take the stairs, it was out of common courtesy for you, as a consequence of your war wound."

He stopped for a brief moment as I opened my eyes and slowly looked down at my legs. The horrific memories of the war suddenly came back to me, from the darkest, most distant recesses of my mind. They came back to me like a flood across my consciousness. I closed my eyes again.

"We were called in by Detective Clark of the New York police to see if we could be of any help in solving the crime occurred here." My companion took a breath before continuing, "It apparently involves a person of importance."

"I see."
We stood in silence for a moment until the mechanical beast slowed to a stop. I opened my eyes and began briskly walking forward to open the gate; my friend followed closely behind. A man in a police uniform met us outside.

"Are you Mr. Royan Scotts?" The man questioned.

"Yes, that would be me." My friend replied.

"Good. Follow me, Sir." The officer said as he motioned and led us down the long dark hallway to a room with an open door. He nodded.

"Mr. Clark’s in here, sir, he’s been waiting for you."

"Thank you, officer." Royan said flashing him a smile with a slight tip of his hat.

The man in the uniform nodded and made his way back down to the elevators. I looked at Royan, who always seemed to be in a happy mood no matter what was happening.

"Shall we go in?" I asked

"Yes, yes. Calm yourself." My friend replied as he stepped forward into the doorway.

The sight that met our eyes was something only read of in the newspaper headlines. Papers and books were haphazardly thrown in every direction. Furniture was knocked over; appliances that had survived the beating lay empty, their contents lay in scattered piles around them. Uniformed constables weaved their way through these piles as they collected evidence. Royan, on the other hand, had found something to investigate and was now kneeling on the ground. With his gloved hand, he pulled a small piece of paper out from underneath the door. Smiling, he slowly and carefully unfolded the paper.

"What is it?" I inquired.
Without saying anything he handed me the paper. It read:

Apartment 17B Stranburg Apartments

15th Street, New York

Don’t leave a “trace”.

-5.17-

“Well then. That’s… interesting.” I said as I handed the paper back to Royan.

“Very.” He replied as he got up and straightened his trousers. As he did so, a uniformed detective walked up to us.

“I’m assuming you’re Royan Scotts?” He said quickly

“Ah, yes. I am he.” Royan said

“Good, good! I’m so thankful you’re here! I’m Detective Clark.” The man said as he and Royan shook hands.

“It’s nice to meet you, Mr. Clark. This is my associate Edward Pinkerton. He’s visiting from London. Don’t worry he’s a brilliant investigator.” Royan motioned with his hand and Detective Clark stepped forward to shake mine.

“So Mr. Clark, what can you tell us about this incident?” It was obvious that Royan was anxious to start investigating

“Well, the victim’s name is Eddy Prince.” The officer stammered, “He apparently went shopping, only to come back to find his apartment like this. Now we normally wouldn’t really be so concerned or be taking as long gathering evidence if it were just anyone, but Mr. Prince isn’t just anybody. Quite the opposite actually; he’s one of the richest white men living in New York.”

“Where is Mr. Prince?” Royan asked
Mr. Clark pointed to a slouched man sitting in a small metal chair among the many piles of his belongings. Mr. Prince was wearing a crinkled gray suit. The salt and pepper hair on his head could only be described as a rat’s nest. Every so often an officer would walk past Mr. Prince, causing the poor man to look around frantically. His face was pulled into an expression I had only ever seen on men who were distraught and at their wits’ end with life.

“Poor fellow, he seems...” I paused for an instant, “Scared”

“He is. From what I’ve gathered from the basic interviews, he’s recently been plagued by horrible dreams. In fact the most recent one had to do with getting robbed. It scared Mr. Prince half to death apparently. He told me that he thought himself to be going insane. To be honest, I don’t think he left the apartment until he ran out of food this evening. I also don’t think he’s bathed at all, he smells awful. It’s kind of scary to see what a couple of dreams can do to a person. I mean; I spoke to him about a month ago and he seemed perfectly normal. Now he’s just a...” Detective Clark trailed off as he looked back over to Mr. Prince. He shuddered slightly.

“Thank you, Mr. Clark, you have given me all the information I needed to start forming an idea of the situation. Thank you. Now if I may start looking for more information...?” Royan said with a slight raise of his brow.

“Yes, yes! Please feel free! Detective Clark happily exclaimed.

“Thank you.” Royan replied with a slight tip of his hat.

He motioned to me and we made our way through the mess of the main apartment to a small room that obviously served as the kitchen and dining room. The room was in an equal state of disrepair as the rest of the apartment, with pots and pan scattered on the
floor, along with newspapers and opened journals lying on the small wooden table. I watched a Royan sniffed, crinkled his nose and got to work.

He first went to the fridge and examined many papers stuck to it by tiny magnets. After a short moment, one note in particular seemed to catch his attention. Royan slowly took the paper off, and flipped it over to read the backside. Grinning like a school child, Royan carefully placed the paper into his pocket, and continued on.

My friend then moved on to the table, stepping over several pots and pans to do so. Shifting through the many piles of papers, Royan suddenly pulled out a pencil along with a pocketbook and began to scribble frantically. After a few short moments of searching and writing, he closed the pocketbook and returned it to his pocket.

“Say old boy, what was that all about?” I said

“I’m on to something.” Royan responded quickly.

We soon made our way out of the kitchen and I followed my companion to the living room where Mr. Prince sat. The man instantly looked up and sneered

“What the hell are you doing in my apartment?”

Royan looked undeterred and continued to smile.

“I’m Royan Scotts, an investigator. I’m here to help solve this crime. Now, sir, I just need to ask you a few questions...” He said.

“They’re letting blacks into the police force now?” Mr. Prince sneered again. I looked at Royan to see if the comment got to him, but as always the racist rambling went in one ear and out the other.

“I’m actually a private investigator. Now, sir, can you please tell me who these people are?” Royan said as he pulled what was now clearly a picture from the fridge out
of his pocket. As he did Mr. Prince’s face changed from sneering to that of a scared ten-year-old child.

“T...T... Those are my brothers. I’m the one in the middle.”

“Interesting...” Royan said “Now sir can you tell you about those dreams you’ve been having?”

“Oh lord, the dreams. They haunt me every night. The dreams... they allow me to see horrible things. Not good things, just awful, horrible things. I can see the future of anything, and it scares me. I saw myself get robbed, every valuable object I owned just... gone. I needed to protect them but I ran out to get something to eat. I was only gone for five minutes. Oh my God.” Mr. Prince said as he lay back in his chair.

“It must be difficult for you, Mr. Prince,” Royan said drily, “Now Mr. Prince can you tell me what was stolen?”

“All my money, jewels, and just anything that cost a bit of cash.” Prince said

“Final question, Mr. Prince. Were any of the locks in your apartment broken or forced open?”

“No, everything was locked up tight and remained so until I came back. I made sure of it.” Prince responded.

At this Royan smiled.

“What are you smiling about?” Prince questioned.

“I’ve solved the case, sir!” Royan replied happily

Prince squinted at Royan with his dark beady eyes.

“Oh, have you now? Please enlighten me on the solution will you?”
“Certainly sir. Where to begin?” Royan said as Detective Clark made his way to our trio and started listening in.

“This crime was a bit of brain teaser, if you were to ask me. At first I was rather confused about why somebody would want rob an apartment on the top floor of a high-class apartment building. I mean one could do so, but doing the crime would have had to be noticed. Especially if it was committed in broad daylight as thought to have happened. It was only after few clues were dug up, every thing became clear.” Røyen said as he quickly looked at his audience, displayed the note he had found, and continued, “The first clue I found was a not telling the robber the address and apartment number. It was signed 5. 17. This wasn’t a hard code to crack the five stands for a E and the seventeen for a P.” Røyen looked at Mr. Prince who rolled his eyes.

“Next I found the picture of Ed Prince and his brothers. There’s writing on the back that reads “Planning for a better future” and it’s dated three days ago. Alongside the picture were newspapers with some stocks circled every single one of these used to be successful money earner but recently they all plummeted, leaving their owners penniless. While talking to Mr. Prince I gained information that stated that everything was locked up tight. No locks were broken. And this, my friends, leads me straight to perpetrator.”

“Who?”

“Mr. Eddy Prince and his brothers. They had lost the family fortune by investing in these stocks. They needed money and the only way to get it was to fake a robbery and claim the insurance money. Am I right, Mr. Prince?” Røyen said with a flourish as a pair of handcuffs was placed on Prince and he slowly led from the room.

“Guess he didn’t dream of that happening!” I said with a chuckle.
My Sister

She touches my cheek lightly. A melancholy smile curves her lips. For a moment neither of us speak. We study each other.

Her hair has been cut. It’s curlier than it used to be. She’s older. Taller too. I don’t grow anymore.

She’s changed. She will keep changing.

Not me.

She’s talking now. She sits with one leg cocked, resting her chin on her knee. She tells me everything, just like she did before. There is a ring on her finger. I feel a pang of sadness, knowing I won’t be there. An ache in my chest.

I won’t be there.

But the sadness is small compared to the excitement and happiness I have for her.

We’re on the lawn on the quilt that grandma made for us when we were little, the blue one with the white star pattern. It’s stained from the picnics and tea parties we used to have on it. There are little holes on the edges where we stuck tacks through to make forts. It’s littered with leaves from the maple tree stretching up over us.

We both know it is night, but we see it as daytime. After all, sunlight is filtering through the leaves.

She rips up handfuls of grass absently while she talks. Telling me about mom and daddy and everyone else. The breeze catches the grass, scattering it over the quilt. She keeps stopping and just staring at me, smiling radiantly. I smile back. She says something and we both laugh. It’s a beautiful sound. A sound we both miss.
It’s like it was before.

Then it changes.

A screeching of tires shatters the stillness. A car comes towards us out of nowhere. A white one with a crack in the windshield, the same one it always is. I don’t feel it when I’m hit. I’m beyond that now.

But she does.

She screams and sobs frantically, gathering me in her arms.

“Please, don’t leave. Don’t go,” she cries hysterically. She hugs me close, her cheek pressing mine, but I know she can’t feel it the same way.

“You have to let go,” I say softly into her hair.

She only holds me tighter.

“It’s ok. Just let go.”

Slowly, she loosens her hold on me and lays me down, her arm cradling my head.

It’s darker now. We’re not on the quilt anymore. I’m lying on pavement. She kneels beside me, the shattered glass cutting into her knees. I can faintly hear the sirens. I can see the car.

Tears from her eyes splash down into mine.

“I- I don’t-” she struggles to speak through her tears. “I don’t want to let go of you. I don’t want to lose you.”

“I’m not lost.”


“I know. I miss you too. We’ll be together again soon. But not here. You can’t keep coming back here.”
"But I miss you so much."

"You can't stay here."

"I can't stop."

"You don't have to stop. You can still come." I touch the pavement with my hand, glancing up at the car. "Just not here." I take her hand.

Tears trip down her face.

"Let me see you smile before you go. Smile a little for me."

I can see it is difficult for her, but she manages a tear soaked smile.

I smile back. "You have to go now."

She squeezes my hand, as though holding it tight enough could bring me back with her. "I'm not ready to leave."

She embraces me again. I rest my head on her shuddering shoulder and close my eyes.

"I know."

But she has to wake up. And we both know when she does, I won't be there.