

OUR SLEEPING MINDS

“...Simon...Simon....Simon,” is what I hear when I wake up.

I look around the room for a minute and see my whole class staring at me, some with a smirk on their faces.

“Simon!”

I turn around and see my teacher with a look of disgust on her face. Her ruler lies on my desk. I can also strongly smell her perfume given how close she is to me. She says my name again but this time louder. Now she looks aggravated. Too much.

“Hope you took your pills or we’ll have a rough day,” I think to myself as she grabs the sleeve of my shirt and pulls me out of my seat. She’s 64 years old and is like a billionaire, she should’ve retired.

My teacher, Mrs. Bawler, takes me down a hallway I have walked too many times now. I’ve been falling asleep a lot this month. I’ve been fine every other month this year but now I’ve started to sleep in Mrs. Brawler’s class. Because of this, I’ve been getting in a lot of trouble. I tell my parents that someone’s putting something in my meals.

I reach the end of the hallway and step into a dimly lit, musty little, storage room. This isn’t the regular place she takes kids who get in trouble. She takes me here because I’ve been falling asleep a lot lately. She begins to talk.

“...Okay?”

She waits for an answer. I didn’t hear a thing she said to me. I feel my pulse go up for a second as I say, “Okay,” I nod my head as if I heard what she said.

I get home successfully after wrestling practice. I go to my room to start on my homework and, after 30 minutes, my mom calls me to the kitchen table to talk to me. Her computer screen shows her e-mail.

“Why do you keep falling asleep in class?”

I just respond with, “I don’t know.”

“Well, you need to figure it out because it’s becoming a real problem now. I’m gonna order a pizza and you’re going to go to bed at 8:30 tonight,” she replies.

“That’s an hour before my regular bedtime though!”

“I know, you better stop falling asleep then.”

I just stand there for a little more then I walk away to finish my homework. My usual punishment is just no TV for the rest of the night but I guess that my mom figured that it did absolutely nothing the last 7 times. I cross my fingers and hope that going to bed earlier will help.

I finish my homework in 15 minutes and eat some mushroom-pepperoni pizza. The pizza is the good kind--chewy and really cheesy, so I won’t be that disappointed when I go to sleep at least. 8:30 rolls around some time later so I get ready for bed.

I hop in the shower, brush my teeth, and then say good night to my mom. I say good night to my dog as well and then I hop into bed. I lay in my bed for a while just looking backing and forth at my lava lamps and the city out my window. The city lights of Chicago. Chicago is beautiful by day but the lights at night are magnificent. Honestly, I like cities at night better.

I eventually fall asleep towards 9:45 and dream about school tomorrow. I’m sitting at my desk sleeping. I see myself like it’s a TV show, in 3rd person with the views changing every few seconds. All of a sudden I come into 1st person and hear my teacher walking towards me. Her voice is raspy and deep as she says my name.

“Simon...”

She walks up to me and grabs my arm with her fingers. Then her fingers stab into me and I hear metal sliding against each other, as her fingers turn into knives. A “shink” sort of sound. My arm turns dark purple fast and starts to crumple. Mrs. Bawler picks me up and my arm just falls off but by now it had already disintegrated.

I wake up sweating and get up out of bed to go to the bathroom. I come back to my bed and crawl in. I don’t pull up my blanket because I’m so hot. I close my eyes but then I hear a loud “bwoooooop” like an old TV turning off or like some kind of electrical item shutting off.

I hear my mom get up and check out what turned off so I get up too. As I put on my slippers, I hear a loud crash with glass shattering. After a minute or two, there’s a fire truck siren in the distance. I walk into to the living room. I hear the same sound again repeatedly and louder now. With the loud crashes coming closer, I hear a “twang” of a wire snapping. I look out the

window and see a huge wood pole with metal rods sticking out coming through the window. I run out of the way of the telephone pole and end up on the floor.

My heart is pounding and my mom checks if I'm all right. The wire comes in after she checks on me. The electricity in the wire is still live and it sets the carpet on fire. I run in the kitchen and out in the hallway to get my dog. I find him, pick him up, and run out of the house.

My dad and mom run out behind me and into the street. There are at least a dozen fires on the street. Big and small ones. The fires light up the street and we see our neighbors out on the street also. I look up and see that the street lamps are out. I then hear gunshots out in the city.

I look towards the city and see only lights from fire and police cars (also fire trucks but the red and blue stand out the most). I turn around and notice that there's no city, street, or house lights. The old TV sound was the grid that went down.

I start to think about how long it'll take to rebuild the city. My eyes start to water and I try to hold back my tears. I have no idea what to do or what we'll do. We have no bed, roof, or car. There are still a few families with cars but they don't have any room for anyone else. I still wonder if there are buses in the city. A police car comes through the neighborhood telling us that there are people in the city who'll help us.

The city is about 3 miles away from here but I'm fine walking that distance. I've run in at least 3--5Ks. We start to make our trek to the city and I carry Oscar, my dog. Halfway there I become very tired and I set Oscar down.

I see many fires out in the distance and no one is there putting them out. There must be too many fires in the city to tend to these first. There are other kids from our neighborhood walking along side of my family. Most of them are little and groan about their legs being tired while the older ones just keep their complaints to themselves.

We reach the city in an hour and a half. Most of the fires are put out but there are still some little fires here and there. I look to my left and see some police next to a little shop that looks like it was burnt. Still standing but a fire was definitely there.

My family and I reach the spot where there are people who'll help us. They're there but there are at least 8,000 people here, and still thousands to come. Things are moving quickly at least. There are 2 signs. Scribbled on one, it says

DEATH/LOSS OF FAMILY MEMBER(S)

And another that says

HOME AND/OR BELONGING DESTROYED

The line with home and belongings destroyed has a bus coming to transport 70 to 100 people to the airport. The other people in that line are talking to multiple insurance agents that are there. The line with the death of a relative(s) has lots of people crying but I don't know what else is going on there. My family lines up in the line with home and/or belongings destroyed.

"I think we might stay at my mom's house for a month or two till we situate things out, okay?" My dad tells me.

My mom asks, "Okay Simon?"

I just stand there for a second and reply with, "Okay."

We get in line and in 1 hour another at least 1,000 people arrive and we're up next.

"That was really fast. They must have done this before or something," I think to myself.

"Is there a ride to Grand Rapids anytime soon? We need a ride for three to Grand Rapids," my dad asks. My grandma lives in Grand Rapids.

"We actually have a bus to Grand Rapids in about 75 minutes. I hope that's not too long."

"No that's fine," my dad says "That's real good."

I go sit down on a bench towards the side of the line with my dad, mom, and Oscar. I lay my head down on my mom's lap and start to drift off. Oscar is on my chest all curled up. I hear my dad call my grandma but that's the last thing. I don't really have a dream. I just fall asleep, and wake up.

When I wake up my mom and dad are getting up to go on the bus. I pick up Oscar and take him with me. I look over at the line and see a lot less people there. Most of them must've gotten on a bus or drove somewhere else (I'm pretty sure almost no one went home, even if they had one. They might have just gone to a hotel or something).

I hop on the bus and also start to drift off but then open my eyes quickly and abruptly. I felt a slight swerve in the bus's path. I must've fallen asleep because I see a stretch of highway that I didn't see anywhere close to us before.

I look up to the mirror in front of the bus driver and see that his eyes are closing and then shooting open, closing, shooting open. I open my eyes wide and wake up my parents and show them. By the time they look, the bus driver is asleep and I hear and see a car coming straight at us. The people that are awake on the bus scream and the car honks their horn.

We get close enough to where the bus's headlights shine in on the car and I see the driver's, terrified, scared, and mad face just before we collide. We get close, then closer, then close enough to where we hit. We're about to hit when I wake up.

I'm sweating and breathing heavily. There's sun light seeping in through my windows. It's morning. My house is here, no fires, lights are on in the buildings that have opened, everything is still here, nothing happened. I realize that even the school day that I fell asleep in was just a dream. All of it was a dream.

Just then my mom comes in my room and asks me, "Simon, is the dog in here?" She looks worried. I answer with, "No."

After my mom leaves, asking my dad if he knows where the dog is, I pinch myself. Just checking.