

Worst Nightmare

You don't know me, but I know you. I watch your every move, counter all of your decisions and lurk in the back of your mind. I am no stalker or person for that matter. I wait for times to catch you off guard and touch a tendril of fear into your heart. I strike when you are asleep. I await you in those dark times until your dreams come. I am no Boogie Man, no bad luck just... your worst nightmare.

Take a classroom full of victims, for instance. Those jocks and the girlie girls fear rejection. They are hiding something under that act that they're all that. I know what they are hiding though and when they think no one is looking, I show up and leak into their hearts. The computer geeks are scared of failure. I can easily manipulate someone close to them to tease them about their less than perfect essay score. It is rather easy to poke around in their fear zone and gently pluck the strings of blatant terror.

No one accompanies me in conducting these wonderful traumas, though. I am imagination gone wrong, so I'm left to do what I do best. I am the unforgiving beast as people call me.

There are boy rebels that don't want to listen to any rules, but their worst fear or what they see in me is that they will never be successful and their future holds no promises. Even sassy girls want someone watching them and applauding for them, but really they are an empty shell and when they become aware of this vacancy I strike.

I never said I was nice and I don't intend to ever give you that thought. I am no sunshine happiness. I am no cuddly bear. I am your worst nightmare. I feed on anxiety and diminish any hope that your nightmare wasn't real. Reality is a nightmare! Some people just need to believe it. Once they do they can just break down, it's easier than trying to fight. I advise all to quit trying to piece yourself together and not even hold onto your sanity, it makes it worse. My victims become self-conscious, always second-guessing themselves and experience great terror... and I love it.

The popular people are my favorite to toy with. They have to juggle between life and that carefree phony stuff. So every now and then I inflict great terror upon them to ruin

their oversized ego and I whisper the horrors of reality. I love revealing the truth to geeks and popular people alike.

Cleo's Point of View

My heart raced as I walked home. The piece of paper in my hand could change my social life forever. I walked grudgingly through the door of my apartment and waved the announcement of my driver's appointment in the air. "Hi dad, um... here you go," I said sliding the paper across the dining table.

Then I went to my room and it felt as if fear was breathing down my neck. Even with an opportunity like driving I could only think about that rainy night... so cold and lights shining all around.

"Cleo!" my dad called from downstairs, "Can you do some laundry?" The whole time I folded clothes I fretted over the million possible fates that I could have while driving. What if I get into a car accident? What if I failed? I began to breath rapidly as the possibilities went through my head. My worst nightmare is dying behind the wheel of a car. I felt like I wanted to curl up into a ball and cry.

The next day, I walked to school and floated through all my classes. At some point, in the middle of my trance, I checked my watch and it read 1:50. In approximately 24 hours I would be at my scheduled appointment with Ms.Winton and have to get behind that treacherous wheel; like the one that my mom died next to. I met my friend Kelly outside the school doors as I always do on Thursdays.

"Thanks Kel again for driving me home," I said after a soundless 5-minute ride home.

"Hey, soon you'll be driving me to school," she said playfully, but I felt cold fingers wrap around my heart.

"Maybe," was all I could manage and I waved goodbye. I ran upstairs and collapsed on my bed clutching a tiny photo frame. Inside was a picture of my mom, but I pushed the horrible memories away. The smell of wet earth, a truck honking... no, it is all too much and I have made more than an effort to keep the fear in check.

I put ear buds in my ears and listened to Royals by Lorde. I just laid there trying to drown out my thoughts, but eventually I had to come back to reality for dinner. I ate silently while my father talked about my preparation for the driver's appointment.

"Of course, don't forget to smile at your instructor and if you happen..." my dad talked on and on. My heart raced and the walls seemed to be caving in on my small world of normalcy. An icy cold lump started expanding in my chest.

"I'm going to go... outside," I said walking out onto the apartment balcony.

When I looked to the neighboring balcony I smiled. A silhouette of a boy was all I saw before it disappeared behind the ledge. "I can see you, Steven," I snickered.

"Well, I actually thought I was well concealed, thanks a lot Cleo," he said rising above the ledge. The smile on his face, though, revealed everything. I felt the corners of my mouth rise, but my father's figure behind the screen of the door snapped me back to my senses. I folded my arms across my chest and sighed.

"Driver's appointment," I said knowing that would explain everything.

"You and me both," he nodded. I didn't give him what he wanted though.

"How did your calculus test go?" I asked.

"I got a relaxing nap, but eventually figured the answer to problem 16 was z squared." His comment was rewarded with a smile he was trying to achieve and I could feel a ton of despair temporarily leave me.

"You got me," I said grinning.

"Two points for me," he declared puffing out his chest.

My stomach churned as my dad motioned for me to come inside, all levity ceasing to exist. Music and talking to Steven are my only ways of retreat from the world. "Got to go Steven," I sighed, walking through the door of reality.

"See ya," I hear him mutter, but I barely catch it as I am told to get to bed quickly for a refreshing sleep. Instead I shower and lay in bed awaiting the fear I will eventually have to confront. How can I? Just being in a car gives me goose bumps. I remember that one night that my mom had been hit by an oncoming truck entering the intersection from the left turn lane. It came so fast that we were unable to stop in time. My mom, knowing there were only seconds to live acted fast and sped up. I watched as my mother gave me a

desperate look before I blacked out. Her gruesome expression still haunts me at nights. With the memory still fresh in my mind I slipped into a restless sleep.

The ten hours of sleep I get pass quickly and I'm up again. My ten-minute walk to school goes by and I'm school campus in no time. It was halfway to homeroom that I noticed how hard my hands were shaking and by then many curious looks were already thrown my way. I was so preoccupied with my impending doom that I didn't notice bumping into Laura of the popular clique.

"Hey!" she squealed like the annoying brat she was. Then she threw a fit about how she hates that people think they are cool enough to come in contact with her. After about a few more whines she stopped not getting a satisfying reaction out of me.

It was in Latin class when Steven brought my mind to school grounds again. He looked at me and mouthed the words I had been mulling over all day: driver's appointment. I frantically looked down at my watch. When I checked the time I was momentarily confused, then I realized Steven was referring to his own appointment.

My muscles relaxed, "Good luck, Steven," I said quietly, not wanting to interrupt a 'very important' Latin lecture. Students, especially nerds, were scribbling down notes and I couldn't help, but roll my eyes. Latin currently is the least of my worries.

The hour of anxiety comes and goes and I walked onto the school parking lot that considering the situation was a black hole. My body continually vibrated as I walked the distance to my Honda Accord with Ms. Winton tailing me. I opened the driver's door and stood hesitantly for the longest three seconds of my life. There I decided to overcome the fear of dying next to a wheel like my mother did and leaving the world.

I got in and looked across to Ms. Winton who gave me a thumbs-up. Then, suddenly I saw a man's face instead my old teacher. He gave me a sly grin like he knew me and we've shared secrets before. Her regular face returned leaving me to do one thing: put my hands at ten and two. I don't know what I saw, but those eyes bore into me speaking and revealing all I anticipated out of this twenty-minute appointment. I turned the key in the ignition.

Here we go.