1

The King turned and reached into the large wooden chest, pulling out one item. He turned and stood in front of me, holding it in his hands. At first I had no idea what it was, until I lifted it out of his hands to admire it more closely. It was a cloak, made of a black fabric at first glance, but always out of the corner of my eye I could see different colors shifting on it, as if inside the black. Wherever I was looking straight at looked black. I could never catch the colors in my vision, but they were always there. The king spoke again as I ran my hand over the smooth material. “The purpose of this cloak is unknown. We only know its name, the Dream Cloak.”

 I bowed my head in thanks, and the king closed the chest and again locked it with the three keys. He clapped his hands once and the two men who had originally carried in the chest lifted the heavy case by its handles, grunting slightly as they took its full weight.

 I removed my old cloak and replaced it by the shimmering one the King had called the “Dream Cloak”. It was surprisingly light and fell over my shoulders gracefully, but despite how thin and billowy it felt, it still blocked out the cold breeze that winter brought through the large and drafty room.

We left the room. I had a job to do, interrogating the other prisoner. The five men went back to their room and I turned down the nearby hall to the dungeon.

They had moved the first man closer to the door and placed the most recent assassin in the cell at the end of the row.

2

I sat in the guards chair and made sure the man was asleep before relaxing and focusing intensely at the same time, letting my mind wander and setting it firmly on the path into the dreams of this man.

 <<>> <<>> <<>>

I walked out of the edges of the man’s dreams. It was still dark inside the dream, a dark stone hall, lit sparingly with torches in rusted brackets, leaking oil onto the uneven floor. There was no natural light behind me or in front of me, and the torches ended after a few tens of meters. The air smelled of nothing good, rats and mold and decay, but most prominent was a stink, the rank smell of something so familiar, yet I could not place it.

I went to take a step forwards but I could not move. A small part of me started to panic. I obviously wasn’t in as much control as I had planned. A low laugh behind me made me start, and I spun around. At least that liberty was still allowed me, but I could see no one. I felt myself grabbed from behind and wrestled to the ground by a pair of invisible hands, and bound with invisible shackles. All the while, the strongest presence remained in front of me. I finally realized what the smell was that had so bothered me. The smell of death.

I looked up from where I was kneeling on the floor. A man walked out of the shadows on the edge of my dream, just as I always did in the dreams of others. My heart skipped a beat from fear, an emotion I was entirely unused to. I was desperately out matched. I looked into the man’s face. My bound hands clenched when I looked into his eyes. My nails dug into my palms and I gritted my teeth. They say the eyes are the windows to the soul. And this man’s eyes were evil. Pure evil.

3

<<>> <<>> <<>>

Thomas woke in the middle of the night. He didn’t know why, but was glad he did. He hadn’t meant to fall asleep, and the chair was very uncomfortable. He still didn’t see why Robin had to do this at night. Why couldn’t she wait for the man to take a cat nap, and enter his dreams then?

He stood up and stretched, groaning as the aches he had developed over the past hour began to unkink in his back, neck, and legs. He left the room and walked down towards the dungeon. He was not too far away when, loud and clear, coming from the direction he was headed, he heard a scream. It was more filled with pain, and fear, and terror than anything he had ever heard before.

Thomas took off running. He had no thoughts for his safety, returning for a sword, or even taking a torch from a torch bracket, which would have been the wise thing. Instead he did the loyal thing, and kept running.

Thomas grabbed the keys off the place where they hung at a run, stopping only at the first and second doors. He grunted in frustration when the key stuck in the lock on the second door, not turning, and not coming out. He stood back and rammed his good shoulder into the door. He didn’t know quite what it would do except hurt his shoulder, which it did plenty of, but it must have helped, for the next time he turned the key, he was able to get it all the way around in the lock.

4

Thomas burst through the door, not sure what he was expecting to see. He wasn’t expecting this. Standing at the end of the row, arms spread and head thrown back, was Robin, a look of terror on her face, the scream continuing from her mouth.

Thomas rushed forwards, thinking he could help somehow, but when he reached her, he didn’t know what to do, and stood there, helpless for a good ten seconds. To him, it felt like forever. Finally, in desperation, he grabbed Robin’s shoulders. She stopped screaming, and looked down from the ceiling. At first, she was just staring through Thomas, but her gaze shifted, focusing on his face, just for an instant, looking upwards into his eyes. She smiled slightly, and then vanished.