

LUCID DREAMS

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Lucid Dreaming: The awareness that one is dreaming while the dream is in progress, furthermore including the ability to exert conscious control over the dream, and everything in it.

Relaxation. It comes upon Jen like she's never experienced such a feeling before. She opens her eyes. She's riding in the passenger seat of a car. It's the car of her dreams. She looks over at the man driving, and he looks at her. It's like she's riding with a stranger, but yet he's her lover. Jen knows that he has promised her everything in her dreams. How unfortunate it is that he can only give her nightmares.

“Hey babe,” she calls him, as his name seems to have slipped her mind for the moment.

He smiles at her. “You okay?”

“Yes,” Jen replies. “Every thing's perfect.”

They're driving on a mountain side road. The sun is setting, and a small storm is building in the distance. Jen places her hand over his, and she holds it tight. She's happy for reasons that are not even known to her. The perfection of the moment is too unreal, perhaps unsafe. But somehow she feels in control.

Suddenly, the moment is tense. A chill runs down Jen's spine. She catches a glimpse of a road sign as they speed past it. There's a sharp curve ahead. Jen looks to her lover. He's frantically stomping on the brake pedal, but to no avail.

“It won't stop!” he shouts.

The curve is coming up fast, and only seconds later, they've arrived. Jen closes her eyes. She braces her hands against the dashboard as the car bursts through the curved guardrail. Their screams should have been heard for miles. Jen opens her eyes. The car is airborne. The feeling of weightlessness overcomes her as they fall down the steep mountain side. Their falling is fast, flipping in the air. There's no doubt of what fate awaits them at the bottom. But then, like turning on a light, Jen quickly sits up in her bed and wakes from her nightmare.

Her breathing is deep, and she can feel beads of sweat forming on her forehead. Jen touches her face, thankful that the nightmare is over, but still curious of the man in her dream; the one that she dreams about nearly every night.

Several miles away, and only seconds earlier, the very man from Jen's nightmare awakes in a slightly different setting. His name is Wes, and his coincidental waking at the same time as Jen is not as spectacular as the fact that he awoke from the very same nightmare.

The nightmare was Wes's own creation. Wes is a sandman; a mythical being that casts sleep upon mortals, and evokes dreams into their minds. But Wes is a special kind of sandman. He only has the powers to evoke nightmares. To others like him, the powers are a birth right; a job that must and will be done. But to Wes, casting nightmares is a curse. He despises filling people's minds with hate and fear. And for those reasons he has run away from the realm of dreams.

Sandmen normally reside in the realm of dreams. It's a mystical place that's far away from earth, and impossible to be seen by mortal eyes. When Wes ran away, he had hoped to also leave behind his powers, but his hopes were wrong. Wes's dream of having a normal life and living amongst mortals has come so close to being reality, but his powers have always intruded and destroyed his dreams. Still, he continues to try.

Wes sits up in his cramped one room apartment and looks around. The view is short. There's a sink, a small table, and a window with dusty old drapes. Everything is as he left it before he drifted to sleep.

Wes repositions himself on his bed, a mere mattress thrown on the floor. He holds his hand out in front of him with his palm facing up. A holographic image of Jen's face magically appears, hovering over Wes's palm.

“I'm sorry, my love. I hate to frighten you, but I just had to see you. And right now, it's the only way that I can.” For almost a minute, Wes stares at the image that he holds in his hand. He's in love with her, that much is obvious. But it's a love that no one could possibly understand. Wes has been inside Jen's

mind. He knows all her secrets, and none of them even slightly extinguish the flame that he carries for her. His love is eternal, and he means the best, but the only way for Wes to see Jen, is to frighten her in her nightmares.

Wes quickly closes his fist, and Jen's image instantly disappears. He can sense an unwelcome presence in the room. One that is almost familiar.

Finally, the presence speaks. “So who is she?”

Wes stands up from his bed and finds himself face to face with a past friend from the realm. “Wade? What are you doing here?”

“Been running round looking for ya, mate,” Wade replies with a smile. “So who is she?”

Wes is confused by Wade's presence there. He cautiously answers, “Just someone I once met in a dream.”

“A dream?” Wade smiles. “Don't you mean a nightmare?”

“Yeah.” Wes scoffs. “A nightmare.”

Wade was one of Wes's closest friends inside the realm of dreams. Wes knew that Wade's presence and actions in that room were far out of character for him. Something was going on, and the only way to get to the bottom of it, was for Wes to enter Wade's mind.

“In all seriousness mate, what're you doing here?” Wade questions.

“I like it here,” Wes answers. “It's peaceful.”

“It's filthy.”

Wes steps over to the window, and Wade follows. “You get use to it.” Wes flings open the old drapes, springing dust directly into Wade's face.

Wade coughs the dust from his throat and rubs his eyes. “I can't even imagine how. This place is a bloody mess. I can't believe that you would leave the realm of dreams for this.”

Wes steps away from the window, and then turns to look at Wade. “Don't you know what the realm is?”

“It's paradise for a couple of sandmen like us.” Wade smiles.

“Maybe for you,” Wes explains. “You can make pleasant dreams; exciting dreams even. But me... I can only make nightmares.”

“But that's what you do. That's how it works.”

“That's not how I work. Not anymore.”

“So what, you're just going to keep chasing after a woman who doesn't even know you exist? It's been three years, mate. She's not going to notice you.”

“She knows that I exist.”

“You've spoken to her?”

“Only in her dreams, I'm too scared to face her in person. Not until I know her feelings for sure,” Wes responds. “How did you know I've been following her that long? I only left the realm a year ago.”

“You know that the lords of dreams are not going to allow this?” Wade queries. “They've sent out dream catchers to find you. You have a price on your head, mate.”

“I guess that's why you're here? To cash in?”

“C'mon, Wes. We're friends. I...”

“Then why are you here, Wade? To warn me? You think I don't know?” Wes snaps. “I know you're here to try to take me back. I'm not an idiot.”

Wade sighs. “You're right. I am.” Suddenly, Wade's face morphs into the face of a man that Wes has never seen before.

“A Dream Catcher?” Wes had never experienced a Dream Catcher first hand, but he had heard what they were capable of. They could transform, and disguise themselves as anything they wished. Inside the dream of a catcher's own creation, they had limitless power.

“You know it's for the best, Wes. We just found out about the girl. We know where she is. You

either come with me peacefully, or I will be forced to destroy you, and ruin her,” the Catcher threatens. “And if you think that your nightmare powers are so bad, you just wait to see what I can do.”

“In your dreams,” Wes says.

“As a matter of fact, it will be in yours.” The Catcher steps forward and gives Wes a light shove. “You know that with my powers, I can force you into a dream with a single thought. Once I have you there, I can tear you limb from limb. And both you and I know that a sandman can die in a dream, it happens everyday.”

Wes smiles at the Dream Catcher, not showing a glimpse of intimidation. “I’m sure that you’re capable of all of that. But can you do it in your sleep?”

The Dream Catcher appears confused about Wes’s comment. Wes motions for him to turn around, and everything is made clear. The Catcher sees himself lying on the floor under the window, asleep.

“What? How is this possible? When did you...” Then it becomes apparent to the catcher. “Ah, the drapes, you hid the sleep dust in the drapes, very clever.”

“You don’t seem intimidated,” Wes remarks.

“I’m not afraid of you.”

“You don’t have to be,” Wes remarks. “I can read your mind, and find out exactly what you are afraid of, and I can make it come to life... right... now.”

Finally, the Dream Catcher shows a sign of fear as his eyes begin to twitch. Wes knows that he has the upper hand. “Welcome to my nightmare.” The setting around them goes black. “It’s interesting that a Dream Catcher like you could actually be afraid of the dark.”

“Stop it!” the Catcher screams. “Turn on the lights! Where are you?”

“Is it the dark that scares you? Or is it the fact that you can’t see what’s coming?”

With those words, Wes abruptly smacks the Catcher in the face. Aggravated, the Catcher spins around to grab Wes, but by then, Wes is not there. The Catcher stands there for several moments. SMACK! Again Wes lays into the catcher’s face.

“Stop it!” The Catcher is frightened. Even with all the powers that he possesses, he can’t overcome the fears in his own mind. “What are you doing?”

“Trying to make you understand.”

Suddenly, the light in the room returns, and Wes appears directly in front of the Catcher. The Catcher tries to strike Wes, but is held back by a power beyond his control.

“You know that feeling? The one where you want to run away, but your feet feel like bricks? That’s me. You can hear me right now, but you don’t understand the words. It’s like a different language. And it’s so irritating, because you know that what I’m telling you is so important. That irritation, that’s me too. And you know when you want to wake up from a nightmare so bad, but you can’t? Oh, that is so me.”

Wes grabs the Dream Catcher around the throat. Using his powers, he flings the Catcher across the room where he crashes into the wall. The Catcher stumbles to his feet, bruised and out of breath, and faces Wes.

“Now, for your greatest fear,” Wes begins. “Your fear of being weak and fragile.”

The Dream Catcher looks down at the skin on his hands. It’s beginning to solidify and turn transparent like glass. He tries to make a fist, but his fingers crack and break off, falling to the floor where they shatter.

“What have you done to me?” the Catcher screams.

“I wouldn’t talk much. The vibration could break you,” Wes explains as he watches the rest of the Catcher’s body turn into a living glass statue. “I’m only making you see what a horrible curse I carry. I hate it, and I can never escape it, just like you can never escape your fears.”

The Catcher tries to speak, but instantly feels his lip cracking, so he stops.

“Look at you. You're supposed to be a powerful Dream Catcher. But in your mind you're nothing more than a feeble shell, that's afraid of the dark,” Wes mocks. “Too stupid to realize that the more you move, the faster your fears destroy you.”

The Dream Catcher can no longer take the mocking and instinctively takes a step forward to attack. Instantly, his leg cracks and shatters under his step. His body soon follows to the floor where it shatters into a thousand pieces.

Wes looks down at the pieces, and can only think one thing. “Idiot.” He ponders for some time, wondering what to do next. Wes knew that this would not be the last time he would encounter a Catcher. Only the next time, the Catcher would not be so easily out-smarted. Wes didn't have much time. He would have to speed up his quest to find his true love. But first, he would need to find a new home. He could never come back to that apartment. Wes leaves, and heads for town

Sometime later, Wes sits in the corner of a small restaurant. He watches the entrance. It's lunch time, and like clockwork, Jen walks in through the front door. Jen comes there everyday for lunch, straight from the office. She doesn't pay any attention to anyone in the room. She only bee lines to the front counter, and places her order. Jen always orders something light, but filling; like today, a chicken salad.

As Jen waits for her food, Wes gets up from his table and walks toward her. He looks at her from head to toe, and is amazed at how attractive she is. He can't wait to talk to her, to hear her voice, to see her smile.

Wes is within reach of Jen as she picks her food up from the counter. She spins around, and like a classic meeting scene they collide, and Wes is covered in chicken salad.

“Oh my gosh,” Jen says, only paying attention to the mess she's made across Wes's shirt. “I'm so sorry. I didn't see you there.”

Wes wipes the salad leafs from his shirt and smiles away what would be frustration on any other day. “It's okay. I shouldn't have been walking so close to you.”

Finally, the familiarity of Wes's voice calls for Jen's eyes to look at his face, and she recognizes him instantly. It's the man from her dreams.

“Are you okay?” Wes asks.

“Yeah. I'm fine,” Jen replies, even though she is shocked at who she's speaking with. “Do I know you?”

“I'm not sure,” Wes answers. He grabs some napkins from the counter and then kneels down to clean Jen's salad off the floor. “Here, let me help you get this cleaned up.”

Jen quickly snaps out of her trance. “No, no. That's okay. It's my fault, I'll get it.”

Jen immediately kneels down to help pick up the mess. As they pick up the dumped salad, their eyes meet, and they smile.

“I feel terrible about this,” Wes begins. “Let me buy you another salad.”

“Okay.” Jen replies.

After another salad is purchased, Wes and Jen find a table in a quiet corner of the restaurant. Jen's lunch hour is nearing to a close, the two feel like they've only been sitting there talking for a few minutes. Their mouths have been so busy talking, that their plates are hardly half empty.

“I can't believe that we have so much in common,” Jen says. “It's unbelievable. You're like everything that I've ever wanted out of a man.”

There is a small awkward silence as Wes assesses Jen's comment.

“I'm sorry. I didn't mean to sound presumptuous,” Jen says.

“It's okay,” Wes smiles.

“What I meant to say is; you understand everything that I'm into. It's like you've read my mind like a book.”

Wes again smiles, not breaking eye contact with her. “What if I say that I have, babe.”

Jen immediately gets a curious expression. “You called me babe.”

“I’m sorry,” Wes replies. “It’s just a habit.”

Jen smiles, and though she only knows the man in her dream as ‘babe’ as well, she shrugs the thought away as quickly as it appeared.

The two sit across from one another for a minute or so. Wes loves the feeling of her warm presence, and Jen admires the familiarity of his face.

“I’m going to tell you something. And it’s either going to make you laugh, or run away from me in fear that I’m a crazy woman.”

“Okay. But I must tell you, I’m not afraid of much.”

“Okay,” Jen begins. “You are an exact replica of someone that I’ve met before.”

“That doesn’t sound so bad.”

“Well, not actually met before, or even seen before,” Jen says. She realizes that her words are coming out all wrong, but something makes her press forward. “You remind me of someone that I’ve seen before in my dreams.”

“Well, that’s not too strange,” Wes replies.

“It’s not?”

“No.”

“But, it’s so surreal,” Jen argues. “Your face, your expressions, and the way you talk. You called me babe just like the man in my dreams.”

“I’m sorry about that. It’s just a habit.”

“But it’s not only that. It’s the way you make me feel. I actually feel safe and comfortable around you. I mean, I just told you one heck of a bizarre story. I would never tell that to anyone.”

Wes collects what Jen has just told him, and sadness quickly comes over him. He’s just realized something; the only flaw in his quest to find his true love.

“What is it? I’m creeping you out aren’t I?” Jen asks.

“No. I’m sorry,” Wes answers. “This isn’t fair of me. I don’t want to make you feel this way. I want you to feel it on your own. Otherwise, it’s meaningless, and wrong.”

“I don’t understand. I feel exactly as I do when I’m dreaming about you, or him, or whatever.”

“Do you know what lucid dreaming is?” Wes questions.

“No, I don’t think so.”

“It’s when you fall to sleep and you have complete control over everything that is in the dream.”

“That sounds pretty cool,” Jen replies. “You think that’s what I’m experiencing?”

“Everyone’s capable of lucid dreaming, in a sense,” Wes answers. “Let me show you a magic trick.”

Wes holds his fist out over the table in front of Jen. He slowly opens his hand, palm up and reveals a holographic image of a beautiful pink rose bud.

Jen is amazed and excited. “How are you doing that?”

“It’s magic,” Wes replies with a smile.

“That’s an amazing trick,” Jen says as she waves her hand through the rose bud leaving it undisturbed.

“That’s actually not the trick,” Wes explains. “Inside this rose bud is an object; anything of your choosing. And when it blooms, we’ll see what it is.”

“But how?”

“Just imagine something. When you see a rose bud, what do you think about?” Wes says as Jen watches the rose bud closely. “Are you picturing something in your head?”

“Yes, it’s...”

“No. Don’t tell me,” Wes interrupts. “Let’s just see it.”

Before Jen’s eyes, the small rose bud begins to bloom, opening one petal at a time. Finally, its

contents are revealed. A small heart shaped ruby hovers in the hologram centered on the top of the now bloomed rose.

“I can’t believe it. It’s exactly as I imagined it,” Jen says. “It was a charm on a bracelet that I had when I was a kid. The chain was made up of little rose bud shapes. How did you know?”

“I didn’t know,” Wes explains. “You did. You controlled it.”

“I don’t understand. How?”

“This is lucid dreaming, Babe,” Wes says. “You’re in control.”

“What?”

“And have you noticed something else? This dreams not turning into a nightmare like the rest.”

“Like the rest? How did you know that?” But before the question can be answered, Jen abruptly wakes up from her short nap at work. She had rested her head on her desk for only a minute in her small cubicle and drifted to sleep. Jen stands up and looks around the office. No one had seemed to notice that she nodded off. She sits back down, slightly shaken by her dream. It wasn’t like the others. The man in her dream was right. It wasn’t a nightmare.

Elsewhere, Wes returns from his dream casting state. Wes was sitting on a park bench when Jen’s dream link informed him that she was asleep. It was an abnormal time of day for him to enter her mind, but he feels that it was well worth it. He’s becoming closer to her. She’s finally realizing her abilities. And when he’s sure that there’s no influence on Jen’s dreams from him, Wes can finally know for sure exactly how Jen feels about him.

The work day is over for Jen, and she returns home. It's a dark evening when she enters her apartment. She flips on the light, and then closes the door behind her.

Jen is unaware of the dark presence that hides in her apartment, until it speaks. “Hello, Jen.”

Jen gasps as she spins around to face her unwelcome visitor. “Who are you? What are you doing in my home?”

A well dressed man is before Jen in the shadows. He's tall, with long hair that reaches his shoulders. “My name is Gabe.” The man spoke. “And I need your mind.”

Jen immediately makes a dash for the door. Upon reaching it, she finds that it is oddly locked from the outside. As she desperately struggles with the door, Gabe steps out of the shadows and comes closer.

“Kind of like a bad dream, isn't it?” Gabe breathes over the back of Jen's neck. “Only one thing is missing; your knight in shining armor.”

Jen pushes herself away from the door, and out of Gabe's reach. “Get away from me!” she cries. “What do you want?”

“I'll get right to the point,” Gabe begins, still holding his ground near the doorway. “I'm what you call a Sandman. I can walk freely in and out of people’s dreams, observing their minds.”

“You're crazy.” Jen says as she inches her way to the kitchen area.

“I've overheard bits and pieces of your dreams, and I've noticed that you dream about someone of particular interest to me.”

“I don't know what you're talking about.” Finally Jen has reached the kitchen, and her hands grow ever so close to the knife drawer. Gabe doesn't show much concern. Jen yanks the knife drawer open, only to find that it's empty. “You did something with the knives... and the door.”

“No. The knives are still there, and the door is unlocked,” Gabe explains. “My powers are limited here in reality. I can only make your mind believe that things are not as they appear.”

“What?” Jen begins to weep. “What are you going to do?”

“As I was saying, you dream of someone; a man. A man that cares for you,” Gabe explains.

“How do you know that?”

“So you know who I'm talking about?”

“How do you know that?” Jen screams.

“His name is Wes.” Gabe begins. “And you dream of him because he is your assigned Sandman, or more accurately, your nightmare.”

“This is crazy. You're not here.” Jen shudders. “I'm dreaming. I must be dreaming.”

“Oh, you're not dreaming. Not yet. And that's the whole point.” Gabe approaches Jen. “Instead of chasing after Wes for what could feel like an eternity, I want him to come to me. And the easiest way for that to happen is if you make him.”

“What?” Jen cries.

“It's simple really. You fall asleep, I provide you with a dream, and you dream about Wes.”

“This isn't happening.” Jen closes her eyes, hoping that when she opens them, Gabe will be gone.

“Oh, but it is, Jen. Now think of Wes.” Gabe quickly throws dust across Jen's eyes, and she collapses to the floor asleep. “And enjoy your dream. It'll be your last”

Meanwhile, Wes reads the bulletins in a subway hall, looking for a new place to live. It seems as if his nightmare powers are with him even then, as nothing is available in the city.

Suddenly, Wes feels an awkward hollowness inside himself. He looks down at his hands, and is baffled to see them fading away. He follows the fading up his arms; they're disappearing inch by inch. He can't scream, like his insides that would allow him to have already disappeared from existence. Finally, his body is gone. The fading is at his neck, and everything goes black.

What seems like only seconds later, Wes wakes up, finding himself in a field of flowers. Climbing to his feet, Wes thoroughly examines his surroundings. All around him are walls, far off in the distance. They're painted to look like the sky, as if they were backdrops on a movie set.

“I must be dreaming.” Wes's voice echoes against the walls. He pinches his arm. He can feel it. The dream isn't his.

Wes looks down. The flowers around begin to rapidly wilt as if his feet were poison to the ground.

“Must you bring your nightmarish sickness everywhere you go?” a voice calls from behind.

Wes spins around and finds himself standing face to face with Gabe. “Who are you? Where am I?”

“I think you know who I am, Wes,” Gabe responds. “And I'm surprised that you don't recognize the surroundings.” Gabe points into the air.

Wes looks up, and is shocked to see Jen, hanging by her hands from a rope. She's slowly being lowered down to him. “No! Let her go!”

“You know I'm not going to do that.”

“You let her go, or I'll...”

“You'll what?” Gabe interrupts. “You're powerless here. This dream is my creation. Everything here, including you, is under my complete control.” Gabe turns away from Wes. “You're nothing here.”

Wes clenches his fists in anger, but he knows that Gabe is right.

Finally, Jen is completely lowered, and Wes is eye level with her. The second Jen lays eyes on Wes, she tearfully smiles. “Babe, I'm so sorry.”

Jen sounds remorseful. Although it pains him, it's also heartwarming to see her with these feelings in a dream that is not his own creation. He knows now that Jen truly does care for him. He smiles back at her. “It's not your fault. I'm sorry for frightening you, but I love you.”

“Oh, please!” Gabe barks as he spins back around. “You're a Sandman. An eternal monster! You can't fall in love with a mortal human!”

“Our love could live forever in a dream,” Wes responds.

“And then what?” Gabe questions. “You continue to hurt one another in your dreams for the rest of her life?”

Wes doesn't answer; he only knows what he wants.

“You can't possibly believe that she cares for you” Gabe says. “I'm in control here. She does as I will her too.”

“That's not true.” Wes quickly places his hands on both sides of Jen's face. He forces her to look at him. Her face is now expressionless. “Jen. Jen. Tell me how you feel.” Jen shows no response.

“You see? Nothing,” Gabe remarks. “You're acting as if you were never in control of her dreams before.”

“What if I didn't have to be?”

“A lucid dreamer?” Gabe asks in disbelief. “You must be kidding. She hasn't shown a single trait of such since I've been here.”

“She's capable. I've seen it. She just chooses not to do it.” Wes looks into Jen's eyes. Her face shows like one of a mindless shell. “Jen. I'm not doing this. You have to take control here. Don't let him do this. Remember the rose bud.” Still, Jen shows no response.

Gabe sighs. “Lucid dreamers are a curse to our kind, Wes. Taking their dreams into their own hands; they could destroy us.”

“But she hasn't.” Wes continues to watch Jen's face, hoping for some kind of response.

“You need to return to the realm now,” Gabe explains. “If you refuse, I will be forced to destroy you. And in this world, the task would be all too easy.”

“I won't leave her.”

“Jen's fate is already decided,” Gabe explains without remorse. “Either way, she is to expire in this sleep.”

“You can't do that!”

“If she is what you say, and if she knows what she knows, I can't allow her to live.”

“I won't let you!” Wes vigorously dives at Gabe to attack. But Gabe allows his body to become like air, and Wes floats right through him, landing in the now crisp bed of flowers. Climbing to his feet, Wes finds Gabe now standing beside Jen. Gabe caresses her cheek.

“You know, I think I can see what it is that draws you to this mortal. She does have a certain flair of beauty.” Gabe taunts as he caresses Jen's cheek.

“Get away from her!” Wes attempts to rush at Gabe again, but is caught by a trick that he has so often used in the past. His muscles have become immobile.

“After I destroy you, perhaps I will bide my time with her. Why waste such a beautiful opportunity?” Gabe taunts.

Jen hangs from the rope like a masterless puppet. She can hear and see everything that is happening, but her understanding of it is very slim. Her position for the moment is normal and comfortable, even in her state.

Wes's eyes bead up with tears of anger. “If you touch her, I'll kill you!”

Gabe quickly marches over to Wes. “How? By torturing me with your sob story about a love affair with a mortal?” Gabe grips Wes's throat and forces him to make eye contact. “You can't hurt me. Just like your life in this dream, your powers no longer exist.”

As Gabe's grip tightens, Wes can only think about those last words he heard, such irony. Wes is finally freed from his cursed powers, but trapped inside someone else's nightmare.

Looking past Gabe's shoulder, Wes can see Jen. She finally raises her head and looks at Wes. She smiles at the familiarity of his face. Wes knows now for sure that she loves him. Choking on his last breath, Wes mumbles, “Finally, a happy ending to my nightmare.”

Wes' eyes roll back in his head, and Gabe drops him onto the ground. Gabe's job is done.

Across the way, Jen sees everything. It only takes seconds for her to realize that the normality of her dream has changed. Normally after a terrifying incident Jen would wake from her nightmare. But now, she's still there; looking at her dead lover. She understands that Wes was not in control. Searching her soul, Jen understands why she never felt scared and always in control in her nightmares. She

understands what she had just heard Wes mention, not moments ago. She is a lucid dreamer, and she is in control.

Gabe looks at Wes's still body for a few minutes. “How foolish he was. Now to deal with...” Gabe turns around to find that Jen has disappeared. The rope that she hung from is still swaying. Gabe quickly realizes that Wes was telling the truth about Jen.

Gabe tries to leave the dream, but to his dismay, he cannot. Jen has already taken control. Gabe does the only thing that he's capable of, and admits defeat. “Alright, you've got me.” His voice echoes inside the empty dream.

Nearly a minute passes while Gabe waits in silence. Finally, Jen's holographic image appears in the distance. She says nothing, hoping that her silence will intimidate Gabe, and it does.

“Listen,” Gabe shouts out to her. “I'm sorry I killed your boyfriend. But I have a job to...”

“He's not dead.” Though she speaks softly, Jen's voice can be heard from the far distance.

“What?” Gabe turns around and looks down at Wes's body. Stunningly to Gabe's eyes, Wes begins to breathe again. “You can't do that!” Gabe shouts. “I killed him!”

“And I revived him. I'm in control here,” Jen responds.

It's obvious to Gabe that Jen has found the full potential of her lucid ability. “So, you are a lucid dreamer. What's your plan now? You bring him back to life and then run away together in a dream?”

“No one will ever be able to find us in my dreams. And if they do, they will never leave it.”

“You're making a big mistake. He's a nightmare! Don't you realize that everything that you've ever done together in the past was a nightmare?” Gabe explains. “That's what your future will be like. It's his birthright! He can't control it!”

“He doesn't have to. I will,” Jen replies. “He's showed me how.”

“It'll never work. One day, he'll have to sleep. He'll draw you into a nightmare, and you'll both die there.”

“And you'll die here.”

Suddenly, a strong wind begins to blow. Loosing the strength in his legs, Gabe falls on the ground, and grits his teeth with pain. Looking at his legs, Gabe realizes why he fell. His feet had turned to dust, and blown away. “NO! You...” But before he can say another word, a second gust of wind carries the rest of Gabe's body away as it explodes into uncountable grains of sand.

Jen kneels down to Wes. Slowly, he opens his eyes, and he sees her. They smile at each other.

“Hey, babe.” Jen whispers as she cups the back of Wes' head.

“Hey,” Wes replies. Wes can not believe his eyes. He feels completely revived, as if he had not been hurt at all. Wes stands up and holds Jen's hands in his. “Finally, I feel like I'm really with you.”

“You've always been with me.”

Wes smiles. “I can't promise you happiness. But I can promise you love.”

Jen nods in complete acceptance. “That's all I need.” Jen leans in to Wes, and they passionately kiss.

The box-like surroundings of the dream raise and disappear revealing a road that leads into eternity. Wes stands up, and escorts Jen to an awaiting car. It's the car of her dreams. She sits in the passenger seat, and he begins to drive down an all too familiar roadway.

They've faced unimaginable odds, and found a love that only they can understand. All that's left is to make their loving dream come true.

But is this the dream, or just another nightmare?

THE END.