

Figment

Episode 4

Darkness was all around Jonathan. Everywhere he turned he saw shades of black, gray, red and orange. He knew he had to be in a dream but he couldn't find the exit. A voice called out from the darkness. Jonathan recognized it as the voice of the man in the shadows. It called out Jonathan, mocking him, nagging him.

"You'll see," called the voice from all around Jonathan. "I'll show you." Every time the phrase was repeated it was followed by a laugh that sent chills down Jonathan's spine.

Although the voice called to him, beckoned him, ridiculed him, and berated him, it never called his name. Jonathan still ran; a flawed attempt in a dream such as this, but it was his only option. So he ran, dark one dark alley after another, the shadowed face spawning at the end of every intersection, laughing, and casting red hues along the walls around Jonathan. There was no escaping this dream. The dark figure, shadowed by his clothing and his choice of lighting, was everywhere, following Jonathan.

As he turned the next corner into another empty alley Jonathan stopped abruptly. At the end of the alley, cast against a red glow, was a shadow, cloaked in black, the flaps of a cape or long coat drifting gently in the wind. Jonathan could make out the brim of the black hat the man wore. It was hard for Jonathan to see the man's face before, but with the shadows of darkness around him it was all but impossible to make any features or even the slightest hue of pink flesh. There was a sound, metal scrapping metal, from behind Jonathan. He turned around to see nothing and turned back around to see the man in black almost on top of him, bringing an object, long and slender, down from over his head.

Jonathan screamed and sat up in his bed. Forgetting that the bed had been lofted almost six feet above the floor, Jonathan's head came in contact with the rough plaster ceiling of the college dorm room. He fell back down to the pillow of his bed, grabbing his forehead in pain.

"FUCK!" he yelled wincing in pain for the scratch left by the sharp points of the textured ceiling.

Craig was already awake, as usual, but had not gone for his morning shower yet. He quickly jumped up from his desk chair when he heard Jonathan scream from the obviously terrifying dream he had been having. Almost instantly Jonathan was back down on the bed rolling back and forth on his back, his left hand cupped against his forehead as curse words quickly emanated from his mouth.

"Shit man," Craig said with a slight chuckle, "that had to hurt."

"Oh, fuck!" Jonathan said again rolling over to look at Craig, "Damn right it did. Do you see any serious bleeding?" He rubbed his fingers against his head and looked at them to see if he needed to get a band-aide.

“No,” Craig answered looking intently at the scar on Jonathan’s brow. Jonathan rubbed his head again and began climbing down from the loft, being careful not to hit his head again. “Bad dream?” Craig asked turning back around and sitting back down in front of his computer.

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.” Jonathan answered still rubbing his head, slowly making his way to his computer chair. He sat down and looked at the blinds that covered the window looking outside. An orange light was plastered against the cream colored fabric. It was oddly eerie to Jonathan. He stood up and pulled the drapes open. Red sunlight poured into the dormitory, casting orange and pink shadows along the walls.

“Red sky,” Craig said looking outside while standing up again. “It was said amongst sailors that red skies were the sign of danger or peril at sea.”

“But we aren’t at sea,” Jonathan felt like adding that point.

“No,” continued Craig, “but it was also the belief of some cultures that a red sky meant victory at battle. The blood of the enemies soaked the ground and was taken away by the sun. Tolkien stated it best in his book *Two Towers* as they tracked the Hobbits through Rohan, ‘Red sky, blood has been spilled this past night’.”

Jonathan flipped on his computer screen and sat back down. “Didn’t they say something yesterday about storms later today?” he asked opening his Firefox web browser. It was defaulted to open the local news website. The first thing listed on the page was information about the previous night’s murder.

The police still had not come up with a motive or had any leads on the murder. So far it had appeared to be a random “thrill-kill”, as they were calling it. The weapon had first been claimed as a large knife, but since none had been taken from the kitchen rack or drawers, it was now believed that the murder carried the weapon with him to the murder and has possibly disposed of it in the local trash. A search of trash cans and dumpsters in the neighborhood had turned up nothing yet but the police and investigators were not going to give up easily on finding a weapon.

Jonathan sat back in his chair, looking at the computer monitor then back outside. He still had the feeling from the night before that everything was connected, but he still could not place it. He actually was unaware that Craig had been trying to get his attention for the past minute.

“Jonathan,” Craig said, almost exasperated. Jonathan looked back to Craig from his glazed stare out the window. “Are you still going to the mall today?”

“Yeah,” Jonathan said with a small nod.

“Good, I need you to get me a shirt I saw last week at Hot Topic.” Craig tossed Jonathan a twenty. “I expect change back.”

“Handler’s fee, you know how it goes.”

“I’m serious.”

“Yes mom.” Jonathan smiled and picked up his wallet that was sitting on the corner of his desk, stuffing the twenty inside with the few singles he had left from his last check.

Jonathan dug his keys out of his jeans pocket, picking the car key right away without even looking at the key ring. It was a force of habit by now. Ever since he was sixteen, Jonathan was driving. He made sure that with every girl he dated, or randomly

took out, or randomly met at the bars or in class rode in the passenger seat. He was the type of person that liked to drive. He never let anybody else drive his car either. It was his pride and joy. He had taken care of it since his parents bought it for his eighteenth birthday. He knew every inch the car as if he had built it himself. In some cases he had. A new stereo system complete with 6-disc CD changer and eight surround sound speakers mounted in exact locations inside the car to maximize sound quality was not in the original specifications for the car. Jonathan had added this himself, along with a new braking and exhaust system and even a redeveloped air intake manifold to increase horsepower and reduce fuel consumption. With gas prices moving closer to bankrupting prices, Jonathan needed a car that could get every mile possible out of one tank of gas, especially with how much he drove.

The key slide freely into the slot on the door, just below the black plastic handle, clicking gently as it locked the tumblers into place. There was a slight sound of electric motors turning as the driver door lock popped up. Jonathan opened the door and sat down inside. He pushed the key into the ignition and turned the car over. The started kicked and the four-cylinder engine came to life. Jonathan smiled and put his car into reverse and began to back out of the parking space when he noticed his fuel gage. Normally it would not have caught his attention, but this time it did. He had just filled the tank no more than two days ago and had not moved his car since. In fact it was sitting in the exact same spot as he left it. He looked back down at his fuel gage to make sure he was not possibly seeing another gage out of the corner of his eye. He threw the car back in park and stared unbelieving as the needle on the gage rested just south of the half-tank line.