

Figment

Episode 8

By the time Jonathan finished with his classes for the day, the wind had died down to a dull, but still fast, breeze. It was not the breeze that bothered Jonathan, and sent shivers down his spine. It was the man last night. The two men. Both clothed in black, shielded by brimmed hats, armed with steel rather than iron. Any nut today could find his way into a gun shop, purchase a weapon and figure out how to use it. The two men, in black guise, fought with expert skill. It was the stuff you would see in the movies, the stuff Jonathan would dream about.

He pulled out a paper that was sticking slightly out of his backpack and unfolded it. The wind ripped at the loose edges of the paper, attempting to pull it free from Jonathan's grip and fling it across the campus in a dancing fury. Drawn, rather crudely since Jonathan was never good at artwork, was a pencil sketching of a blade. It took almost the entire length of the paper, if he had the sheet turned on its side. The blade was long, and curved, darkened just a touch by shading with the side of his pencil. The hilt was all black, but even darker than the coloring lay a web of intricate lines, mapping the details of the design. The grip and pommel were shaded neatly in black to accentuate the wrapping of fine cloth or leather around solid, black wood. Printed, as neatly as possible, in capital letters underneath the crude drawing were the words *ONYX STEEL*. Jonathan had never heard of an onyx steel before until he drew this same drawing earlier in the week. In fact, as far as he knew, no such element existed on the planet. He could not figure out why he was so obsessed with this drawing and why it continued to return to him in his dreams and daylight doodling during class.

He stuffed the paper back into his bag, making sure that it was not neatly folded as it had been before. He wanted that image out of his mind. He wanted answers. He wanted food. Crap! His dinner plans with Christine. He had almost forgotten them. He slung his bag over his shoulder and hurried back towards his dorm, keeping his head down from the rushing wind.

As always, Craig was waiting in the room when Jonathan got there. Craig looked at Jonathan and almost passed no acknowledgement, but then did a double take and jumped from his seat, spilling his keyboard to the floor.

"Where have you been?" He asked quickly approaching his roommate.

"I've been in class man," Jonathan said setting his backpack down. "Why?"

"Professor Daniels called," Craig continued. "He was wondering where you were."

"I just left his class, I wonder what he wanted."

"He wanted to know why you didn't bother showing up today for your Statistics class."

Jonathan froze in his steps towards his computer and turned to face Craig. A bewildered look had been smeared across his face.

“I just told you,” Jonathan said, slightly irritated but baffled, “I just left his class room.”

“Jonathan,” Craig said, “all of your professors called today, looking for you.”

Jonathan looked at Craig, unable to find the words. He quickly crossed the room and picked up his backpack and pulled out the drawing.

“Do you remember a few days ago when I showed you some doodles I did in class?” Jonathan asked handing Craig the paper.

Craig took the paper and unfolded it, revealing the neatly shaded drawing of a black sword with a slightly curved blade. The bottom edge of the blade was etched diamond patterns, similar to those found on a properly sharpened Japanese katana. The hilt resembled the shape of a galaxy with four arms stretching out from it slightly, coming to a point at each end. The grip was wrapped in what appeared to be leather, all the way to the pommel which had similar shading to the hilt. Craig folded the paper back up and handed it to Jonathan. “You never showed that to me before.” He said concerned.

“Sure I did,” Jonathan explained. “A few days ago we were going to the Village to grab something to eat. I asked you if you’ve driven my car and showed you a similar drawing.”

“Dude,” Craig said, “we haven’t been to the Village to eat in over a week.”

Jonathan staggered back against the door, shocked from Craig’s comment.

“Like I’ve been saying, your professors have been calling you all day long, trying to figure out where you’ve been.”

“I’ve been in class all day long.” Jonathan said before grabbing the drawing again and unfolding it to show it to Craig. “Dr. Daniels’ class is where I drew this. I got bored.”

“Look, maybe you need to just relax a little.” Craig said motioning towards the sofa in the middle of the room.

“I..I can’t,” Jonathan said. “I have a date with Christine in a little bit. I’ll figure this out when I get back.”

“Jonathan,” Craig sighed, “you’re missing eight hours of your day. You think you’ve been somewhere that you haven’t and you come back with a detailed drawing of a sword made out of something called ‘onyx steel’ and claim you showed this to me two days ago on the way to the Village when you both sat here in the room and ordered a pizza. You need to sit down a minute or go to the hospital and get a scan or something. Something is not right.”

Jonathan sat down on the sofa, staring straight ahead at no particular thing. “I can’t forget about Christine again,” he said after a few seconds of silence. “She already thinks I’m a jerk for not calling her back before.”

Craig sighed out loud, making sure Jonathan heard his annoyance that his roommate would not stay and relax or seek medical attention for his loss of hours in the day. “There is no stopping you, I guess.” Craig said with an exasperated tone.

“I have to walk all the way to The Retreat and all the way back here.” Jonathan said standing up. “It will give me time to think about this and maybe remember where I was all day, okay?”

Craig sighed again. He did not like the state his roommate was in. Loss of memory, delusions of events that never happened, and irrational thought were all

symptoms of stress, but also dementia. Was it possible his roommate was losing his mind?

Jonathan checked his pocket to make sure he had his keys and started to walk out the door.

“We’re not through with this, Jonathan.” Craig called after him just before the door shut and the latch clicked. Craig sat back at his computer and said to himself, “Just be sure to come back here before something bad happens.”

Jonathan walked to The Retreat with a brisk pace, almost jogging. It was now calm outside; no wind was blowing at all. It was almost as if the world had stopped. The sun had already started to set in the far west, tingeing the sky a dark orange and purple. Jonathan knew he was going to be running a little bit late, even with his fast steps, but he did not want to run. Although he could handle his stamina in bed, running for a period of time often winded him to the point where he could barely talk.

He was thinking about what Craig was talking about. He knew he had been in class all day long, so why would Craig say that his professors had been calling for him? He had the notes from his math class and the handouts from Econ 220. It was possible that Craig was pulling a prank on him, trying to confuse him. That still did not explain why Craig was so sincere about the situation. Craig had pulled pranks on Jonathan before, but had never been able to keep such a straight face about it.

Jonathan was also concerned about the past two days. He remembered everything about them; talking to Craig while walking to the Village, showing him the original drawing of the sword, asking him if he drove his car, yet Craig seemed not to recall a single event.

Somebody shouted his name, but Jonathan didn’t hear it. He was deep in thought, trying to figure out this new enigma. Even though the second character in black had come and fought off the one proclaiming himself the killer the police were after, Jonathan could not shake the thought that his part in this whole ordeal was not over and that all the event happening this week were all related in some fashion.

“Jonathan!” Christine cried out again, waving her arms over her head. Jonathan snapped out of his daze and gazed up from the ground. Christine was already there waiting for him, standing just outside the main entrance doors. He thought she looked good standing there in a v-cut tee shirt and low-rider blue jeans. The wind gusted just lightly enough to blow her hair into her face as Jonathan got closer. She brushed it out of her eyes and held out her hand. Jonathan took it gently.

“You’re late.” She said with a faint smile.

“Sorry,” Jonathan explained. “I was talking to Craig.”

The two entered through one of the large glass doors on the outside of the building, disappearing behind the reflection of the outside world. Just as the door clicked shut, cast in the reflection of trees and grass, a whisper of a man dressed in a black coat stepped out of sight.