

## The Tide of Dreams

### Waking in a World of Dreams, Part 1

Luke Speller emerged from his attic a dusty mess, but successful none the less. In his right hand was a dusty sword hilt, with a faded leather hilt, a thick, worn out cross guard in the shape of blue wings, and a scratched up pyramidal pommel. There was about half an inch of jagged blade attached, as though the original blade had been shattered.

“This'll be perfect,” Luke said as he wiped the dust out of his spiky brown hair and off his clothes. “Nothing like getting a boring project out of the way quickly.”

He ran down to the first floor, looking for his mother, and found her in the living room reading a magazine.

“Hey Mom, you know what this is?” he asked.

“What's what?” She looked up from her magazine and saw the hilt in Luke's hand. “Oh, that thing? It's an old family relic on your father's side. It belonged to your many-times-great grandfather, who was a knight in the 1400's.”

“Hopefully he didn't use it like this.”

“No, apparently the blade was shattered sometime in the 1600's.”

“Too bad.”

“But that thing was packed away in the attic. What were you digging around up there for?”

“Social science project. Had to find something that's been in the family for at least a generation and talk about it. Something about appreciating the past or something. I don't know.”

“Okay. But you keep that thing safe. If you damage it, you're in trouble.”

“Got it, Mom. I'm going to sleep now. Gotta get to school early tomorrow.”

“Goodnight, honey.”

“Night, Mom,” Luke said as he walked up the stairs and into his room. He sat the hilt on the

nightstand next to his bed, changed into a pair of running shorts, got under the covers, and fell asleep in minutes.

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Luke stood wide awake in the middle of his own room, but there were some things that were seriously out of place. For one, he was wearing a pair of black boots, black pants, a white dress shirt, and a black overcoat, which was only weird because he didn't actually own any of those things. Another thing was that everything appeared as though Luke were looking through blue tinted sunglasses, even though he didn't have any glasses on at all. But what disturbed him out the most was that in his bed, which should have been empty, was his own body.

“What the hell?” Luke thought to himself. “I know I'm awake, so how am I...?”

His thought was cut short by a loud screech coming from outside, at the front of the house. Luke ran out of his room and into his mother's room.

“Mom, did you hear that?” Luke asked. His mother lay in her bed, quietly asleep, which was weird because she was a light sleeper.

“Mom, wake up!” Luke tried to shake her awake, but for some reason his hand stopped just a centimeter away from her, as though she were encased in a solid plastic wrapping.

“Okay, this is weird.” Luke tried to grab the phone off of her nightstand, but the same thing happened. Desperation setting in, Luke ran downstairs and out the door, onto his front lawn. Everything was normal, sans the blue tint the world had taken. He rubbed his eyes, blinked a few times, and then looked around. When his eyes saw the sky, though, his jaw dropped. High above Luke, there were hundreds, if not thousands of interlocking purple bands. They were tubular in shape, and flowed across the sky like a river.

“To hell with school, I'm going to a shrink tomorrow,” Luke muttered to himself.

Luke had no time to decide on what to do next, as the same earsplitting screech from earlier erupted for behind him. He turned around, and saw nothing, then looked up, and felt his stomach drop to his feet. Perched on top of his house, staring down at him, was a creature like nothing he'd ever seen. It was huge, with the body of a snake, over 30 feet in length and 10 feet in diameter. It had the head of a shark, with all the teeth, and four awkward looking legs, each ending with three clawed toes and looking way too skinny to hold up a creature of that size. And it did not look happy.

“Okay, I have to be dreaming. That thing can't be real.”

The impossible creature let out another screech, sending Luke running before he could process the action. The creature leaped off the house, over Luke, and into the street in front of Luke, crushing some of the cars parked on the street, including Luke's.

“Are you kidding me? This dream sucks,” Luke yelled in frustration as he stopped running. Then it hit him. “Wait. This is a dream. What do I have to worry about? I'll just wake up in the morning.”

The creature took a swipe at Luke. Instinct made him jump back, and a claw just barely cut into his left forearm. And it hurt.

“Wait,” Luke said, clutching his bleeding arm with a renewed sense of fear. “This shouldn't hurt. It's a dream, so why does this hurt so much.”

The monster screeched again and Luke sprinted back to the house, dripping blood along the way. The monster gave chase, awkwardly running on its skinny legs. Luke made it inside, closed the door behind him, and locked all the locks as the creature crashed into the house. Surprisingly, the house held up against the impact. Luke walked over to the window, saw the creature rearing up to charge again, and knew the window wouldn't hold against another hit.

“Oh, fuck me,” Luke muttered as the creature charged. He backed away from the window and

crouched down behind the nearby couch, bracing for an impact and a cloud of shattered glass. It never came. Luke stood again, staring out at the creature that looked as dumbfounded at the failed entry attempt as he was.

“So you're finally here,” said a deep voice from behind Luke. Startled, he turned and backed away. Standing before him was a strange man, with pale skin and long black hair, dressed in all black.

“Who the hell are you?” Luke asked through clenched teeth, his arm throbbing in pain. “And what are you doing in my living room? And what the hell is that thing outside?”

“I am the Dream Master, and I have a lot to explain. But first, let's take care of the dream creature outside. And get you stabilized.”

“Come again?”

“I need the hilt. The one you found earlier. Get it and bring it to me.”

“No way. Not until you tell me what the fuck is going...”

“If you want to live,” the man shouted, “bring me that hilt. Now!”

“Right,” Luke said quietly. He ran upstairs to his room. The hilt was sitting on the nightstand, just as he had left it when he went to bed, only it didn't have the blue tint that everything else had, it had its normal color. When he picked it up, his body warmed up, and the blue tint disappeared. He decided to worry about his vision later, if there was a later, and took the hilt downstairs.

“Here,” he said as he hand the hilt over to the Dream Master. “But what are you going to do with a sword *hilt*? There's no blade or anything. It's practically use...”

“Just watch,” the Dream Master said. He pointed the hilt out toward the window. “Dream Weaver, awaken!”

The hilt began to glow orange, then, in a flash of light, a full sword appeared in the man's hand. The blade was bright, brilliant silver, and the hilt itself looked as if it were brand new, not the faded antique it was moments before.

“...less,” Luke finished his sentence, astonished. “Holy crap, what did you do?”

“Hang on for a second, kid.”

The man closed his eyes, and the sword began to glow again. Then, without warning, a blast of light shot from the sword, through the window, shattering it, and hitting the creature in the face. The creature dissolved into purple particles with a dying screech, and floated up into the sky.

“Whoa,” was all Luke could muster. After a few seconds to gather his thoughts, he finally asked, “Okay, Dream Master. Who are you, where am I, why does my arm hurt in a dream, and generally, what's going on around here?”

The Dream Master turned to Luke and said, “There's a lot to explain, Luke, but let me be the first to formally welcome you to the Dream Realm.”