

Vivid Nightmare

by
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INT. OFFICE - DAY

"New York Times Best Seller" Plaques. Medieval weapons garnish the wall. Musty books line the back wall. A small cot nearby. Loud stomps up the stairs. Muffled yelling. LUCIUS NOX, 20's, short, wireframe glasses and unkempt hair, enters the room; phone in hand.

LUCIUS

--yet another uninspired addition to a mediocre catalogue? Bland setting and inconsistent dialogue? Those fools couldn't write themselves out of a paper bag. A soaking wet one!

Lucius strangles a nearby coat rack. Hits himself on the head. Muffled talking.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Relax? How can I relax when my *reputation* is at stake?

Lucius sits at his desk while rubbing his forehead.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

I'll show them how wrong they were. I'll make them eat their words and thus lose face as professionals!

MONTAGE OF LUCIUS WRITING

... Energy stimulants line the side of his desk.

... The waste basket slowly fills up then overflows.

... Bags grow under Lucius' eyes.

... Keyboards clatter.

END OF MONTAGE

UNDERWATER

Pitch black. Bubbles surround him. Lucius is sinking. Moonlight filters down from above. Lucius kicks hard. Breaches the surface.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Lucius waddles to the shore. Collapses on the ground. Clothes are drenched. Heavy breathing. Faint laughter. Lights in the distance. Lucius walks toward them.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Villagers are dancing and drinking. Area is illuminated by candles. Lucius looks around confused. Walks past HENRY, 40's, stocky build and a grey beard, drinking alone in front of a bar.

HENRY

Oi, did you stumble into the river? Yer soaking wet. Had one too many grog?

LUCIUS

..Where am I?

HENRY

Heavens, ye don't even know where ye are? Must have been a hell of a binger. Yer in the court of Sir Godfrey.

LUCIUS

Godfrey? As in the bishop, Godfrey?

HENRY

Ay. He governs this land and all its occupants.

LUCIUS

That's... impossible. He's the antagonist of my newest story.

Lucius looks around. A cathedral looms in the distance. His eyes widen. He falls to the ground.

HENRY

Oh, looks like the grogs got ye now.

LUCIUS

This can't be real. I must be dreaming.

Lucius stumbles to his feet and runs blindly into the dark streets. Heavy breathing.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Lucius stands at the foot of the bridge. He spots the opening of the path that leads to the crops. He walks down the path. He stops in a clearing and faces the riverbank and the bridge.

LUCIUS

What? No...

Lucius runs back through the path. He reaches the same spot. He falls to his knees.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

I can't leave. I'm stuck here.

He crouches into a ball and rocks back and forth.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The center is packed. Merchants sell their wares at stalls. Lucius stands near the bar. He downs a pint of beer. He's hunched in defeat.

HENRY

Hair of the dog that bit ya, ey? How's the head?

LUCIUS

It's perfectly fine.

HENRY

Well look alive, lad. Sir Godfrey will be back from blessing the crops shortly. Despises drunkards, he does.

LUCIUS

Blessing the crops? Wait.. I remembers this.

A crowd forms by the steps. A dignified man in an elegant robe walks through them. BISHOP GODFREY, 60's, tall with a thin frame and white hair, turns to face the crowd.

GODFREY

By thy decree, this land shall prosper and yield a most plentiful harvest. It is due to ye faith in God and the holy church that birth these miracles--

LUCIUS (V.O.)

This is the scene where the bishop requires a new servant and the hero elects himself. The hero then learns of the bishops evil nature and convinces the village to go against him.

GODFREY

--step forward if ye wishes to praise the almighty in body and soul.

(silence)

Nobody? Fine, thee will do. Come along boy.

LUCIUS (V.O.)

That's not how it goes! Where's the Hero?
(scans the crowd)
He's not here. What does this mean? Am I
supposed to take his place?

Godfrey walks up the steps towards the cathedral. Deep
breath. Lucius follows after him.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Large columns and rows of pews line the center. On the
far end is a marble alter with gold plating, and a large
cross. Intricate stained glass is on all sides.

GODFREY

Apologies, but could thee be so gracious
as to repeat thyself?

LUCIUS

Thy hails from the faraway provenience of
America. Belongs to noble lineage. Thy
have come to learn of the gospel and
devote thyself to he who wrote it. Lucius
Nox is thy name.

GODFREY

Ah a royal. On a voyage of spirituality
nonetheless. One must only need to hear
ye speak to know ye garner respect.
Thyself is honored to be in ye presence.

LUCIUS

Thy is honored to be under ye tutelage.

GODFREY

Kind words. Begin at once, we shall.

The pair stroll down the aisle. People kneel by the pews
praying to the large cross. The choir practices hymns
near the alter.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

This is the house of God, where one must
worship the one true God to cleanse
themselves of sin.

LUCIUS

Of course, this is sacred ground. By all
accounts we are stepping on holy land.

GODFREY

That is correct. All that is built upon this land is God's, and as servants of God, we have an obligation to keep his property well maintained.

Alter boys walk around with donation baskets. People shakily deposit bundles of coins.

LUCIUS

It must be expensive to run a place of worship as large as this one.

GODFREY

Yes, we are only able to enjoy these amenities due to God's glory and per--

Muffled argument. AGNES, 30's, tattered clothing, an assistant tightly grasps her arm. She tries to break free but is unable to. Godfrey walks up to them.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

Behave yourselves at once! What is the cause for this sacrilegious commotion?

AGNES

Apologies! It has been a difficult period for us after thy husband took up arms in the crusade.

GODFREY

A worthy cause.

AGNES

Of course, sir. But without assistance for the harvest, thy cannot afford the full offering.

GODFREY

Is that so?

AGNES

Thyself promises to pay everything thy owes next season! Thy still needs to feed thy children and--

GODFREY

--Do ye know why ye must give an offering every season?

AGNES

To show thy respect and gratitude to thy lord and savior.

GODFREY

That does play a part, yes. As humans thy are destined to die suddenly and unpredictably. Those that do not give offerings are enemies of god and thus sinners that will be cast to hell for eternal damnation. Do ye want to run the risk of hell over a bit of hunger?

AGNES

No, of course not.

GODFREY

Excellent.

Godfrey takes the coins from her clenched fist. Slips them in his pocket. He walks back to Lucius. Agnes sobs. Godfrey grabs a bible from a nearby pew.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

Here, use this as ye personal copy. Study it well.

LUCIUS

..Much appreciated.

GODFREY

Apologies, where did thy leave off? Ah, might ye inform thy of ye talents?

LUCIUS

Thy is a well renowned scribe in thy homeland.

GODFREY

An academic! Well versed in higher education, thyself. Attended the most prestigious academy in all the land.

LUCIUS

Yeah, I know you power hungry douche.
(clears throat)
So is that all to see here?

GODFREY

Hmmm... well there is one other place.
Through here sir.

Godfrey unbolts a heavy wooden door. A stone staircase illuminated by candle spirals downwards. Lucius walks down first. Godfrey watches him with suspicion on his face. The door closes.

INT. DUNGEON

A cold cavern. The rustling of chains and whimpers echo in the darkness. Godfrey lights a torch on the wall. Medieval torture devices are scattered throughout. Men huddle together in a cell.

GODFREY

This is where we keep the heathens that dare oppose the sanctity of the church.

Godfrey grabs keys on the wall. He goes in the cell, and grabs an elderly man.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

This sinner stole food from the market. He must be punished as the bible dictates: an eye for an eye.

LUCIUS

No, that's not necessary.

Godfrey places the man in a device. Affixes a metallic contraption to his face.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Hey, that's enough.

Godfrey tightens the screws. The elderly man yelps.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Stop! This is cruel and barbaric.

GODFREY

Ye dare stop divine retribution? Mock the teachings of the church?

Godfrey tightens the screws. The elderly man yells out.

LUCIUS

No! The son of god sacrificed himself to wash away humanity's sin. As long as he pleads for forgiveness before death, his sin can be forgiven.

Godfrey tightens the screws. The elderly man shrieks.

GODFREY

So ye choose to oppose the church then?

LUCIUS

Not the church. I oppose you, and people like you.

(MORE)

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

If you go through with this I'll make sure to tell my homeland of all the atrocities I saw.

GODFREY

Understood. Thyself concedes. Thy will be late for the evening mass.

Godfrey steps away. Lucius loosens the screws to the mask. It falls to the floor with a crash.

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

The pews are packed. The entire village is in attendance. Lucius sits to the side of the alter. Hushed murmurs. Godfrey addresses the congregation.

GODFREY

Thy knows that all is worried of the fire in the communal storehouse.

Children cry out, woman weep and men clench their fists.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

Thy knows that life will become more difficult for many of ye, but we will overcome this tragedy. And thy announces welcome news. Thy has found the culprit.

Gasps. Crowd-member yells out "Who is it?"

GODFREY (CONT'D)

The culprit is...
(points at Lucius)
That man over there.

HENRY (O.S.)

The drunkard?

LUCIUS

Wait, what? I was with you the whole day! What the hell are you talking about?

GODFREY

Thy does not know what ye was up to before ye came here. Regardless, an alter boy saw ye go into the storeroom before the fire. It has to be ye!

LUCIUS

You're lying! It's not true.

GODFREY

Why would a child have any reason to lie?
As long as ye plead to God for
forgiveness before death, then ye sin can
be forgiven, right?

LUCIUS

I won't beg for forgiveness! I'm not
guilty of any crime.

AGNES (O.S.)

Thee has damned us all!

GODFREY

Ye dare use the lord's name in vain, in
the house of God? Heathen! Countrymen, ye
know what must be done to those that
oppose our faith. Seize him at once! He
must face divine retribution!

The crowd chants "repent". Lucius runs. The entrance is
blocked off. He goes down into the dungeon.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

Do not follow him! Dispatch the heathen,
thysself!

Godfrey grabs his sword. Lights a torch. He enters the
dungeon. The door closes behind him.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

Lucius scans the area for an exit. Steps echo from the
stairs. Lucius spots the keys. He grabs them and throws
them into the cell. Godfrey walks in with a torch in his
left hand, and a sword in his right.

GODFREY

Thysself shall have the glory of taking ye
life, sir noble.

LUCIUS

Screw you, you pompous prick.

GODFREY

So be it.

Godfrey swings. Lucius dodges then charges him. Godfrey
braces then headbutts him.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

Ye makes for a lousy warrior.

He cuts Lucius across the right calf. Lucius stumbles backwards. The bible falls out from his pocket.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

Resign to ye fate, and die like a man!

LUCIUS

No one that dies at your hands, dies a man's death!

Godfrey lunges forward. Lucius grabs the bible and uses it as a shield. The blade is wedged. Lucius spins the book and the sword falls to the floor. Lucius kicks Godfrey in the knee but he doesn't fall.

GODFREY

Watching ye is pitiful. Make peace with God, sinner.

Godfrey reaches down for his sword. Several arms reach out from the shadows and grab him from behind.

GODFREY (CONT'D)

Let go of thee, filthy retches!

The prisoners wrap a chain around Godfrey's neck and squeeze. They surround him and beat him. Bones crack.

LUCIUS

I hope ye made peace with God.

GODFREY

Mediocre scribe...

The ground melts and Lucius sinks. Lucius tries to break free but only sinks faster. Before he disappears he sees Godfrey's body spasm then go limp.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Lucius bolts up from his bed. Sweat pours down his face. He looks around. Back at his house.

LUCIUS

A lucid dream, huh.

He sits at the edge of his couch. He goes to his desk and deletes his book file. He makes a fresh document.

He sits back down on the couch. Notices droplets of blood. Checks his legs. Fresh scar on his right calf.

END.