

THE FIXED STORY

Addicted

Matt Smith was holding a small medical ampule with blue liquid in it. He smiled: „That’s it, mate. The final version.”

His co-worker’s eyes were shining from happiness: „I think now it’s time to try it out.” He took a deep breath. No one could describe his emotions right now.

Mr Smith looked at him: „Ready?”

„Ready.” He grabbed the syringe and stabbed it into his muscle.

...

It was a frosty night, the wind was whistling behind the windows. I opened my eyes wide. It was *New moon*, darkness filled the whole room. I looked through it.

A weird, choked sound escaped my mouth. A tall, skinny man was standing next to my bed, bending over me. His blonde moustache lifted up a little when he grinned.

I looked right into his unforgettable eyes. *So bright*. And then, it came. The man opened his mouth as if he wanted to yawn, I sobbed when the burning pain in my chest arrived. With every second, it got worse. And I could do nothing about it.

...

The sound of my bare feet stepping on the floor was the only thing I could hear. I grabbed the calendar and went through it with my eyes. *If it’s New moon tonight, I’m screwed*. I still remember that night when it all started so exactly. My mum hushing me after it happened. Dad’s face when I described him what I saw. Dad, an oneirology scientist who has studied dreams for years telling me I had a *sleep paralysis*. Internet would tell you that sleep paralysis is when people while falling asleep or waking up are unable to move, speak and they may hallucinate. That’s the internet definition.

A month passed, another *New moon* came. And so did my sleep paralysis. Again and again. Cognitive behavioural therapy, antidepressants, visiting therapist every week - I went through all of this to stop it, but nothing helped. It has been happening till this day, every month. *Every damn month*. And now, after all these nights, I am standing in the kitchen, holding the calendar and looking at small, black dot next to today’s date. I took a deep breath and

swallowed the blue pill.

New moon. Tonight.

...

It was a cloudy, but warm Monday morning. I was sitting at the kitchen table, thinking about last night. It happened again. Alexa, my older sister entered the kitchen quickly, she was in a hurry. She's always in a hurry. Her long, brown hair tied up in a ponytail was swinging gently, tight shirt and skirt were showing the shape of her body nicely.

I lifted my eyebrows and smiled: „Trying to seduce someone?”

„You tell me, how was your night?” she asked and winked at me.

I glanced at her: „Haha, so funny.” I checked my phone – one new message from dad: *Have a nice day at school and say hello to Alexa, love you both!* I smiled. Our parents divorced few years ago, but me and Alexa visit him any time it's possible. „Dad says hello. Oh, and where's mum?” I asked, pouring milk to my cereal.

„She went to work half an hour ago, sleepyhead,” Alexa finished packing her handbag and looked at me. „Yeah, and I'm driving you to school today so hurry up.”

„You're what?”

„Are you deaf?” she left her eyebrows and giggled. „Mum's already at work and there's no way to catch the bus in time so speed up or we will be late.”

„But you're a horrible driver,” I said, quickly eating my breakfast and frowned at Alexa.

„Hurry. Up,” after saying that, she disappeared in the hallway. I finished eating the cereal, texted dad back and made my way to the bathroom.

...

It turned out that Alexa isn't *that* horrible driver. She didn't crash the car and we made it to school in time. When we got there, I looked at the building. Next to the front door, there was a huge photograph of a man in his middle ages hanging on the wall. He looked happy in it. Flowers and candles were everywhere. I narrowed my eyes. The man looked familiar.

„That's your school Cara, if you doubt,” Alexa laughed. I rolled my eyes. Hilarious as always.

„No, look,” I pointed at the photo, „Don't you know that man from somewhere?”

She thought for a moment, and then said: „Ah, Mr Wilson. Don't you know him? He was really famous.”

„Famous what?” I asked, frowning.

„Scientist, Cara. It was all over the internet when he died, how come you don't know?”

„Mhm,” I nodded, „and how did Mr Wilson die?”

Alexa laughed: „What's wrong with you this morning? He died of a heart attack few years ago. What else do you want to know?”

I got out of the car: „Nothing, I'm leaving. Don't crash the car!”

„Bye, love you!” she waved at me and started the car.

...

When I came to class, everybody was there already, wearing black. I looked down at my blue jeans and white T-shirt. *Great.*

I sat next to my best friend Zoe asking: „Is everybody wearing black because of Mr Wilson?” „Good morning to you too,” she smiled.

I made a grimace: „Zoe, c´mon.”

She laughed: „Yes, it´s the anniversary of his death today. Five years, Cara, isn´t it crazy? Oh, you didn´t hear the announcement on Friday, did you? Everyone was supposed to come to school in black.”

„Well and how does this Mr Wilson relate to this school?”

„Don´t you know? He was also a science teacher. Teachers that knew him say Mr Wilson was an amazing person and...” Zoe stopped talking when she heard a scream. The lights went off.

She frowned and ran to the door, turning to the class: „Guys, I see people there at the gym!”

„Zoe, don´t!” she didn´t hear me, just disappeared in the corridor followed by the rest of the class. I looked around. It was too dark. *Are you gonna stay here all alone?* I stood up.

...

Jasmine was sitting on a bench in girl´s dressing room, trembling and breathing fast. Mrs Steward, our school nurse was comforting her, her arm wrapped around Jasmine´s shoulder. „Hey, shh, it´s okay now. It´s okay,” Mrs Steward whispered.

When the lights finally came on, she warned us to *go immediately back to our classes because lesson has already started.* As I turned to leave, someone grabbed my hand on the doorstep and pulled me to the wall outside the dressing room. I turned at Zoe surprised.

„Hey, what are you doing?” I whispered.

„Shh, Cara!”

„Zoe, we should not...”

„Sweetie, did you see anything scary?” Mrs Steward´s calming voice was coming out of the dressing room.

„It´s okay, you can talk about it now.”

„Mrs... Mrs Green. She was here,” Jasmine´s voice was hoarse. We looked at each other with Zoe. We both frowned.

„What do you mean that she was here, darling?” Mrs Steward´s voice changed a little bit. „I...I came here because I had forgotten my gymnastic dress here yesterday and... Suddenly the lights came off, the door opened but nobody came in, I, I couldn´t turn the light on,” she sobbed again. „And then I saw her, she...” „Her clothes were ripped off, there was dirt all over her body and she had a huge scar on her cheek and...God, her collarbone, it was sticking out, all covered in blood...” I looked at Zoe. She didn´t say anything, just turned and started running away.

...

„What was that?!” Zoe stopped in front of the cafeteria. She was scared, I could see it in her face.

„Disgusting,” I said, imagining every detail Jasmine described.

„What *the hell* was that? Beginning with the power outage up to Jasmine’s anxiety attack or whatever that was—don’t you find it weird, Cara?” she was nervously playing with her blonde hair.

I frowned: „How did Mrs Green die?” I was confused, but not scared. Jasmine was just hallucinating, for sure. *And what if not? When you’re scared of dark you can see anything in it. No. That’s bullshit. And how can you explain her anxiety attack, huh?* There were two fighting sides in my brain. *Devil and angel like in cartoon movies, haha. What’s wrong with you, Cara?*

„Hey, are you still listening?” Zoe’s voice brought me back.

„Huh?”

„I said that Mrs Green died in a car accident and Jasmine described her so exactly, that’s why it’s so weird. Can any hallucination be *this* exact?” *Her clothes were ripped off, there was dirt all over her body and she had a huge scar on her cheek.*

„Chill Zoe, there must be some logical explanation, maybe...” I screamed and touched my chest. The pain came unexpectedly *like a lightning from a clear sky haha you’re such a comedian Cara*. It was quickly spreading through my whole body. I sat down on a couch nearby and made a mixture of sobbing and screaming.

„Cara,” Zoe put her hand on my shoulder, „I’ll call somebody, okay? Just don’t leave, stay here.” *Do I look like leaving, Zoe?* She quickly turned and started running. I curled up in a ball, holding back the tears of pain. My whole body was nothing but a mixture of cramps and burning pain at the same time. The lamp above burned out. *Oh God Zoe where are you?* There was dark everywhere except a little light coming through the windows. The door opened with loud squeak, someone was walking towards me.

My breath got faster when I realised. *Damn it, no!* I tried to get up but the pain overwhelmed me.

Mr Wilson came closer. And that was the moment when the pain got unbearable.

With just one movement of his fingers in the air, he pressed my hands to the couch tight.

I was screaming, jerking my body madly, tears were running down my cheeks. Something painfully dug into my wrists. I hissed, clenching my teeth.

The light came on, Wilson’s eyes filled with blood. He screamed, raised two fingers and swung his hand sharply. The lamp above exploded.

He turned to me and opened his mouth. *Wait, no, no, no!* I quickly sat up. The pain hit me again.

I gasped, staring at my hands, at the blue smoke steaming out of my whole body. *This is not normal, this is just not...* Wilson stopped and raised his fingers slowly in the air, forced me to stand up. I turned my face away with disgust as he touched my chin.

He laughed: „Oh Cara, don’t you recognise me?”

My mind spun, I kept replaying the last night in my mind. Of course I recognise him. *There’s no difference between Mr Wilson and...* I looked into his bright, unforgettable eyes. He smirked. *The man from my sleep paralysis.*

My mind was racing, I couldn’t think clearly. I started running.

...

I slammed the toilet door and quickly went to the basins. *This is not okay, I'm not okay.* I splashed the water to my face, seeing the fear in my hazel eyes in the mirror. *Dark, too dark.* A few drops made my brown hair wet. I didn't care.

And then it happened again.

I screamed and covered my mouth. *Mrs Green died in a car accident and Jasmine described her so exactly, that's why it's so....* Staring at me in the mirror, she swung her bloody hand and pulled me to the wall, walking towards me.

„Oh, look at you,” a grin appeared on her face. She looked terrible, she really did. I closed my eyes tight, feeling her fingers comb my long hair slowly.

The pain hit me again, my eyes filled with tears. Leaning to the wall, I fell to the ground and just watched the blue smoke steaming right to her mouth. My sight got blurry.

The door opened. *God, please...*

„Cara!” someone came up to me and gently lifted up my head.

„Girl, can you hear me?” I closed my eyes. I was weak, too weak.

Can any hallucination be this exact?

...

I opened my eyes. *Oh.* I was lying on a couch in a nurse's office, Mrs Steward sitting next to me. I sat up.

„How do you feel? Zoe told me everything, you probably got over a psychological shock. Was it Jasmine's talking that scared you so much?” she smiled and put her hand on my shoulder.

I smiled back: „Yeah, I...”

My mum walked in, her short hair was wet from rain.

„Oh God, darling, you don't know how worried I was! Should we visit a doctor?” she hugged me tight.

„No mum, it's not necessary. I'm fine now. Really.”

...

„And now tell me the truth,” mum closed the car door and turned to me. It was raining like crazy.

„What do you mean? The school nurse told you everything, didn't she?”

„You *know* what I mean. What happened?”

„Mum, I had a psychological shock, it's not a big deal. I'm okay now,” I said and turned on a radio.

She turned it off: „I'm your mother Cara, I can say when you're lying.”

„Mum, why would I...”

She grabbed my wrist: „And what's this? Did Jasmine do this as well?” I looked at the bruise. *Damn.* I stayed silent.

Mum started the car: „We are going to your father. I think it's time for him to tell you.”

„To tell me what?”

She sighed: „Everything.”

...

„What a weather, huh?“ dad was looking out of the window of his office, biting his nails nervously. He sighed and sat in the armchair opposite me. There was something different about him. *He* was different.

„You know I love you, right?“ he smiled sadly.

„Dad, what’s going on?“

„God, I was hoping I would never have to tell you this... Please, just hear me out, okay?“

He took a deep breath: „A few years ago, a mail came to our agency, asking us for help. Cara, I swear, if I only knew what will happen...“

„Who sent it? Who sent the mail?“

„The ghost hunters. They needed us, they needed our work to create something absolutely new, something that would help them the best. And that’s how it all started. We invented *Luna*, a new drug. A drug for ghosts.“

He smirked: „Silly, right? But that was what we wanted, that was our purpose. To create something they would get addicted to, to make the work of ghost hunters easier. And it worked perfectly. God, how happy we were...“

But it got out of control. Walter, my co-worker... He was testing the drug on himself at first and... He injected too much of it. Everything went wrong. Everything.“

...

„Did you hear that?“ Walter lifted his head up from the microscope. He and Matthew Smith were the last in the lab, he was sure about that.

Matt looked at him: „You need more sleep, don’t you?“

He giggled: „Maybe.“

Smith looked out (of) the French window at the dark, night sky. So peaceful. And then he heard it too.

The door opened with loud slam, the lights turned off. A woman walked into to the lab and swung her hand. The test tubes broke into pieces, all the liquid was now running down the tables.

„Hey!“ Walter stood up and quickly went to her. She swung her hand again and pressed him hard against the window. Something painfully gripped his wrists. He screamed.

„Walter!“ Matt quickly walked towards him, the chemicals were splashing under his feet. The woman looked at him and hissed. She raised her hand, lifted a shard of glass into the air and started cutting Matt’s thigh slowly.

He fell to the ground, crying out of pain. A big, disgusting smile appeared on her face. Then she turned to Walter and opened her mouth wide. Matt looked at the woman.

The skin on half of her face was completely peeled off, revealing a several muscles. One of her hands was cut off, every inch of her body was bloody.

Smith was powerless. They both were.

„Noo!“ Matt screamed, his eyes filled with tears.

Walter was losing strength. The pain in his chest was unbearable. He wheezed, turning his head to Smith and slowly closed his eyes. The woman laughed and lifted up the shard one last time. She swung her hand, the shard painfully cut Matt’s cheek. And then she disappeared.

„No, no, no, Walter!“ Matt crawled to him and grabbed his wrist. He couldn’t feel the pulse.

„Please, mate, stay with me!“ he burst into the tears.

His co-worker would never look at him again.

...

I straightened: „What was his surname? What was your co-worker’s full name?”

Dad looked up at me.

„Wilson. Walter Wilson.”

...

I held my head: „No, no, no! Walter died of a heart attack, he...”

„Cara, darling... I’m sorry, I’m so sorry...”

I shook my head slowly, my eyes filled with tears.

„His heart stopped beating, but it wasn’t a heart attack. The woman... She sucked the life out of him. That’s how he died.”

„No, no, the woman couldn’t kill him. She just... Ghosts don’t...”

„No, Cara. Ghosts exist. They’re more real than you think.”

I

covered my mouth: „The blue smoke... She killed Wilson, she hurt you because...”

He nodded silently.

„What is it?”

„It’s my fault, it’s all my fault... I’m sorry, you don’t know how...”

„What is it?! What’s the blue smoke?”

„The drug we invented. Luna. The ghosts, they’ve got too addicted. More than we wanted. They started attacking the ghost hunters, it all got out of control. And Walter, he...”

Dad sighed: „Too much had accumulated in his body, that’s why the woman killed him. Ghosts could smell the drug for several kilometres. And still can.”

And still can. My head spun.

„Luna...It’s in me, isn’t it?”

„Cara...”

„Isn’t it?”

He looked at me, a tear run down his cheek.

I shook my head: „How?”

Dad covered his face: „Darling, I’m so...”

„How?”

He took a deep breath: „I couldn’t find out for a long time, but then...”

I

straightened: „No, no! The pills...”

He nodded slowly: „The pills.”

„Wilson came up with the idea to create something like that, to help people with nightmares. It was all his work. But he didn’t manage to finish it. It was an untested medicine, Cara,” he said quietly and held my hand.

My eyes filled with tears. All nights when I was secretly stealing the blue pills from dad’s office, hoping they would help me with sleep paralysis, it all came to my mind.

„So if I just told you I’m taking the pills, if I told anyone...”

I shook my head: „They were supposed to help.”

„They were. That’s what Walter wanted.”

I looked up at him: „What happened?”

...

Matt went through the results with his eyes. Damn. His head spinned. He hoped it won’t be there. But it is, there’s too much of it. Too much. He looked at the word once again. Luna.

„Why didn’t you stop me? You knew the drug’s in it!” my voice broke.

„It was late, Cara, too late. Although you stopped taking the pills a long time ago...” His eyes filled with tears.

„How much? How much of it is in my body?”

„I’m afraid it might be... It’s probably more than Wilson had.”

No.

„I’m sorry, I’m so sorry darling... But it’s time for you to know. Please, listen to me. People use about...”

I stood up crying: Why are you telling me this now? You didn’t tell me for years...”

He stood up too and touched my hand: „Cara, please... All this time, I was looking for solution. We all were. But there’s no point in it anymore. Please, just hear me out.”

He sighed: „People use about ten percent of brain capacity. There are several theories about what we could do if we were able to use more. But ghosts, they do. They use more than us. We researched it a few times, and yet we have agreed on forty percent. If people were able to use this much, they could control the bodies of others, they could control any stuff, only because of the increased brain capacity. Cara, you don’t have sleep paralysis. You have never had. The ghosts paralyse your body, so you can’t move while they try to get the drug from you. They can do whatever they want with you, with us. The increased brain capacity allows them to do so.”

I shook my head slowly, looking at him: „They could kill me if they wanted. Wilson could. Why don’t they come to me every night?”

Dad held my hand: „Their eyes, they are too sensitive. That’s why the ghosts don’t show up when it’s Full moon, or day. Their eyesight wouldn’t bear it. They need darkness.”

I realised everything. Mrs Green. Wilson’s eyes filled with blood when the light came on. *Ghosts exist. They’re more real than you think.*

I covered my mouth, looking out of the French window behind dad.

He turned and saw him too, standing outside in the yard. I screamed. *Wilson. Walter Wilson.*

All the lights went off.

They weren’t hallucinations. They never were.

By Nikol Lévaiová (7.C)