

## Jakes Dreams

by Conor Kenny

It was late afternoon, it was spring. The rain had only just subsided and some of the clouds had been dispersed by the wind, letting in the last of the days sun. Some raindrops clung to the windows of a small, plainly furnished office.

‘Do you dream much, Jake?’

Jake blinked, stirred and turned from gazing out the window to face the questioner. ‘Sorry, I was somewhere else for a little bit there.’

‘It’s fine’ came the response.

Jake changed his position, uncrossing and crossing his legs, the leather backed chair creaking at his motions.

‘Yeah, I dream, sometimes anyway. I don’t remember them a lot of the time.’ His hands fidgeted and he looked down at them and clasped them together to help make them stop.

‘Tell me about some of them’ he was asked as the person adjusted their glasses ‘Dreams are often our minds way of sorting through our subconscious, or the things that are happening in our conscious lives.’ Jake frowned and pursed his lips in thought. ‘Not much to say really. I had one a while ago where I lived in a tree house and sold soaps and candles by mail order. A friend came to visit at one point. We talked and drank tea out of little cups.’

The other person made a sound, a pen clicked, and a note was scribbled. ‘Do you think that is something you would like?’

Jake shrugged. ‘Yeah, it was pleasant. There wasn’t much detail though.’ He paused, ‘I had one or two really just weird ones recently though.’

The other person made the sound again.

Jake sat back, the chair groaning slightly. ‘I didn’t like the last one at all, even in the dream I was disturbed. The toilet in my flat sort of, exploded. There was well, shit everywhere. Filth was just spewing out and covering the wall and floor.’

‘That does sound distressing’ said the other person levelly, ‘What did you think of that when you woke up?’

Jake gave a hollow laugh. ‘I wasn’t a fan. It was pretty disgusting.’

One corner of the other person’s mouth turned up in a half-smile. ‘It sounds so.’ ‘I read a little while ago about some scientists that claimed that dreams are like visions of parallel versions of ourselves, ones who’d made different choices.’

The other person crossed their hands and wrinkled their nose slightly at the idea. ‘Perhaps. Do you think you’ve made good choices in comparison to these other Jakes?’

Jake thought for a moment. ‘Yeah, no. Sometimes. Maybe not the one that gets to live in a tree house.’ The other person opened their mouth to speak but Jake spoke first.

‘What made me wonder, when I read that, is what other Jakes would think of my choices, of my life.’

Jake was asleep. His eyes were closed, and his breathing was soft. He dreamed of himself. He walked through dusky streets at night with his friends. They took a secret passage that didn’t really exist into a pub that was also a theatre that also didn’t really exist. He got into a fight with his friend Arthur. Fists flew and blood was spilled. Tears were shed in pain and sadness and anger. When Jake

woke up he was compelled to check up on his friend. It was when he was going to the bathroom that he realised none of it had happened.

'How have your dreams been lately?' he was asked.

He breathed in and opened his mouth to speak but stopped.

He started again. 'Well, I dreamt I got into a fight with Arthur. I hurt him, well, we hurt each other really. It was bad, everyone kind of freaked out, understandably.'

The other person was standing and walked around beside Jake. 'Have you two been getting on? I seem to remember you had a shouting match not long ago.'

Jake was looking the steam curling from the mug of coffee in front of him, he felt a hand on his shoulder. 'Yeah, I guess there has been some friction over the last few months, maybe even years.' The other person squeezed his shoulder and Jake rested his arm against it. 'It'll be alright Jacob.' But no one calls me Jacob, Jake thought.

The two kissed. 'I love you' said the other person.

'I love you too?' Jake said.

Jake saw a ring on his ring finger and looked into the eyes of the other person.

'But I don't have a husband.' He said.

Jake looked at his therapist's bespectacled face. Dr. Lisa Hanrahan looked back at him. 'I had a dream the other night that I had just woken up from a dream where I got into a fight in a mystery pub theatre with a friend, I haven't spoken to in seven years and then my husband who doesn't exist comforted me.' Jake said in one breath.

Hanrahan looked down at her notepad and back to Jake. She cleared her throat. 'Well that's-' she began.

'And then I told him I didn't have a husband.'

'Well, that is certainly different from the others you told me.'

'But the weird part is that I then said to my dream husband "I don't have a husband". I've never lucid dreamed but it was like I went from just going along for the ride like usual to actually doing something, if you know what I mean?'

Dr. Hanrahan placed her pen on her notebook. 'So, rather than just accepting the dream you took your own agency. Do you think that might be reflective of the progress you've made in our sessions?' Jake frowned and his mouth curled with a combination of thought and disagreement. 'Maybe.'

Jake was asleep and Jake dreamed. Jakey was scared, in a way he couldn't define. Lost somewhere, the layout didn't make sense. Paths would seem to turn in on themselves. Doors of buildings would open into fields. Always there was the sense of something nearby, pursuing him, watching him. He knew he didn't want to look back. At some point Jake stopped and he turned around in the dream and he woke up in a sweat knowing he'd seen something terrible but not knowing what.

He was on his way to Doctor Hanrahan's clinic. He was taking a longer route so he could have a coffee and walk by the canal. His order was called, and he went to the smiling employee and took out his wallet and then he stopped.

'That's three euros please' said the barista.

Jakey blinked twice and looked around him. 'Wha-what?'

The server looked from him to his wallet. 'Three euros? For the coffee?'

Jakey opened the folded leather pouch in his hands and looked at a selection of unfamiliar coins and paper monies. He grabbed a handful and thrust them to the woman's hands.

'Uhhh-' she said looking at the coins and notes pressed into her hands and opened the till. His eyes alighted on a stack of cakes and pastries as the woman parsed out the money, he'd handed her. 'The food, can I?' said Jakey.

The woman looked up, smiling blandly, a slight fear in her eyes, Jakey had seen it in his own before. She nodded.

Jakey grabbed a handful of the cakes and stuffed them into unfamiliar clothes. 'The woman's mouth opened to speak.

Jake opened his eyes. He was sitting by the canal. He looked around and then checked his phone. Two hours ago, he stepped into the coffee shop and now he was here and had missed his appointment.

Doctor Hanrahan looked at him. 'So, you blacked out and came to two hours later?' Jake nodded, squirming awkwardly in the creased leather of the chair. 'That's never happened before.' She nodded. Before she could respond Jake said. 'But that's not all. Parts started to come back to me, it was like I was someone else, someone who didn't recognise anything. He was scared too, and I think I dreamt him.'

He elaborated on the dream from the previous day, and that he was wondering if he really was experiencing parallel versions of himself and that now a parallel him had just experienced his life. Doctor Hanrahan listened in silence, nodding now and again, or taking a note here and there. 'So, do you think I'm losing my mind?' he asked when he was finished.

The doctor smiled slightly. 'No, Jake, I do not think you're losing your mind.'

Jake relaxed his body, not realising how tense he had been.

Doctor Hanrahan took a breath. 'However, I do think we should consider some alterations to your medication.'

Jake nodded. 'Alright, that makes sense.'

Jake was at the chemists, standing in line, holding his freshly printed prescription. 'Next', called the person at the counter.

An older lady in front of Jake stepped shakily to the counter.

Jake blinked twice. He looked around him.

Jacob looked down at the prescription in his left hand.

'My name isn't Jake', he said under his breath. He noticed he wasn't wearing his ring. After three years of marriage to Ryan he hadn't taken it off.

'Next' called the person at counter.

Jacob walked up and smiled awkwardly at the young man. 'Uhh, hi, I think I need to get this prescription.' Jacob said uncertainly.

The staff member took it and went to get it.

Jake opened his eyes. He was in his small, sparse kitchen, but he wasn't sure how he got there. He looked at the clock on the wall. He'd left doctor Hanrahan's office almost three hours ago. There was a glass of tap water on the table front of him and a box of tablets. His memories of the intervening time slowly came back. He, or some version of him had left the chemists and come back home. They'd looked around his flat, tidied up a little bit and, a look at his cupboards confirmed this, even gone out again to get groceries.

Jake opened the box of tablets and read the instructions under his breath. He put two tablets in his mouth and chased them with water.

Jake was asleep, but that night Jake didn't dream. He woke up well rested, better than in weeks. Part of him missed the dreams, but only part of him.