

What the Shadows Bring

Part I: *Hello Darkness, My Old Friend.....*

“Red Alert! All crewman report to battle stations!” yelled Captain Daniels over the intercom. “Lieutenant! Open a channel to Starfleet!” he continued.

“Aye sir! Channel open!” replied the Lieutenant.

“This is Captain Trip Daniels of the U.S.S. Shadow, NCC-9398, requesting immediate reinforcements! We’re outnumbered by an unknown force,” said Captain Daniels to the intercom.

As the Captain finished his transmission, his starship was struck by his foes’ incoming fire. Nearby computers exploded and some of the crew were rushed off of the bridge to the ship’s infirmary. Captain Daniels, uninjured, sat in his chair tried to figure out how to salvage this impossible scenario. He was interrupted by his helmsman.

“Captain! They’re firing again!” the helmsman yelled.

“Evasive maneuver Alpha!” replied the Captain.

The ship was struck again, more crew were rushed out and replaced, and filled the bridge. The lights went out, and the red glow of the emergency signals took over. The starship came back around and was in the position for a counterattack. As Captain Daniels, standing now, was about to order his ship to fire, he was interrupted by his Lieutenant.

“Captain! Reinforcements have arrived! I’m detecting four heavy cruisers,” said the Lieutenant.

“Starfleet’s finest. Ok Lieutenant, patch me into their comms. All units fire on my mark,” said Captain Daniels with newfound encouragement.

Before the small fleet of starships could open fire, Captain Daniels heard a strange noise. It sounded like a collection of bells singing a happy tune. He shrugged off his senses and focused on the screen before him. He watched as his starship flew closer to the enemy ships in front of him. Just before Captain Daniels was about to give the order, the bells intensified. He fell to the ground and closed his eyes.

Trip Daniels awoke to the sound of his alarm, with its infuriating and cheerful bell tone. He rolled over in his bed and picked up his phone; he’d forgotten to turn down the brightness the previous night and was blinded for a moment. As his eyesight recovered from the explosion of white light, he read the time; it was 6:00 am. “*Fuck,*” he thought to himself. He set another alarm for 6:30 and attempted to go back to sleep so that he might continue his adventure in the world of *Star Trek*. Trip closed his eyes and, before he realized it, began to dream once again.

He found himself, of all places he possibly could have gone, driving his car down a long open road with fields on either side. Nothing even remotely of interest in his view until a dark figure appeared far down the road. Trip honed in on this new piece of scenery. Although Trip felt himself darting down the road, he came no closer to the figure. Shrugging it off, he continued along the straight path, until suddenly it dawned on him that he had no idea where he was going. Growing bored, he turned on his radio. The volume was turned low and Trip couldn’t hear what was playing. He reached for the knob on the control panel and turned it up a little. He heard the sound of bells ringing again. “Shit! Nonononono!” he yelled.

He began to change radio stations, but on every single station he heard the same bells ringing; and with each push of his seek button, it grew louder and louder. Trip awoke in his bed again, rolled over, and picked up his phone. He turned the alarm off and threw the phone across his bedroom. Reluctantly, he stood up and navigated his way through the mountain range of dirty clothes on his floor and picked out what seemed like his last clean outfit. “*Guess it’s time to do laundry again,*” he thought to himself. He retrieved his phone from the corner of his room and shuffled downstairs to finish getting ready for class. Once he reached the bottom of the steps, he saw his two roommates sitting at the dining room table gulping down their cups of coffee.

“Mornin’ Elim, Miles,” said Trip as he went to pour himself some coffee.

“You’re late this morning,” teased Elim.

“Rough night?” added Miles.

“No actually, I dreamt again,” replied Trip.

“No shit! How long has it been this time?” asked Miles.

“Hell if I know, like it even matters anymore. My alarm always makes sure to end them before anything fun happens,” said Trip.

“You need to sleep more,” said Miles.

“Hey, you paid the bills yet?” asked Elim.

“No....I’ll do it after class,” replied Trip unwilling to deal with any responsibility this early in the morning.

The three roommates finished their coffee and left to go to their classes. As Trip sat through his law class he began to doze off. In an attempt to keep himself awake, he mentally planned out the rest of his day.

“Ok,” he thought to himself, *“I have this class to get through, then my other two, then I have work right after until.....what was it? 8?”*

“Also, don’t forget about your paper is due this Friday by class time,” his professor’s words cut into his thoughts.

“.....aaaand another paper to write, great,” Trip continued thinking.

Trip went through the rest of his day the same as he did every Wednesday. He went to his classes, he went to work, then he went back home to try and get some of his homework done only to end up cutting it short and spending time with his friends. He left his friends’ house down the street at around 1:00am and continued some of his homework. His roommate Elim was still awake and much to Trip’s aggravation kept engaging him in conversation.

“Why are you even still awake? Didn’t you only get like three hours of sleep last night?” Elim asked.

“Three and a half actually,” Trip responded without taking his eyes off of his computer screen.

“You should really get some sleep dude, that shit isn’t healthy,” said Elim.

“Thanks Mom, but this paper can’t wait. Plus I have other shit to do,” replied Trip growing more irritated.

“Whatever man, good night. Hey, make sure you get to those bills tomorrow, we can’t wait much longer.” said Elim getting up from his chair and going upstairs

“Goodbye Miles,” Trip said finally grateful for some quiet time.

Trip continued working on his homework until 3:00am. After looking at the time, he decided to call it a night. He stumbled upstairs and went to bed. He didn’t bother to take off his clothes, as he had no clean ones to replace the outfit he was wearing anyway. He fell face first onto his bed and passed out. The next thing he hears are those damned bells three hours later. Trip woke up and, dreading his life, took a cold shower to wake himself up.

He proceeded throughout his day just as he had the previous one. He attended his classes, went to work, and came home. Luckily, this was his easy day. Only two classes and he finished his shift at 5:00pm. After scrounging himself dinner, an exquisite combination of chicken flavored ramen noodles and a grilled cheese sandwich, he returned to his living room to work on his homework yet again. As he typed, he began to doze off. There was no fighting it this time, and since Trip had some extra time, he decided to take a half hour nap. He walked upstairs and looked at his phone. It read 7:00pm, so he set two alarms; one for 7:30 and the second for 7:45 just in case the first one failed to wake him. With that, he laid down on his side and pulled his extra pillow to his side, put his right arm under it and the left over the top. As soon as he closed his eyes, he was asleep.

After about ten minutes Trip woke back up, but it wasn’t because of his alarm. He noticed that he was having trouble breathing. Worried, he tried to turn onto his back to alleviate his lungs, but he could not move. Trip began to breathe more heavily as he grew more and more concerned. “*What’s happening? Why can’t I move?!*” he thought. He began to look around the

room, which was difficult since he could not move his head. Even through the darkness, he could make out a figure standing at the foot of his bed. He was tall and the only features that Trip could make out were his pale hands and half of this strange figure's face. The top of the figure's head was covered under a shadow down to his nose, Trip could only see his mouth and chin.

“HmMMMMMMMM!” Trip whispered, now extremely alarmed.

“I can't talk! Why can't I talk?! WHO IS THIS PERSON?!” Trip thought.

“HURRRRRR!!” he whispered a little louder.

The figure move slowly towards Trip, leaning over the bed until he was about two feet from Trip's face. He began to whisper something, but Trip couldn't hear what the figure was saying. Trip closed his eyes, fully expecting this figure to murder him. He opened his eyes again and looked to the foot of his bed, the figure wasn't there. He looked around with his eyes again. He saw nothing. Then he looked to his right and the figure was right next to him, standing there watching him. Trip closed his eyes once more and wished, more than anything else, to leave this room. He drifted back into sleep and into a lucid dream, not realizing that he was now dreaming, Trip flew out the wall of his room and flew away as far as he could. When he realized the absurdity of his sudden Superman like abilities, he woke back up. He sat up in his bed for a moment, then jumped to his feet and ran to the light switch. He flipped the lights on and saw he was the only one in his room. He walked over to his door and tested the doorknob. Locked.

Trip grabbed his pocketknife from his desk, unlocked his door, and slowly crept through the house to find whoever had broken into his house. After a thorough search he realized that he was alone. *“Am I going crazy?”* he wondered. Trip grabbed his jacket and went outside to smoke a cigarette. Just as he was finishing it, Miles returned home. He noticed Trip on the front porch

clearly distressed. He sat down next to Trip and asked him what was wrong. Trip explained what had happened to Miles.

“I thought I was going to die,” Trip said finishing his story.

“That’s terrifying,” Miles said.

“I want to think I was dreaming, but it....it was too real. It wasn’t a dream,” said Trip.

“You know what?” Miles said, making a sudden realization, “Have you ever heard of sleep paralysis?”

“The fuck is that?” asked Trip.

“By the sounds of it, exactly what you just told me. People who’ve had it say they have trouble breathing, they can’t move, and they hallucinate because their minds are still in a dream state; but they are awake-” Miles explained.

“What causes it?” asked Trip.

“- and they say it’s probably why people think they’re abducted by aliens, they usually see monsters, but yours didn’t sound like a monster. You, uh, didn’t get probed did you?” said Miles with a grin on his face.

“Miles!” said Trip.

“What?” Miles replied.

“What causes it? Should I be worried?” asked Trip.

“Sleep deprivation,” Miles replied matter-of-factly, “And no, it’s actually pretty common and completely harmless. Except maybe shitting your pants in the process.”

“It felt so real...” said Trip.

Miles got up from his seat and assured Trip that he was ok. They both went inside and Trip continued on his law paper, desperate to forget what had happened during his nap. Besides being afraid to go to sleep again that night, Trip continued life normally for the next week. He went through his daily motions, rinsed and repeated, until his lifestyle robbed him of sleep yet again. Trip went to sleep one night, this time, on his back. He awoke as he had the first time he experienced sleep paralysis. Even though he was frightened again, he took comfort in the fact that it was not real. The figure leaned over his bed again, he began to whisper and this time Trip could hear him.

“You have crossed over. You are awakened,” the figure whispered.

“*What the fuck does that mean?*” Trip thought, unable to respond out loud.

“Believe,” the figure whispered as it stepped back from Trip’s bed.

Trip closed his eyes and went into a deep sleep. The next thing he heard was the sound of bells that had come to rob him of sleep yet again. “You are awakened,” Trip said to himself. He could not help but wonder what that had meant. Trip was not a religious person, but he wondered if he had experienced divine intervention, or a demon, or even aliens. He pushed those thoughts from his head for the time being, and went through the motions that made up his days.

Part 2:*I’ve Come to Talk with You Again.*

Instead of going to class the next day, Trip decided to stay home. The experience he had the previous night was stopping him from doing anything even remotely productive. He needed

to make some sense of it. He *knew* that his mind was playing tricks on him, yet he still could not shake the idea that there was greater meaning to his experience.

As much as he would have liked to, Trip could not call out of work that night. He jumped onto his register and entered his log-in information. Working at a supermarket may not be the most glamorous job, but it's easy enough, and helped to distract Trip from his experience the previous night, for while at least. A customer came through Trip's line, he'd never seen him before, but that was not uncommon at large supermarkets like his. The elderly man loaded up his groceries and greeted me as he finished. Trip's smile turned to horror as he heard a voice whisper to him.

"This one is awakened."

Trip stared at the man in awe for a moment. He was shuffling through his wallet trying to find his club card and didn't notice Trip's gaze. After finding his club card, the elderly man looked at Trip finally and an uncomfortable scowl overtook him. He scratched his balding head and said to Trip,

"You alright there kid?"

Trip snapped himself back to reality and apologized to the elderly man, citing his lack of sleep as an excuse. As Trip was finishing with the customer's items, he worked up the courage to ask the man about the voice he had heard, hoping he would have an answer.

"Excuse me sir, but can I ask you something?" asked Trip.

"Sure...what is it?" the old man replied skeptically.

"Are you....awakened?" asked Trip.

“Excuse me?” the old man replied, appearing offended, “What the hell is that supposed to mean?” he continued.

“Listen, I know this sounds crazy, but have you ever talked to a shadow man in your sleep?” Trip asked.

Trip finished with the customer’s items and read him his total. The old man was looking at Trip as though he was part of some kind of cult. He acknowledged neither the total of his order or Trip’s question for a moment; still trying to figure out if Trip was crazy or playing some kind of joke.

“Listen kid, I don’t know what any of that means, but whatever drugs you’ve been taking...well maybe it’s not a good idea to do them while you’re working,” said the elderly man.

“What? No. I haven’t been doing drugs sir, are you sure you haven’t heard any voices? Mine told me you were awakened,” replied Trip.

“I already told you, I haven’t the slightest idea what you’re talking about!” the man replied taking money out of his wallet, “Keep the change,” he continued as he grabbed his groceries and walked away hurriedly.

Trip looked around the store, now red in the face from embarrassment. Thankfully, it appeared that no one had seen him interrogate his the old man. “*Am I going crazy?*” he thought to himself. Trip found his manager after being sent on his break and asked to be sent home because he wasn’t feeling well. Reluctantly, his manager let him go. He then walked out to his car and drove home.

As he walked through the door, Miles and Elim were playing videogames with each other in the living room. They were surprised to see Trip back so soon, but they didn't care to ask why. After Trip had changed out of his work clothes and come back downstairs, he found his roommates waiting for him, television shut off.

“Trip, for the last fucking time. THE. BILLS. ARE. DUE. TOMORROW!” yelled Elim.

“Seriously dude, what gives? This has ever been an issue before,” Miles said, agreeing with Elim.

“They don't understand,” the same eerie voice whispered to Trip.

“Woah, Trip, you don't look so good,” said Miles.

Trip fainted. Miles and Elim looked at each other and shook their heads. They set Trip up on the living room couch and went off to their rooms to leave him in peace. As Trip slept, he was anything but at peace.

Trip found himself in his bedroom, it was dark and he was sitting upright on his bed. The shadow figure was standing in front of him. He was just standing there, waiting for Trip to make the first move. Tired of not understanding why the figure plagued him, he sprung up but was forced back into his seated position by a mysterious force.

“Ow! What the fuck was that?!” Trip yelled aloud, “Wait, I can talk?” he continued.

“That is right, dreams are the only way we can communicate at length,” said the shadow being in his eerie voice.

“What are you?” asked Trip.

“You would not understand exactly, think of me as....your guardian angel,” the shadow replied.

“You aren’t what I pictured a guardian angel looking like. Why are you here? Are you real?” asked Trip.

“Of course I’m real,” the shadow replied chuckling softly, “I’m here to unlock your full potential, not everyone is lucky enough to experience one of my kind,” the shadow continued.

“There are more of you?” Trip asked, astonished.

“Yes, many. Listen to me, our time together grows short,” said the shadow.

“Ok,” replied Trip.

“Listen when I speak to you, it will benefit you in the long run, I promise,” the shadow said.

“Why should I trust you? I don’t even know if you’re real!” said Trip.

“Then you will miss out on effortless riches and fame,” replied the shadow, “As for being real, I assure you, I am just as real as you are. I merely exist in a different world. Think of it as the dream world,” the shadow continued.

“But-“ Trip started.

“Farewell, until we meet again, and remember, sleep is the enemy,” the shadow interrupted.

The shadow vanished and left Trip by himself. He felt a sensation of extreme discomfort, as if someone was slapping him in the face. He heard mumbling around him, but couldn’t see

anyone. Suddenly, he woke up on his living room couch to Miles and Elim shouting at him. They both appeared concerned, but he could tell they were still upset with him.

“Did one of you slap me?” Trip asked groggily, feeling his face.

“Well you did just pass out, we were just trying to wake you up,” said Miles.

“Are you ok, dude?” asked Elim.

“Yea...yea I’m ok, I’m just really tired,” replied Trip.

“Well there’s a surprise, are you sure you’re ok?” asked Miles.

“Yes, you guys, I’m fine,” replied Trip.

“Good, now can you do us a favor?” asked Miles.

“Miles I swear to G-“ Trip started.

“Fuck, man do you want our power shut off?” asked Elim.

“You do not have to take this from them,” whispered the shadow’s voice.

“I swear, you’ve really lost it lately. We’re her for you man, but if you don’t want our help, then suck it up and move on!” said Elim.

“Oh screw you bot, I don’t have to take this from you,” said Trip turning to walk upstairs.

“Hey! We’re talking to you!” yelled Miles; grabbing Trip by the shoulders and turning him around.

Trip’s eyes grew wide with rage. Miles noticed the deep, black bags under them. Miles backed away; the look in Trip’s eyes were those of a madman. Never before had Miles, or Elim

for that matter, seen Trip in a state like that before. He looked as though he had transformed into some sort of monster.

“Teach these sheep a lesson,” whispered the shadow.

Trip heard the shadow’s voice and his hands curled into fists. He approached Miles, who was slowly backing away, and punched him right in the jaw. Miles fell to the ground as Elim jumped off the couch to subdue Trip, who at that point, had pounced upon Miles. Elim grabbed ahold of Trip and threw him into the next room. While Trip recovered and rose back to his feet, Elim helped Miles back to his. With blood trailing from his lower lip, Miles yelled,

”Have you gone crazy?!”

This caught Trip’s attention for a moment as he’d wondered the same thing earlier. Like a robot with a glitch in its system, Trip stood there for a moment computing his actions. That is, until his train of thought was interrupted by the shadow’s voice again.

“They’re just jealous of you!” the shadow whispered.

Trip shook himself out of his trance and found himself charging at his two roommates. Although, now that he had lost the element of surprise, he was no match for the two. As he charged, Elim managed to grab Trip in a full nelson and Miles, cracking his knuckles like a scene from a movie, taunted Trip.

“Payback’s a bitch, huh? Tell you what, why don’t you get some sleep for a change. Fucking psycho.”

Miles wound up and clocked Trip in the jaw and he fell back into Elim’s arms, out cold. Hoping to avoid any involvement with the authorities, and reluctant on turning in their friend and

roommate. The two decided to let Trip sleep it off and see how he was the next day, so they brought him up to his room.

Trip fell into a deep sleep. Darkness slowly turned into swirling colors and in turn, those colors turned into a dream. A wide desert of tan on either side, as far as the eye could see. A perfect, freshly paved road was in the center; it was one long and perfect line to who knows where. Trip found himself behind the wheel of his car once again, driving down this open road, his destination a mystery. He looked up at the sky, a deep baby blue, and not a single cloud in sight. He played with the radio and settled on a station playing *Mr. Sandman*. He rode on his path humming along to the song.

“Mister Sandman, bring me dream...”

His attention focused on a figure in the distance, and it was approaching fast. The figure was dark, and filled Trip with hatred. It was the shadow figure. Trip turned up the radio, stepped on the accelerator, and felt the car jolt forward. As the two grew closer and closer, the shadow tried to jump out of the way, but Trip’s car was too fast. He felt the car bounce twice as if he went too fast over a speedbump. The song still rang out in the background.

“Then tell me that my lonesome nights are over!”

Trip drove on, and feeling freer than he had in a while, kept going until those unforgiving, cheerful bells stole him from sleep once again.