

Dreams are what you wake up from

by Rosalyn Hurst

It was the unpredictability of the condition that was so frustrating. She began to notice it when she left home for university, although in retrospect she suspected it may have been evident earlier. Her mother viewed her with dispassionate eyes, saying she was definitely 'odd'. In fact 'odd' was as accurate a diagnosis as could be expected at that time.

She remembered the first manifestation after she left home. October, the lecture room packed with first year students. No one spoke, the silence of a waiting room, all looking around hoping for a known face, finding none.

The door crashed open and the lecturer swept in, one of the last to wear a full academic gown. And then a sinking feeling, it was his tie, old battered and yet prominently displayed, Hertford College, Oxford, she recognized it but did not know why.

He had started with, "It's crucially important that you are familiar with the work...."

The his papers crashed on the floor.

"Maltheus," she offered, "Thomas Maltheus."

The lecturer threw her a stony look, "Exactly," he snarled as he struggled to continue.

Later, leaving the room he paused near her.

“Did you really study at Hertford?” she asked.

The second significant incident disturbed her friends. They were walking back to their flat, a woman with a toddler, baby in a buggy were on the other side of the road. Traffic was heavy. She saw the toddler had slipped the mother’s hand and was moving to the edge of the pavement. She looked and just ran across the traffic and pushed the child clear. He fell back his head bleeding. Traffic screeched to a halt, mobile phones came out, some calling for help, many more taking photos, filming.

Her friends joined her. “You’re great, how did you know he was about to run into the road?”

“I dreamt it.”

Her quiet reply was met with silent meaningful glances.

Most of her dreams were trivial, leading to the annoying habit of interrupting people before they had finished speaking. Reprimanded at work she would mutter, “Sometimes I just can’t help it, I know what they were going to say.”

‘Nonetheless,’ she thought, ‘I never get advance notice of anything of super significance, the outcome of an election, a horse race, a death,’ though sometimes she had a ‘feeling’ of impending sadness.

“You have the gift,” an old gypsy woman had told her on a cold wet windy day in Hastings, but she had laughed and walked away

And this is how it all stopped.

It was the day she met the seer, the oracle, the diviner, the auger, the soothsayer, a man of great renown, who had advised presidents; dictators of every psychopathic tendency, stars of the cinema and TV or the podcast all searching for fame; the titans of the commercial world

seeking endless fortunes and he, this famous and revered man just held her hand. She could feel the power, the strength, and great compassion flowing through her.

“You have the gift,” he had said, gently quietly, with a look of great sadness, “It is but a bud just waiting for you to grow it.”

For the first time someone understood, knew of her struggles to know the future but not enough to stop something, an opportunity to disentangle her dreams. But why was he so sad, it was the face, the touch of a man about to tell her of the death of someone dear to her?

“Be warned,” he had continued, “this gift is more of a curse than a blessing. What you will see is the nightmares, the dreadful deeds people have done and who want to know if they will ever escape punishment, you will see those plotting murder, divorce and cruelty and worst of all you all see the tragedy about to befall. You will dread the coming night, you will try to keep awake, avoid the dreams, so rarely of good fortune, and then the dawn, the realisation that the mechanics of the universe are outside your control.”

She looked into those kindly eyes, ‘Can I give my gift back, can I be free?’ she thought, and he understood, turned and left, taking with him her little bud, her faint powers and leaving the promise of peaceful dreams that she could leave behind, forgotten, never recalled.