

Twimare

All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream.

Edgar Allan Poe

“I’m going to knock again.” *Knockkanocckk*. Gunney shouted her whisper.

“Nobody’s here. Pretty obvious. No lights on. No sounds except the wind.” Beja commented in a friendly, self-deprecating manner through her red and white face mask. Beja always was skitter headed when it came to just walking up to some old farmhouse or stable and potentially finding something scary versus something cool, like a really valuable barn find. The whole I wonder what’s behind Door Number One question went volatile in her head. She always believed that to tempt the universe with thoughts of randomness could deliver up an answer you don’t want. So don’t ask in your head. And besides, she really didn’t like the smells of old damp barn wood mixed with horse poop.

A couple more knocks on the weather-beaten door were a wood mantra recitation of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

The unlubricated door handle screeched a greeting while the door hinges slowly commented their displeasure at having to be awakened. They let it be known with a concerted kcccrwweeeek.

“Is there something I can do for you? You look lost.” The old woman with the face of many memories inquired. She was an odd sort. A most curious diminutive turquoise fabric cowboy style hat sat upon the top of her head. Her chest was bejeweled and accessorized with sparkly shiny stuff of all different sorts. The outfit was complete with her large lens tortoise shell

glasses. What was most unusual though was the pool chemical – dish detergent smell that bounced out the opened door. *Must be an old person's air freshener* Gunney thought.

“Well, uh, yes you can. We were wondering if you have anything you might want to maybe sell? Some items you don't need anymore? Not trying to suggest anything. We travel around to interesting country places and try to find pleasant to the eye items to decorate our house with.” A white lie from Gunney's mouth jumped out. It flippity flopped and hopped around on the cracked planks of the door landing. A white lie begs to be colored in. She painted this one grey.

“Oh my what an interesting question. I think I might have some things you would be interested in. We don't get many visitors out here and if you make me a good offer, I just might make something yours and not mine. Why don't you come in and have a look around?” The blue hatted lady commented.

Gunney and Beja toured from room to room. The farmhouse was filled with all kinds of intricate doodads, colorful chachkas, and assorted antiquated memorabilia of different shapes and sizes. It had more shelves than an old British library. All that was missing was a ladder to reach the top offerings.

“Beja, check this out. What the heck is it?” Gunney queried Beja hoping for some luminary hints as to the identity of the shiny golden-bronze bowl with two partially cloth covered wooden spindle mallets resting inside of it.

“Dunno. Some kind of mixing bowl to make food in?”

“Heavens no my dear girl. That is something very special. It's a gold Tibetan singing bowl. A Chinese woman from Wuhan gave it to us. Isn't that right sis?” The cowboy hat lady spoke to her slightly shorter sister who had silently just joined them.

“Yes, yes. I almost remember something about it. It has an odd inscription on the outside.” And the last word from the shorter sister who also wore a blue hat drew all eight floating eyes to read the writing in silent unison.

“It looks like *Dector Pardee Ga*. But I don’t know what that means. Are those even words?” Gunney rhetorically asked.

“Sis, I recall now. Ummmm, I think you” Her voice trailed off like a pleasant whistle with interspersed quietness as she picked up both of the mallets and used them to make the bowl serenade the audience of four. The sound was a harmonic tonal of deep and higher pitched vibrations. As she playfully malleted the bowl faster and faster it was as though time had ceased to exist. A *Dector Pardee Ga* sound sang out from the vessel. It droned on and the odor and taste of bitterness of the stale air blended with the enamoring harmonics and expanded throughout the room of antiquities. A goulash of the senses.

Gunney saw some moving bright lights and she tried to close her eyes but the sharp, penetrating, blazing luminescence would not allow her to close her lids. Her consciousness faded as she resonated with the soothing loving vibrations.

“Would you like some tea? You look a bit flustered my dear.” The old lady compassionately interrupted Gunney’s trance.

“Huh? Ah, yes, I guess.” Gunney responded in a dazed, blinking eye sort of way. She looked around the room and the lady’s sister and Beja were nowhere to be seen. It was just her and the blue hatted senescent cowgirl.

“It’s right over there on the small ironwood table. Here, let me get it for you.”

Gunney tried to raise her hand to grasp the glass teacup but the old lady beat her to it. She handed the warm cup to her visitor.

She took a dainty teacup pinky extended sip and felt pleasantly cozy, toasty all over. Like sinking into a-mile-deep heated down comforter. She closed her eyes to savor the velvety cushiness and the slightly bitter taste of the tea.

Outside of the windowed hospital room were murmurs and glances. “I wish I had better news for you. But you know this whole Covid thing is just extremely unpredictable. Some of our patients have only minor symptoms but your daughter in such crisis distress I recommend keeping her in the induced coma. We can change the medications so that we limit the potential side effects. She’s already been on this protocol for almost two weeks. I don’t mean to alarm you but it is a bit of a roll of the dice. And we’re very good here at rolling winning numbers.” The good doctor Pardeega shared with Gunney’s mom, Beata. It was a teary eyes welling up grim moment.

“So many interesting items. Those look like dice. Weird markings though.” Gunney shared with the grande dame.

“That’s exactly what they are. They’re Tibetan divination dice. Rumor has it that the great sage Nyatri Tsenpo once played the game of Sho with them. Care to toss them to see the future?” The sage words musically played to Gunney’s ears.

“Games of chance are not my thing. But hey, what’s that over there?”

“Is she comfortable? Is she in pain?” Beata concerningly asked with more wrinkles on her brow than an old cotton shirt in the hamper.

“She’s not in pain. We’ve been cycling analgesics and sedatives, as I mentioned. Just a short time ago we cycled in some opioids to help make sure she feels relaxed and comfortable. And we monitor her bodily state to see if she is tensing up or shaking.” Pardeega answered.

“How long will she be like this? I’ve heard of people being out being in a coma for months on ventilators.” She nervously asked.

“No longer than she needs to be. I know you realize we do our best to make sure we can wean them off of the whole mechanical support aspects of the treatment as soon as we can. First we’re going after the Covid symptoms though. One step at a time. Her temperature spiked a few degrees recently and we need to watch that closely.” The doctor went on a bit.

Gunney felt sweaty and had a fleeting thought of her mom speaking with her. “I think you are a big girl and it’s time to wean you off.”

“I promise you we’ll only have her stay as long as absolutely necessary. Not to be crass but the sooner we have her well, all the better. We free up a bed by having her get out of the Twilight Zone.” A crass but very true statement.

“Please do stay a while and look around. I think you’ll find something, or maybe somethings that catch your fancy.” The old woman stated.

“I think I’ll do just that. It really is a very inviting home.” Gunney offered up.

“Well, you know what they say, home is where the mind is.” Her hostess shared.

Gunney thought to herself that wasn’t right. Home is where the heart is not where the mind is.

“That would be most delightful. I don’t remember having you stay here very often. It’s nice to have company in this lonely, isolated house.” A smile beamed from the blue clad lady.

“You are very kind. Is it getting warm in here or is it just me?” Gunney politely asked.

“I’m so sorry. The heater acts up once in a while. I try to keep it all nice and toasty but maybe it went a little too high. Let me see if I can adjust it.”

“Do you like the clock? It’s a very strange piece. Some eclectic artist put that contrivance together.” She shared with Gunney.

Gunney was fascinated by the clock or whatever it was. So odd. There were no numbers, just blurry areas with a small *o* next to them. The outside frame had colored tubes and wires going to nowhere. Just hanging off the fixture. She wondered *how the crap does anyone tell time with that thing?* She silently questioned the design rationale.

The doctor just kept trotting out his monologue. “But there is no crystal ball here. We’re still trying to get our minds wrapped around all the symptoms and side effects of the virus. It’s a fast gallop wild horse ride and we try not to get knocked off by the branches.”

“Oh that’s a crystal ball. Don’t stare too long at it. My sister claims it really does tell the future. Not like the dice. She thinks she sees visions in it.”

“Let me take a look. I’ll take that dare.” Gunney confidently stated.

Gunney stared into the innermost twisty frosty markings of the orb. She saw herself hugging the back of a grand white stallion that was galloping through the dark, foreboding woods. The loud snorts choreographed with the steady rhythmic breathing of her steed.

“We’ll do our best and my suggestion is to not come here too often. She is in isolation so not much you can do. We’ll let you know if there are any changes in her condition. Good or bad. Okay? Will that work for you? I have your phone number in my phone. We’ve been making a habit of creating the best communication we can for folks like you. It’s an unfortunate state of affairs but for now it’s the best we can do.” Pardeega delivered a sympathetic, Grey’s Anatomy soliloquy.

A wave of loneliness swept over Gunney’s being. Not something you can put a needle in. Just a gentle riptide rush of being alone even though she was in a lovely house with a charming old lady. She thought she was lucky to have such an interesting, engaging guide.

“I can’t thank you enough Doctor. I don’t know what I would do without you as a lifeline.” She responded with glazed over Georgia peach honey sweetness congeniality.

“I don’t know your spiritual beliefs and they are your own of course. If I may suggest for your consideration. Sometimes reaching out to something bigger than ourselves can be tremendously helpful. Does that make sense?” He segued to a brighter space of hope.

“I don’t think it’s wise for you to stand on that chair to reach the old top shelf holy books. You could fall and hurt yourself.” She cautioned Gunney.

“I’ll be fine. Love old religious books. I’m a Baptist myself. Although sometimes I wonder. How much is real, surreal, or unreal.” She shared as she outstretched her arms and placed her fingers on an ancient, brown leather-bound King James bible.

“It’s funny you mention that. We still have our prayer group every first day of the week, I’ll have you know. My bible thumping Baptist upbringing is still the largest part of me. We pray for everyone. And then we offer up sprayers to loved ones in need.” She stated with soulful conviction.

“Very good Ms. Williams. My prayers will be with yours. Better times are ahead. I would give you a hug but our protocols don’t allow any contact. The best I can do is bid you adieu and call you if anything changes.” He shared as they walked away from the suite.

As she touched the binding she felt comforted with an overwhelming sensation of compassionate good will. The scent of the dusty tome tendrilled up through her nose and into her head. Little heavenly sprinkles that surfed the air like so many dandelion flyers.

“Don’t fall, my dear. We’re pretty far from the doctor out here.”

“Ma’am, who are all these people in this room?” Gunney politely asked about the small group of people that had gathered in the woman’s seasoned abode.

“There just some friends that visit every once in a while. They just show up. I’m not quite sure why they’re here. But they do sound lovely with the song of the bowl. Don’t they?”

Gunney glanced around the room and the old lady was stirring music in the singing bowl. A wonderful inspiring harmony saturated the room with its goodly soundliness.

Mrs. Williams belatedly made her way to the elevator. She stood in a daze in front of the cold steel doors. She had forgotten to press the down button. A bespeckled, azure suited Blue

Sky old lady volunteer walked up to her and asked if she was alright. Mrs. Williams was in a space of blanked out time.

“Let me press the button for you. Going down?” the quaint old lady inquired.

Mrs. Williams nodded and looked at the delightful spirit. She was an adult version of a candy striper. Blue hat, blue uniform, name tag, and an assortment of cheery, achievement lapel pins. The outfit was accessorized with a light blue face mask. A very wonderful uplifting presence.

“That would be nice. Thank you. I was lost in thought. My daughter.”

“Covid?” The old lady asked.

“Unfortunately. She’s in a medical coma. We’re not sure when she’ll come out of it. It’s up to God to deliver her back to us.” Mrs. Williams shared her soulful thoughts.

“Oh yes, my dear. The whole pandemic thing is most worrisome. My girls here do the best we can to comfort the folks who have it the worst. I must share with you it’s a challenge. We have to get all dressed up in protective clothing and even wear face shields. We look like the senior moms from Mars.” The blue suited volunteer snickered at her own comment. How true. When suited up they looked like otherworldly beings.

“It’s so nice of you to help out here. How blessed we are to have a two-legged angel such as you.” Mrs. Williams commented.

“I don’t think we’re all that divine, but we do our best to be genuinely smiley and helpful.”

“May I ask a favor of you? It would mean so much to me.”

“How may I help you?”

“My daughter is Gunney Williams. Could you look in on her every once in a while? Your energy is so positive and sunny. I think that by you just going by her bed it would be helpful.”

“That would make you Mrs. Williams. I frequently do look in on your daughter already. A very beautiful girl. Even though I’m not supposed to, I stroke her hair and pray for her. Quiet prayer. I ask God to protect and guide her.”

“You truly are an angel. If you’ll forgive me, I need to get going home.”

“God bless you and keep you in his love.” The old woman shared.

Mrs. Williams exited through the sliding glass doors and walked across the parking lot to her Jeep. She saw that Gunney’s friend, Beja, was waiting next to the car door. She had a red and white bandana over her nose and mouth.

“Hi Beja. Waiting for me?”

“Yes, and Mrs. Williams, I’m gonna breeze by Gunney’s room and just think good thoughts. Are you okay with that?” Beja politely asked.

“How very thoughtful. That would be nice. We’ll take all the blessed wishes we can be given. What’s that in your hands”

“It was the last thing we bought when we were barn hunting. It’s a Tibetan Singing bowl. I can’t take it into the hospital so could you take it home for her? But hey, listen to this.” With that last word Beja put the bowl on the hood of the car and stirred up the lovely tones of the metal.

Mrs. Williams double clicked her fob and the Jeep lights blinked on and off. She was in a bit of a rush to get home and while she listened to the call of the bowl she opened her door and got in.

At that very moment, the Blue Sky volunteer that Mrs. Williams chatted with walked by. She was humming a tune that sounded like, *there by the grace of God.*

Gunney's eyes twitched as she looked at the old lady who was humming a song. Her blue hatted acquaintance asked if she would like to listen to an old song, Jeepster. The one with the lyrics *I'm a Jeepster for your love*. Gunney blinked once and fell into a dreamless slumber.

Gunney could not have screamed any louder as she awoke shaking at the thought of the crazy mishmashed dreams. A metal bowl, an old farmhouse, an old lady dressed in blue, and the most bizarre collectibles all swirling around in her head.

Her mother rushed into the darkened room to see if Gunney was alright. She comfortingly called out to her daughter. "Are you alright? Bad dreams?"

"I had the most random, phantasm dreams. I'm all sweaty. I'm so glad I woke up. I dreamed I had Covid. It was horrible. I was in an out of my dreams. I was in a hospital bed with all kinds of tubes and wires stuck into me. And I couldn't move!" Gunney was shaking like a dry oak leaf in the wind.

"Oh you poor girl! You did catch the virus though." Mrs. Williams shared with her daughter.

"I did?" Gunney quizzically asked.

"Yes. Here let me turn on the light and let's talk to calm you down." Her mom turned on the light to change the shattered, frightening ambience.

Gunney just wide-eyed stared at her mother and with beads of salty sweat running down her scrunched forehead into her eyes. She asked, "Mom? Why are you wearing those glasses and a blue uniform and hat? Why are you wearing that here, in the house?"

"It's what I always wear when I'm working. Here's some water and a sedative to calm you down. Would you like me to adjust your bed?"

The End