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Escape the Lightning

By Hayden Postin

I was in a beautiful field of flowers, looking up at a fast-moving sky. Every step I took seemed to make the flowers shine brighter, and the world more luminescent. There were no signs of animals or humans in the surrounding area, it was only me in this world.

I had seen this world before in a previous dream, so I can only assume that this is another one. Looking around, it seemed much too peaceful, like this beauty couldn't be preserved for long. It was melancholic, because I already knew what was going to happen next, just like last time.

As I thought, all of the flowers began to wilt and the peaceful world I saw had dissipated. The sky turned red and the clouds darkened, with a painful screeching noise resonating throughout. I held my ears in pain only to feel a liquid running through my palms.

Blood....

The red liquid dripped from my hands to the ground and began forming a stream growing larger and larger in length and width. It flowed far into the distance, and I could tell it was trying to lead me to something. I took the bait, and followed the stream of blood for what felt like an eternity.

As I continued to walk the land around me became much more eerie. The previously wilted flowers around me were now burning, and I could see scraps of bloody wood hidden in

the grass. The fast moving sky started to thunder, with lightning razing the land all around me. I suddenly wasn't able to move, and the flames spread to form a circle around me.

There was then a flash of light and everything went black. I felt warm and nice, with the soothing sound of rain in the background. There was a calm, soothing aura in the air, and I felt absolute peace.

The place I found myself in after that extreme event was...my bed. I was sweating profusely from that intense experience, enough to where if anyone came in it would look like I peed myself in my sleep.

Just like last time.

I quickly jumped out of bed and began to change the bed sheets. I wished I had a roommate or family member to help me do this, but I unfortunately lived alone. I couldn't ask neighbors to help me either because I don't have any.

I hated the bustle of city life and found myself at a younger age wishing I could live in a small house in the middle of a forest, so I did. Surrounded by nature with the closest store being 15 miles down the road, I lived my peaceful life unperturbed in this forest where no one could bother me.

My parents had told me this was a bad idea, saying that if something happens to me, no one will be able to reach me. However, I believe that if something bad were to happen to me, it would all be based on fate. As such, it doesn't matter whether I'm in the forest or under 24/7 protection, if I'm destined to die then I'll die.

Also this is my parent's old house after all, so I don't think they have room to talk.

I dragged the wet bedsheets down the stairs to the washer. I put the sheets inside and attempted to turn on the washer, but it didn't work. This is a reoccurring problem, and usually a couple of kicks get it to start working.

Facing the uncooperative washing machine, I knew my battle with this appliance would yet again be the highlight of my day. I kicked it and pressed the start button...but it failed. I repeated this process at least ten more times only for it to continue to not work. I didn't feel like washing it by hand, which meant the only solution would be to call for someone to fix it.

I lazily left the tainted bed sheets in the washer as I heard the rumble of thunder in the background. Ignoring it, I turned on the TV to listen to the news. I enjoyed watching the news because usually all the problems surrounding the world didn't apply to me out here in the forest.

"A severe thunderstorm is encompassing all of Los Angeles and Alhambra. Evacuate to your buildings and DO NOT go outside. There will be 60 mph winds, possible hail, and plenty of...."

I turned off the TV. I only watched the news so because it didn't apply to me, and it seemed this storm was hitting this forest, no worries no problems.

Feeling bored because there was nothing to watch, I decided to just go back to bed without my bed sheets. Hopefully the storm will have passed by the time I wake up, and I can resume my daily routine.

I jumped in bed and closed my eyes, trying to fall back asleep. But every time I closed my eyes the scenery I had in my dream kept appearing.

It must be happening soon...but what does it mean?

This type of thing had happened once before, me having an extremely weird dream that stays fresh in my head until one day it just...stops. The last time it happened I was in a field of flowers, just like in my most recent one.

It was beautiful, and I frolicked around enjoying the calm vibe, until the flowers began to wilt and the sky began to turn red. My head began ringing, and each time it throbbed a shockwave burst from my feet, cracking the ground around me. Eventually the ground cracked open completely into a large canyon, and I fell deep within it. When I looked down, I saw a plethora of spikes at the bottom, and right before I was about to hit them I woke up.

The interesting thing about this dream was that it was recurring, every time I fell asleep for the next couple nights. A replay of that dream happened, I couldn't avoid it, or change anything. I just kept falling into the abyss over and over.

Due to the severe lack of sleep I was getting, I began getting paranoid and wanted to stay as far away from the ground as possible. So one day, I asked my parents if I could take their jet on a round-trip around the country to "gain experience". Overjoyed, they thought I was finally coming into my own, but in truth I just wanted to stay off the ground for as long as possible.

I got on the jet and had someone fly me all the way to Colorado before stopping for gas and turning back. When I landed, there was a big event on the news talking about a 9.2 magnitude earthquake that hit LA. The ground opened completely and many people died. When I came back to my house, it had crumbled completely with almost all of my belongings being destroyed.

I freaked out for many different reasons but I also had one underlying thought.

What would have happened if I didn't have that dream?

If I didn't have that dream, I most likely would have died in my house trapped underneath a bunch of rubble. If I didn't die from that, I most likely would have been buried alive, unable to escape, and with no one to call for help.

This is just a hunch, but I believe that was a prophetic dream. A phenomenon only thought to appear in the Bible, happened to me, and saved my life. Funnily enough, I'm an atheist, and only read the Bible because I was forced to by my parents.

They weren't religious or anything, but thought that if I was "more in touch with God" I would actually do something with my life...obviously it didn't work.

But enough about my unimportant past, I didn't want to have to deal with any strokes of death, so sooner rather than later I would have to decipher what my dream meant.

As I was contemplating this, the thunder in the background boomed louder than before, and I heard the pelting of rain all around my wooden cottage.

How annoying...I'm trying to think here!

There were a couple things of note in my dream.

First: The blood that turned into a stream.

When the sky turned dark and my ears began to bleed, the blood formed a river. It felt like it was leading up to something. Like that was the prelude of the things to come. It growing larger in length endlessly was also concerning, but I'm not sure what that means.

Second: The flames spreading all around me.

The flames had formed a circle around me in the dream, and had spread to all of the flowers-turned-wilted in the area. The circle of flames felt sentient, like it's entire purpose was to trap me there. It was...suffocating, like I was being crushed under an unimaginable weight.

Third: The box and the flash.

At the end of the dream I was trapped in an invisible box, and then in an instant I was completely enveloped in a flash of light. That last event is what caused me to wake up.

From compiling all of this information my hypothesis is as such: I am going to be trapped in what I assume to be my house under a bunch of rubble. The signal for this to happen is either a loss of hearing from something that happens to my ear, or a type of liquid flowing? Finally, if everything goes according to fate, when I'm trapped I will be surrounded by flames, and my death will be caused by an explosion.

It seems like I can simply avoid this predicament by staying out of my house, but the problem is that it's storming outside, and I'm surrounded by trees. Trees are perfect targets for lighting strikes, and I don't particularly feel like dying from a fallen tree.

As if responding to me, the thunder boomed ever louder in the sky, like a belligerent god throwing a tantrum. I could hear the rain that was pelting my house slowly start making a cracking sound, signaling that the rain was now turning into hail.

It really is storming out there.

Even without the dream, the sound that hail makes when it hits wood would make it impossible to sleep. With that, it might be better to stay awake so I could leave the house as fast as humanly possible.

I went back downstairs and began making some cereal. I poured the Cinnamon Toast Crunch in the bowl along with the milk, and started eating it while standing.

****BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM****

The shockwave was so sudden it made me drop my cereal and shattered the bowl. It wasn't just thunder that time, it sounded like a mini-earthquake.

I turned right and looked out the kitchen window to see a fallen tree, completely blocking my front door and windows. What's worse was the tree was aflame, that's when I realized.

The dream wasn't talking about the far future, it was talking about the present! The coming of rain, and the loud boom must be what triggered the event!

The dream partially makes sense now, the boom was so loud that it made me drop the bowl and shatter it. In the dream, it started out as my eardrums bursting, and blood dripping from my ears.

I needed to get out of the house posthaste. I ran over to the door and attempted to kick it open, hoping stupidly I could somehow move the giant tree in front of it with willpower. Alas, it didn't work, and instead I just mildly hurt my foot from kicking the door too hard.

I looked out the windows once more to see if I could climb out, but the flames spreading from the tree were preventing me from doing so.

I don't have a back door, the front door is the only entrance and exit to this house. The only other option of escape would be to jump out my second-floor window, but that would certainly mean breaking my bones, so that's a no.

You would think I would be able to, however I learned from my father who was once a firefighter before he had me, that there was a certain way you had to jump or you would certainly break your bones. I, again, did not pay attention to anything my father had to say when I was younger, so I have no idea on the correct way to jump.

While I was spending time pondering this, the fire had begun to spread throughout the house, and the living room was engulfed in flames.

Of course, the rain had to be replaced with hail right before this happened...

My thoughts slowly drifted to the dream. In the dream, I was trapped in a circle of flames, and then a small box with a bright flash. I can now assume that if I do nothing, I'll be trapped in the small area with no room, and another flash of lightning will hit me or the house.

I racked my brain thinking of ways to get out of the house. I could tell I had about three minutes before everything was engulfed in flames, resulting in my certain and painful death.

The only idea I can think of is to break out of the house. It's basically a two-story wooden cabin, but I would still need a weapon to actually break out...which I unfortunately don't have in this house.

The only thing I can think of that closely resembles a weapon is one of the kitchen knives, but I doubt any of those would break through wood. Just to make an attempt I looked over to the kitchen...to see half of it up in flames.

Alright then.

That was probably God's sign of telling me that there was nothing over there.

There has to have been *one* memory, *one* interaction with someone or something that could help me out of this situation. The fire was spreading to my location, whether I had time to think or not.

I had two options, I could either go upstairs and essentially trap myself. Or I could go to my dad's study and give myself a little more time, because the door in my dad's study is the only thing in this house that isn't wooden, and it's also the only thing in the house besides the front door that has a lock on it.

I hurriedly ran into my dad's study and caught my breath, which was hard to do because of the fire. I leaned on his desk and tried to once again regain my thoughts.

My attention then turned toward a safe behind my dad's chair. I had rarely gone into my dad's study as there wasn't a need to before now, it also filled me with not-so-fond memories so I tended to stay away from it.

I walked up close to the safe and examined it. There was an alphanumeric code on the side, and a small screen that said "**Locked**". It was quite a large safe, it was almost as wide as the desk and I'm surprised I didn't notice it until now.

Wait...I remember this safe!

It was my dad's cherished fire axe that he used to save my mom, and it was how they first met. If I can break this safe, I can actually acquire a tool that will get me out of here.

Now what is the code?

I input my birthday.

****Incorrect****

I input both my mother and father's birthdays.

****Incorrect****

I input their anniversary date.

****Incorrect****

****One Attempt Remaining****

What the hell?! Is this safe actually an iPhone or something, what'll happen if I get it wrong one more time?!

I had no idea what it could possibly be. It made me regret not spending more time with my parents.

But...wait, how do I know there's a fire axe in there then?

I had to have watched him put in there for me to actually remember, I wouldn't have if he just told me.

It was getting harder and harder to breathe, I was running out of time. The smoke was setting in the room and it was getting much hotter.

My legs were getting weaker and I had to sit down just to remain conscious. I looked toward the door I had gone through previously, anything that was left of my house past that point was in flames, and this room along with myself would soon meet the same fate.

I could feel my strength leaving me, I didn't live that great of a life anyway. I spent it disobeying my parents and following my "dreams" that I got too lazy to fulfill. I wallowed in self-pity and blamed everyone except myself, and to escape from the truthful words of my peers and family I secluded myself in a house pre-paid for by my parents.

I hadn't done a single thing worthwhile in my life, so what's even the point of trying to escape an inescapable situation. In my next...life...I'll definitely...spend...more...time...with...

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"Son! Come here, I have to show you something."

"Ughhhh, what is it dad? You interrupted my game!"

"You and those games! You're 23 and you still haven't found a job! Are you sure living in this house will help you get on your feet?"

"How many times do I have to tell you dad? Every time I try to do something, everyone always gets on my back! Peace and quiet will help me refocus and get back on my feet."

"Regardless, take a look at this safe."

He pressed a combination of buttons and the safe opened to reveal a blue fire axe.

“This is one of my most cherished possessions son...this was the axe that saved your mother from an apartment fire, and where we first met.”

“So?”

“If you’re ever in a tough situation, I’m sure this axe will look out for you, just as it did for me.”

“I don’t know what tough situation I would need an axe for but thanks I guess.”

“The combination to the safe is 112587. November 25th, 1987. The day I saved your mother’s life, and she changed mine. Despite how it seems, I love you son.”

“Mhm.”

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“I’m not going to die like this!”

I sprung up in the chair, and my foolhardy exclamation made me cough profusely. Maybe it was because I was near-death or delirious, but something in my brain had activated and reminded me of something from the past. Maybe my life had flashed before my eyes, regardless I wasn’t going to waste this chance.

The fire had spread to almost cover the desk, the only things left in the room that weren’t aflame was the chair, me, and the safe.

“112587!” I yelled as I input the combination.

“Unlocked.”

I heard some whirring and then a soft click, and the safe door was slightly propped open. I opened the safe in a hurry and took out the fire axe. I held it firmly in my arms and started hacking at the wall behind the safe.

“Haaaaaaaargh!”

I swung and swung with all of my might, until I began to see the outside. This further strengthened my resolve and continued swinging with heightened fervor. After a couple more swings I was finally able to make a hole big enough to squeeze free.

“Yes! I did it!” I exclaimed once I tasted fresh air.

But as I said that, I was suddenly blown forward by something behind me, and everything faded to black.

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The first thing I heard when I woke up was the sound of a beep repeatedly playing in my head. It was hard to breathe and I felt like I was constricted.

I opened my eyes to see myself wrapped in bandages, laying on a bed with the sun shining right in my eyes. I was in a hospital.

As I was attempting to sit up, a nurse came in the room and dropped her clipboard.

“H-He’s awake! Come quick, he’s awake!”

The nurse called for someone and I saw both of my parents walk in. My mother sprinted toward me and hugged me, and my dad started tearing up.

“Mom...Dad, what happened?”

“You were found outside your house covered in burns and bruises. It seemed like lightning struck your house and caused an explosion inside, you’re lucky you got out when you did or it would have been over.”

“H-How did someone find me? I’m in a cabin in the middle of the woods.”

“It seems like a group of forest rangers were having a retreat near you. They were also caught unaware by the storm and were seeking shelter, they came upon your house and found you lying in the dirt. You were extremely lucky, son. And we’re so happy you’re ok.”

He came over and hugged me. I couldn’t hold back my tears any longer.

I began crying my heart out while hugging my parents. I told them about my dreams and how I’ve been living life. I told them how scared I was going through it, and I told them how I feel about them and myself.

“Mom...Dad...I’m sorry, for everything. I’ll change, I’ll stop being lazy. I was ready to accept death back there but a memory of you saved me by giving me the answer I need. I’ve been living life feeling apathetic, barely showing any emotion, just going with the flow. I kept everything inside for so long, but in truth I was scared! I promise I’ll change, and make you guys proud that I lived!”

“Honey, even if you were the worst person imaginable we would still be proud of you. You can change at your own pace, and we’ll be there every step of the way.”

“We’ll always be by your side son, just focus on recovery for now, then you can worry about change.”

“Mom, dad, thank you so much. I promise I won’t let you down.”

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After my heartfelt reunion, I felt very tired due to the energy spent crying, and they left so I could rest. When I fell asleep, I was met with a surprising sight.

The dream world that showed me what the future entailed was all around me, The sky was red, flowers wilted, with debris burning all around me. However, it was a bit different.

I looked over and saw myself, trapped in a circle of fire. He stood there with a blank expression on his face as he got trapped in the box.

“No! You gotta get out of there! I’ll save you!”

I ran and ran but I never got any closer, and suddenly the flames burned even brighter and impaired my vision.

“No.” A voice said in my head.

“*You* have to leave. I don’t need saving, you’ve moved on. Prove your words and make sure someone like me never returns.”

Even though I couldn’t see beyond the flames I could still sense what his face looked like. Tired, blank, and apathetic.

“Now go. There’s a beautiful world out there, ready for your debut. Shed your past self and continue walking forward.”

Those were his last words as the lightning struck, making him, along with the flames and debris disappear. I turned around and saw the sky in front of me was blue, with flowers blooming beautifully. I looked back, but the red sky behind me had not changed.

“I’ll keep moving forward, and no longer look back. I’ll keep my promise to my parents, and to you.”

With that last statement, I took my first step into a new beginning.

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