

The Shadow Of Eloïse

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A story by Andréa Nebel

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Let me introduce myself. My name is David Wilker and I am a psychologist. You might have read my article in Psychology Today about 'dysthymia' and its effect on the sufferer's relationships...? Well, most likely you have never heard of me before....

Let me tell you my story: I had a successful practice. My private office crowned the seventh floor in one of the new fashionable buildings on the East side of the city, with a nice view over Tower Bridge. I surely could not complain about any lack of patients. Indeed business was blooming. My clientele was consisting of the average; frustrated housewives, desperate husbands, clerks, business men and women that did not seem to get ahead in their career... yes the general insecurities, phobias, the great life crisis... their stories seemed the same after a while. I heard them too many times and seldom I found them very interesting. But I always had this ability to help people and to give them good advise and reflective ideas. Thus my job was easy enough to just give them the common symtoms that I could read about in my books.

My job paid well and the clients seemed satisfied. My life indeed was pleasantly dull and content, I owned a nice apartment, my precious dark-green BMW and I had a good social life. Yet, I was bored, both in my private life and in my profession. I indeed longed for more challenging and exciting cases that could intrigue my knowledge and curiosity.

And then came Eloise.

One early afternoon, I had just returned to my office after I attended some casual business, my assistant Kathy informed me about a new patient that had booked an appointment for this very afternoon at 3 pm. I went into my office to catch up on some paper work, and 15 minutes later Kathy called in to let me know that the new patient, a miss Eloise Karlow, had arrived. I asked her to send her in.

She caught my eye at once, as soon as she walked through the door. She was tall and slim, clad in tight jeans and a long tight white shirt, she was lean and quite strong in appearance. I suspected she was a dancer or athlete of some kind. Her hair was dark and long and she had a beautifully sculptured face. Yet her complexion was pale, her grey eyes sunken in deep shadows. It was obvious that she was troubled and had not enjoyed a good night sleep for a while. I asked her to take a seat in one of the brown chairs in front of my desk. Quietly she sat with her legs crossed over while I filled in the personal details that she had given Kathy outside, into my patient file on my computer. At last, I looked up, introduced myself properly and said "please, what can I do for you".

Eloise hesitated, paused, even smiled a little before she told me of her problem. She had re-occurring nightmares, she admitted, and they started to concern her. "Please go on " I said, "what do you dream about?" She continued and told me that almost every night in her dreams a shadow appeared, a figure, a shape without face. A shadow that would just appear and stand there, observe her. The first times, after she became aware of this presence in her dreams, the shadow was something she could make out in the distance. Yet lately the unknown shape appeared closer, frightening her, waking her in the middle of the night. Observing this presence in every dream is frightening her and alarming her that something is wrong.

I listened carefully until she had finished her story. I made some notes in my journal in front of me. It appeared Eloise took those dreams very seriously. After a little pause I offered her a glass of water. And then I answered her. "Dreams like that are not at all unusual, they may indicate our state of mind, our feelings and our experiences, hidden desires and fears."

I explained to her that the shadows we often see in our dreams are our own hidden aspects, perhaps aspects we are too ashamed to admit to ourselves. "Indeed they could be hidden talents", I said optimistically, "thus the shadow may be a part of yourself,

something you have got to uncover and understand." I told her we should have several therapy sessions in which we can talk a little about her life experiences to analyse her feelings. I assured her that she had nothing to be alarmed about.

She looked at me, a little surprised and perhaps a little unsure. Perhaps it was not the answer she was expecting. But she accepted my response and we scheduled a new session the following week.

Not often do I take my work home with me. However that evening after I had my dinner and sat down to watch the news, my mind wandered back to the new patient I had seen. There was something about her. Something unusual, something disturbing, something intriguing. Indeed I had to take out my book about Jungian dream-analysis to freshen up a bit about the subject. I was looking forward to our new session.

The week passed swiftly with my usual clientele, the usual everyday complains about living in a hectic frustrating urban society. Friday morning, after my coffee break, it was time for Eloise. The lift arrived, the door opened and she walked in. Strong and elegant, clad in a dark top and jeans that covered her high-heel black boots. Her long hair was tied back into a pony tail. She took off her sunglasses and put them into her black leather bag. Even with all her cover-up creams, I could see that her face looked more weary than last time, her eyes more puffy with dark circles.

I asked her to come into my office and to take a seat. I sat myself in front of her, with my journal resting on my lap. "So", I said, "how are you, are sleeping any better now, or do you still have the dreams that frighten you?" She looked at me with an intense stare. "Every night!" she sighed. "I know I will see the shadow every night and now I don't want to sleep anymore... I dread it. I drink coffee, I watch TV until I finally fall asleep on the couch and then somewhere in my dream it is there, the shadow... staring at me, and he's just standing there... silently, threatening me, he, or it... I don't know, it's

evil, you know. I scream in terror and then I wake up. God, what is going on, why is this happening?"

I assured her again that this dream is harmless. "It is merely a state of mind, a feeling that expresses itself, a denial perhaps. Often such dreams can occur as a cause of post-traumatic stress, did you experience anything traumatic recently? Perhaps a childhood memory that you have pushed out of your mind?" I explained to her how we have to discuss her experiences, any depression, perhaps boyfriend trouble. Did she feel guilty about anything, how was her relationship with her father? This is always an important issue.

I arranged two sessions the following week, where she had to tell me about herself and reveal any possible traumas. She kept her answers very brief and I felt like she did not want to let me into her depth, thus I could not find anything out of the ordinary. Yet her shadow fear continued. I assured her that this image will most likely disappear by itself after some time, that it is just a process of the subconscious to deal with something. And of course, it would be highly advisable to come to session with me on a regular basis to work through this. This was true of course, but also the perfect way for me to keep seeing her. Before she left my office I wrote her a prescription of Imovane. "Here you have some sleeping pills, because you really need to sleep. When you sleep heavily, you often won't remember dreams that much, ok?"

With those words I sent her home. I walked with her to the reception desk and watched her as she entered the lift. I waved to her until the doors were closing behind her. My work day was done on this Thursday afternoon. That evening I met a colleague for dinner down in Soho, at one of the tasteful Italian restaurants. After the usual small talk and complaints about our profession, I could not help telling him about the strange case of Eloise. Mark, my colleague, agreed of course that re-occurring unpleasant dreams often are caused by violent trauma and perhaps sexual abuse. "Such emotional stress can trigger the condition of 'Nightmare Disorder'",

he stated. He ordered another latte. Then he continued "Does this patient have a history of drug abuse at all? This can also provoke panic dreams as those you describe." I had to admit, I had not asked her yet.

After a visit to the gents room, followed by the order of two glasses of wine, I revived the discussion again and mentioned thoughtfully "but every night? The same figure in different vivid settings, is that not a little unusual?" My colleague suggested that perhaps she might be exaggerating, that maybe she only thought she saw this presence when in fact she only felt the same fearful emotion upon awakening... I nodded, "yes, of course, that sounds very logical".

That night I took the underground home, I watched the immobile faces of the fellow passengers, how they all seemed to be caught up, and probably trapped in their own thoughts.

I was overcome with a few odd feelings myself. I did not tell my colleague that Eloise was a quite mysterious and attractive woman. How she radiated a strange magnetism. Perhaps it is no surprise that she is haunted by disturbing dreams, I thought to myself. I cannot see her leading a conventional life. I decided that I had to get her to tell me more of herself, reveal her inner secrets... I should ask her about her sex life... I might find the answers to her worries there. I was eager to help her. Content I went to bed that night and fell into deep slumber.

It was only five days later that I had another session with Eloise. Her appearance again was stunning. Yet her face was hard and her gaze quite serious and thus I understood that there had been no improvement to her emotional suffering.

I gave her a glass of water and we sat down in my office. "So did the sleeping pills help you at all?" I requested to know. She moved around in her chair, I could sense she was nervous and distressed. "Actually I feel it has only gotten worse. I took a pill, right, and then I

fell asleep and then I dreamt I was in an empty house and I entered the basement, unwillingly, I was moved forward, and there in a corner in the dark, there it was, the shadow, and now it came closer, a hooded figure, and I was unable to move, I was unable to shout, so the shape came closer towards me. And I could not wake up. So it came real close and leant towards my face. It had no face... it was horrible! And finally I could make myself wake up. I'm telling you it is an evil presence. Please tell me what I can do". She was not as aloof and restraint as she usually appeared to be.

"Now, now calm yourself" I begged of her. " I told you before there is no need to be afraid of a dream. Yes it is unpleasant to experience such gruel emotions, but believe me it is only a trick of the mind. There is nothing evil in your dream, Eloise. So please stay focused. We will work through this emotion, but it might take some time". "In fact" I said positively, "it is a good sign that the shadow is finally approaching you. It means you soon will see what hidden memory is trying to emerge, soon this shadow will have a face". She looked at me with exhausted eyes. I proceeded to ask her more private questions, about any experiences with drugs, any medication she might be taking. She was unwilling to talk about it, and she confessed to nothing unusual. I reminded her to tell me everything; childhood memories of abuse, perhaps a recent unpleasant sexual experience. I explained again that a memory is trying to emerge in order to heal the body of this painful feeling.

In short, I gave her all the answers an educated psycho-analyst can give her, all the common explanations to understand the mind's mysteries. I tried to lighten the atmosphere a bit and said "come on you are a fighter, right? Try to face up to the emotion you have, face the shadow you see. Hey, why not try to see me in your dream and I will help you with defeating this presence, hm? We can work as a team" I laughed and hoped she would catch on. But she just gave me a feeble smile.

Session time was up and she walked out. I would have loved to ask

her out for a coffee, and perhaps talk about something else than her obscure nightmare. The following nights when I went to bed, I thought about her, wondered how she was doing, if she was alone in bed, fearful, or if she had company. How did she live? I just was curious... and I fantasized.

Within the next days I tried to do my job as focused as possible, but my mind drifted away all the time, always back to Eloise. I could not get her out of my head, there was something so fascinating about her and something so disturbing. I was worried as well, perhaps I should give her a call, just to see how she was doing. I was a concerned therapist after all, and there was nothing wrong with checking up on my patients.

I did not have to wait long though, a couple of days later, my assistant Kathy handed me a note as soon as I walked out of the lift towards reception and said that 'this one' called and requested I should call her as soon as possible. I took the 'post it' paper with the message and entered my office. I assumed it came from Mrs. Duncan, a demanding new client who had to complain about everything in her life. Perhaps her husband was cheating again, and I don't blame him... but I looked down at the number and knew it was not hers. In fact, it was Eloise's cell phone number.

I got nervous. I closed the door to my office and retreated to my desk. I paused a minute, then I dialed the number to her mobile phone. My heart was beating fast...

"Hello?" Eloise answered. I replied with a "hi it's David Wilker, you called?" She sounded upset and wanted to come into my office later that day, if it was possible. I said "of course you can, my last session today is at 3.30 pm, can you come at 5pm perhaps?" She confirmed and hang up.

My 3.30 appointment cancelled shortly after. I was glad for that, as my mind already focused every thought on Eloise. I was apprehensive, I was restless, I wondered what had happened. Kathy went home at four, this meant I could be all alone and undisturbed with Eloise.

I waited in my office, impatiently I looked out of the large windows. It was getting dark outside and the rain was whipping the windows with long wet stripes. I turned on the lights and walked across the room. I looked at my own reflection in the window across my desk, I looked pale in the neon light. I decided to go to the bathroom to freshen up a bit. I wanted to look attractive, I was still a young man in my thirties after all. I combed my hair, brushed my teeth, a dab of aftershave on my neck, here and there... I opened the first buttons on my purple shirt, straightened my black jeans, I wanted to look a bit more casual. And then I waited til 5 pm. I listened... did I hear the lift moving?

At last a few minutes after five, I heard the doors open and thereafter footsteps coming towards my office. She walked fast, she walked with heavy steps.

Once in my office she immediately sat down on her chair and looked at me firmly. She crossed her legs. Again she was dressed tastefully, a tight white dress with black tights beneath and knee-high black leather boots. Her hair was hanging loose and wild across her shoulders. Stunning, but her face looked drained and worn-out.

I said "please, tell me what happened". She looked around the room and smiled nervously. "I saw it" she whispered distressed "I saw it!" "What did you see?" I passed her a glass of water. She continued "I dreamt again and I was in that empty house again, alone, and I turned around and there in the corner the shadow was standing, and it came towards me, it came close to me and leant towards my face again and I screamed and awoke, and then... I opened my eyes and it was still dark out... and by the foot of the bed... it was there,

the shadow was there, standing there, looking down at me, oh my god, I got such a fright! So I immediately turned on the light by my bedside, but then it was gone. But I saw it, I saw it there in my room. How can this be, am I loosing my mind...?"

I shook my head "Eloise, you had just woken from a bad dream, perhaps you were still dreaming. And then in the middle of the night when you wake suddenly in the darkness, shadows are very common to see. I am sure you projected your dream object into reality and your mind is playing you a trick. It is only natural that you start to see such things, it is only an illusion. It was gone when you turned on the light, was it not? See, shadows disappear once you turn on the lights and wake from your slumber." I smiled at her and tried to lift her spirits. She looked at me, still with doubt and fear in her eyes.

I continued "however, I am beginning to get alarmed over your state of anxiety, this stress does not do you any good. I am prescribing you a mild tranquilizer just to calm your mind, ok. Don't worry we will get to the bottom of this." I handed her the piece of paper. There was a sudden silence. And with it, I took advantage of this opportunity.

"Well, I am getting hungry, would you like to join me and get a bite to eat? My treat." I was eagerly waiting for her answer. She looked at me again, quite surprised but also rather apathetic, yet she replied "yeah, sure, why not..." I was almost shocked by her consent... inside of myself I got terribly excited. This was it; my chance to get to know her, privately. "Great" I said "let me get my coat and then turn off the lights and yes then we can go... I know this lovely place just around the corner." She rose from her chair and stretched her body before she put on her short leather jacket. She was a tall woman, almost as tall as me, and I was a good 6 foot. I turned off the lights and we took the lift down.

The air was moist from the rain, it smelled fresh and uplifting, the start of a good night for sure. Eloise was rather quiet on the way to the restaurant. I was talking the usual small talk; the rain that had stopped, the mild temperatures, the good Italian around the corner where I often take my lunch... she answered mostly with a distant 'hm'. But once we got a table and had ordered, she started to relax and open up a bit.

She did not live too far from here, just a 10 min bus-ride away. A flat in one of those big council estates that had seen better days, once. She was living alone there. Indeed she was a dancer, she danced in shows and videos. She also trained a lot at a local gym. I learned her family came from Eastern Europe... she did not reveal too many details though, but we had some wine, laughed a bit about silly things, like stupid scenes we saw on TV. After a long pause our conversation turned to the more serious part; her disturbing dreams that affected her so greatly. I told her that I really want to help her, and for that she would have to provide me with details of her life, her thoughts, her fears. We also discussed the possibility that spooky films and television might have influenced her sleep world.

I confess, I was mesmerised... I was blinded. There was such a magnetism that drew me to her, that drew me away from all the boredom. This fascination for Eloise slowly started to make me lose my professional conduct. I wanted more of this. I tried to keep her in the restaurant for as long as possible, tried to keep the conversation interesting for her. It was quite late already when we then decided to leave. I wished we didn't have to, but I had to resume my role as the good-intended therapist.

We walked down the empty wet street, the air was so fresh and alive, which gave me the courage to ask her if I can drop her off at home. She answered with a "uhm, yeah sure thanks". My car was back at the office building in the car park below, which gave me yet another reason to walk a bit with her and drag out some more

precious time. We walked down the dark stairs to the car park, her high heels echoed loudly from the walls, when I noticed that she was looking back a few times. She seemed a little nervous. "You ok?" I asked.

"I don't know... I thought I saw something, over there by the bottom of the stairs" she kept turning her head. So did I and said "yes I know, car parks are creepy at night, right? I also find them uncomfortable".

We reached my car, I was proud to display my dark-green BMW to her. I had to show off a bit; I turned on the radio and kept tuning until I found some rock music. I was casually cool, which perhaps is quite a task when you are a PhD.

We hit the road and about 10 minutes later, after she gave me directions, we arrived at her building. Eloise thanked for the ride and opened the door to her side. I let her know that I had a very pleasant evening and confirmed that we will meet again at the office for therapy after the weekend. She was just about to step out of the car when suddenly she exhaled a choked cry. Quickly she sat herself back into the car and stared towards a narrow spot between the two buildings. "There, by the garbage containers" she cried "I saw a shadow, a shape standing, just like from my dreams, oh no!" She stared desperately into the darkness, and so did I. I admit even I would see shadows there if I would let my imagination run loose, it was indeed a dark and creepy corner. I explained "it is quite common to project any fearful vision to the outside, but it is only your imagination running wild, it is very important to tell yourself that this is just a trick of the mind, ok. But I will check for you, perhaps you just saw a person lingering around over there."

I got out of the car and walked towards the containers. The whole area smelled strongly of urine and decaying garbage, the unpleasant stench would freak out anyone. Yet I saw nothing, no person either.

I met Eloise by the entrance door and we said 'good night'. I asked her if she would be okey going up to her flat alone and she answered that she would be fine. I suddenly exclaimed "oh wait, here, take my card." I handed her my card with my private cell phone number. "Call me if you get scared, anytime, ok" She nodded. I could sense that she was feeling lost and I felt for her. I watched her go inside the building and walk down the long corridor.

I was driving home and I replayed the evening in my head. I had a really good time and indeed some excitement. I was not surprised that Eloise has frightening dreams and visions, living as a single lady in such a bad neighbourhood. Maybe I should advise her to move, and perhaps she could stay with me for a while... so I fantasized in my mind. Was I violating my profession here? I erased that thought immediatly. The magnetism was too strong and for once I was allowing myself to be merely human. That's right, I was just a man after all.

I went to bed that night with mixed emotions. I thought about re-decorating my flat, I thought about writing another article, perhaps writing on a new case study... perhaps writing about Eloise... or perhaps not. Because to honest, it dawned to me that I had no idea what I was dealing with here. Could she indeed have a disorder? Could she make the whole thing up because she craves attention? No, I allowed that thought to slip my mind. And instead I chased the fantasy about the mystical, yet so vulnerable creature that was Eloise, and I went to sleep.

I slept long the following saturday morning. I crawled out of bed and took a long shower, singing along to Toto's "Hold The Line". I was in a very good mood. After I dressed, did some housework and grocery shopping, I got ready to go out. I had an appointment with my good friend Ludwig Hallday from Surrey, a respected professor of clinical psychiatry. We had an early supper date in town.

We met at one of the fancy restaurants at Portobello Road. The street was crowed and crawling with colorful people, as always on a Saturday. We found a table by the window and enjoyed our wholesome meal with salads from the buffet. Over a glass of wine we discussed our latest cases and studies. Ludwig of course had a lot of experience with the more severe cases of mental disorder, it was always fascinating to listen to his latest studies.

I hesitated, but after a while I told him that also I had quite an interesting case right now. Ludwig wiped his mouth with his napkin "oh, please David, share!" I told him about Eloise, focusing strictly on the case, of course, on the peculiar dreams and visions of one of my patients. No further details. I merely asked his opinion to what this bizarre dream scenario could be.

He gave me the usual list of common names; post-traumatic stress, paranoia, delusional disorder... He kept talking and discussing, there was nothing new really that he could tell me. I drank my wine in several minutes of silence. I looked outside the window onto the wet streets. It was getting dark out there, and the shops were closing, leaving the remaining shoppers to gather outside, and slowly walking away... and soon the streets lay clear and lonely.

Suddenly I said thoughtfully "but she dreams of this presence every night and she claims it is something malicious... I just wonder, uhm, could it be, I mean could there be, you know, uhm, something that we don't know...". Ludwig put down his fork and gave me a stern look while adjusting his glasses... "My dear David!" He exclaimed astonished "are you suggesting anything of a supernatural nature?" He raised his eyebrows. I shook my head "no, no of course not, but I just wonder, how much do we know yet about such phenomena, like, you know 'hauntings'... or 'omens'... I am only expressing anthropological curiosity here, merely... it is interesting, don't you think?"

Ludwig did not agree at all. "David" he said, "We are professionals, it is our job to treat abnormal behaviour of the mind, to assure our patients that it is only their minds and emotions playing a trick on them and that we can provide the necessary treatment. If your patient does not improve with casual therapy you should ring the day-center at Bedford Hill and arrange a meeting for your patient there. I nodded and agreed "of course... but that won't be necessary, I am convinced it is only emotional distress we are talking about here, quite harmless".

My mind drifted and soon Ludwig was changing the subject to his upcoming holidays and the good news that his wife had been upgraded to head-mistress of Windor Hill college.

We took a walk, stopped by another bar and then we ended our informative evening by Notting Hill station. My car was standing down the car park by my office and I took the underground there. My BMW was the only car left standing, abandoned, on my regular spot. I had just started the radio and was about to drive when my phone rang. I thought about ignoring the call, in case it was work related, but then I realised that nobody ever would phone at this time on a Saturday evening, so it had to be a private call. I hurried to answer my phone.

It was Eloise and she sounded very alarmed. She shouted "it's there it's there, oh my god, it's there, please do something..." I calmed her " please, slowly, what happened, where are you?" She was standing outside of her building. She explained that the shape was in her flat again, in her bedroom. "Did you sleep and have a vision again upon awakening?" "No!" she cried "not at all. I was out all evening and I just came back home, I opened my door and turned on the lights and when I walked passed by the bedroom I saw it there, standing in the corner by the window. I saw it... and I just ran out of the flat and closed the door, and I ran down the stairs... I really saw it." I again assured her that it is only a vision, a hallucination...

But she was getting hysterical "I wasn't dreaming, ok, and I do not go back upstairs. Why is this happening to me?"

I said firmly "Eloise just stay where you are, I'm coming over now, I'll take care of you, ok, just calm down." I drove my car out of the car park at high speed. I felt like a character in one of those action thrillers.

I admit to my own foolishness. I convinced myself that I was a concerned professional doing my duty, but I did realise that I was dealing with a patient with a possible delusional disorder. And I still I had no idea what I was up against. I did not want to see the seriousness of the situation, indeed I took advantage of the situation. She clouded my judgement.

There was a lot of traffic that night; many cars and red traffic lights blocking my way, drunken people carelessly crossing the streets, forcing me to stop constantly. The streets were wet, and the street lights were blinding my sight. I grew impatient, the ten minutes to Eloise's building seemed endless. But finally I arrived by the entrance door. I could see her standing outside, she was walking back and forth outside of the glass door, forcefully, stressed out, like a a tiger in a cage. She was wearing a long black shiny leather coat, long black leather boots and tight blue jeans. Her dark hair was hanging wet over her shoulders. I parked my car by the road and turned off the radio. Snatched my keys and jumped out of the vehicle. I felt like a hero, coming to the rescue of the lady in distress.

I ran up to her and she looked at me with desperate eyes. I took hold of her left arm and said "Just relax, tell me again what happened." So she told me again, how she was out the evening and how she came home just to see a glimpse of a shape as she walked passed her bedroom, which she clearly identified as the shadow from her dreams.

I remained cool and said "Alright, I'm going up to your apartment and take a look around, ok?" She said "sure, but I'm not going up there, I'm staying right here." She handed me her keys and I made my way up to her apartment. The whole place smelled unpleasantly of urine and other musky stench. I took the lift to the 4th floor. I opened the door and entered a silent dark corridor. The one single neon light went on and off, throwing shadows on the wall... the atmosphere alone would be enough to make anyone uneasy. No wonder Eloise has become this afraid and startled. I reached her apartment and opened the door carefully.

The lamp was switched on in the hall just as she had described. It was a tiny flat, sparsely but dramatically decorated, a little bedroom to the left, a small living room across leading to the kitchen to the right. There were many posters and paintings with dark colours on the walls. I looked around, but there was nobody here, no person or entity. The place was empty. I locked the door behind me and went down the stairs. They lay dark and threatening and I feared for my safety. This was indeed not a secure neighbourhood. I hurried down the stairs to the ground floor.

Eloise was standing by the inside of the entrance door. The lift arrived down the corridor at the same time and a group of young people fell out; loud, drunk, most likely on their way out to hit the night-life. After they left the building and silence was restored, Eloise came towards me and said fearfully "So, what did you see, was somebody there?" I shook my head and raised my shoulders "No, there was nothing unusual, nothing..." She seemed disappointed. I continued "why don't you come up with me and we take a look together." She was reluctant and took a step back, but finally agreed to step into the lift with me.

We arrived at her door. She drew a deep breath and unlocked it. I entered first. Slowly she came after and looked sceptically towards the bedroom. She walked in and switched on the main light. "There" she said "I saw it right there". Nervously she bit her fingernails,

she seemed devastated "you don't believe me, don't you?" I replied swiftly "of course I believe you. I believe that you saw something that startled you. And that fear is real, it is real for you. So yes I believe you saw it. But my dear Eloise, we must figure out why your mind gives you this delusion, because it is all but in the mind, in your imagination you see."

My voice took a more serious tone "Eloise, you should not be here by yourself, I am quite sure that this place is aiding your creepy illusions, it is very sinister around here, hey, I myself would probably get jumpy if I would live here alone" I laughed and tried to lighten the atmosphere a bit. We paused and I said "listen, why don't you come home with me, I have a nice apartment, a warm fireplace, a bath tub, and a cosy spare bedroom. During the week we will discuss things further, hm? Just grab a few things you need and let's get out of here". She nodded and grabbed a large bag from one of her bedroom draws. Quickly she started to pack a few clothes and bathroom items. Her hands were shaking as she packed. When she was done, she took a look around, snatched her cell phone from the kitchen table, turned off all the lights and locked the door.

Silently we walked down to my car. All we heard was the great echo from her heels. I was concerned about her state of mind, but I also was excited to have her as a guest in my house. She seemed in deep thought as we drove. I asked her about her friends and family, did they show any concerns at all...? She stroked her hair and gazed out of the window "well my friends think I'm either going nuts or make the whole thing up and my family does not know anything... too weird, you know..." I nodded and agreed "yes such matters are best handled by professional therapists".

We pulled up towards my drive way. The house was divided into three apartments, mine was at the top. We stepped up the newly painted white stairs to my front door and entered the spacious living area. The floor had just been re-done with nice wooden parquet. I asked her to take a seat on my leather couch and make

herself comfortable, while I was taking her bag into the spare room.

Then I went out to my open kitchen. I was proud of my fashionable flat. I asked Eloise from the kitchen if she would like tea, or perhaps some wine... she answered "Sure I'll have some wine... I wouldn't mind a whiskey either, if you have ...?" I replied "sure, one whiskey on the rocks coming up."

I made some tea, opened a new bottle of wine, got out the whiskey bottle from the antique bar by the window. I started up the fireplace across the room, lit candles, prepared some snacks and finally put on some quiet relaxing music. I put food and drinks on the coffee table and sat down in my exquisite white leather armchair.

I exhaled a great sigh... "ah what a night, huh? Well let's just eat and drink and relax, just try to forget your place for a while. How long have you been living there anyway?" She told me she had only moved in about a year ago, back then she had a flatmate, who moved out again a few months later... then her boyfriend moved in, but again only for some months. They broke up and since then she had been living alone. Things did not go too well economically, since she was a dancer and worked small jobs here and there, sometimes down at the gym where she was training, but she hadn't been going there for a while...

After a few glasses of both wine and whiskey we talked a bit more, she mentioned certain films she liked or music, or places to see... she did not mention her family at all and I was quite sure that she was holding back certain things from me... perhaps some family secrets she did not want to share yet... and it intrigued me even more...

It was getting late and I realised that she was getting tired. We arose and I showed her the spare bedroom. Naturally I fantasized her coming to bed with me, but I had to take things slowly, I still was her therapist. I said good night and retired to my room. I heard

Eloise going from the bathroom into her room... and then I lay in bed and listened through the dark. After a while Eloise called out to me "David, are you still awake?" I answered "yup, I am. What's up?" She said "I can't sleep... what if I dream again, what if I wake up screaming...?" I called out "don't worry, I'm here for you, you're going to be ok". There was silence again, yet I could not rest. It was a bizarre night, an exciting night in my else so boring, uptight life.

The clock was ticking through the silence. I called out to her "Eloise are you sleeping?" She answered my question with a 'nope'. I decided to take my chance and uttered the words "Eloise why don't you come here, perhaps you will sleep then..." I listened into the painful silence, the seconds became unbearably long...

With light feet she came over from her room across the living room and entered my bedroom. My heart missed a beat, could I be so lucky? I moved the duvet from the left side of my kingsize bed and invited her in. I whispered that there is no need to worry about any bad dreams tonight. She looked at me through the dark... I stroked her hair and I stroked her face... and I finally got to love my Eloise, until, exhausted and without a word we simply went to sleep. I was happy and content and soon I was lulled in by sweet dreams...

I do not know how long I slept, all I remember is that I suddenly was woken rudely out of my heavy slumber by a loud scream next to me. Groggy and very confused I turned around to my left. I was sure Eloise had one of her nightmares. As I opened my eyes I could make out a shape that was standing by her side of the bed. Eloise moved towards me and screamed even more. I thought surely I must be dreaming and rubbed my eyes to see more clearly. But indeed, there was a hooded shadow creature looked down at us; it was silent, menacing, ghastly. Suddenly it leaned forward, towards Eloise's face. Was I drawn into one of her nightmares? I was unable to move.

The gruesome shape reached out for Eloise, moving on top of her. She was hysterical and desperately cried for help. I jumped out of bed, but my legs were so shaky they gave in. I lay on the floor absolutely petrified. I attempted to crawl across the room, I needed to turn on the light, but I wanted to help Eloise as well. Before I could hold on to her the horrid shape had covered Eloise with its embrace, it looked at me with a shapeless hidden face that forced me to my knees once again. Then it slowly disappeared into the wall, taking along the scream of Eloise. Aghast I could hear her scream from the inside of the wall and the scream subsided until it was gone.

I managed to get up and ran to the switch and turned on the light... the shadow creature was gone, but Eloise's body was lying motionless in bed, her eyes wide open.

My name is David Wilker and I am currently residing at the closed mental institution of Bedford Hill. I am charged with the murder of Eloise. Even though I explained over and over again that I was completely innocent of this hideous crime, even my lawyer was convinced that sanity has left my mind.

What really happened that night, nobody ever believed. When I saw Eloise lying lifeless in my bed, I tried to revive her. With that to no use at all, I phoned an ambulance. I tried to explain what happened, but how could I possibly explain what really happened here, so in the end I just said that somebody broke in and choked her while I was sleeping. Either way, nobody believed me.

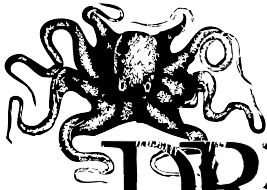
My good friends Ludwig and Mark, came forward and confirmed to the police that I had talked strangely about a patient tormented by unusual nightmares. Their theory was that it must have been I who had this deluded visions to justify my own murder fantasy... Whatever their psycho-analysis babble and bullshit, I now sit here in a locked room and I am desperate.

Nobody here listens to a word I say. They drug me to calm me down and get me to sleep, even though I beg them not to. I tell them I must stay awake and I simply cannot go to sleep, for the shadow that awaits me in my dreams. He comes to me in strange places, standing in the corner, silently, waiting for me, slowly moving towards me until I wake in terror.

My therapists here explain to me that my dreams represent my bad feelings, my guilt for what I have done... and with good sessions, they promise, we will get to the bottom of this nightmares. And even when I scream in terror at night and cry for help because there is a hooded shape standing in the corner of my little room, they claim it is only a hallucination caused by my delusional mind.

Would they only understand and realise what is going on... The torment I must endure, the agony, the fright when the shadow creature stands next to by bed and leans over me... it bears the face of Eloise...

c - Andréa Nebel Haugen



DREAMSIDE