

# Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

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First chapter/prologue of a novel I'm working on.



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## Chapter 1: Visionary part 1/3

### One

"By the time Selma will notice the sedative she'll already be asleep."

"She won't need a sedative, she'll fall asleep in two hours trust me."

"I wouldn't count on it, she's a liar."

November 4th 1995

Selma leans back into the couch letting the leather upholstery slowly swallow her. Her knees lift away from the blanket that lies between her and the couch as she begins to disappear between the cushions. Except for the videogame the shed is quiet.

Her boots and jacket lay buried somewhere in the cramped cluttered space. The dozen or so boxes stacked around the room cast strange shadows across the door. An overturned milk crate and a large bag traps Selma on the old couch. A handful of dream catchers shiver in the breeze where they hang above her.

Selma suddenly looks up when she hears the growl but just as quickly goes back to her game. Shaking her head she whispers. "Don't worry. It's just the wind blowing tree branches against the roof. Yeah, just branches."

Selma forehead creases with worry, as the growling gets louder and more ferocious.

Now Selma's hands are shaking. She lowers her Gameboy awkwardly resting it in her lap. She inspects the room and finds herself completely alone.

She sits up trying to focus her tired eyes on the Gameboy but the shaking spreads up from her hands up her arms causing her to shoulders to shudder.

She shakes her head as other newer sounds fly past; the sound of a train running over its tracks, of a girl yelling out food orders and of a car honking at a swearing pedestrian.

Selma doesn't bother to explain what she's hearing this time. It is not a television set, it is not a radio, is its not her imagination, it is not a ghost and it is not a prank. She knows what it is, it was the sound of the beginning of the end. Selma is falling asleep.

She was falling into another coma, one filled with visions she couldn't control. She wouldn't let it come not until she was out of the city and out of the Center's reach.

Fear alone, Selma realized wasn't a strong enough motivator. It faded the longer you waited, as the comfort of normal life and soft beds invade your senses, killing the darker parts of your imagination. The parts that hold your superstitions, the parts that keep you safe.

Selma feels the cold air nip at her neck keeping her awake as it floats in through the open window behind her. With every tick of her necklace watch the shed seemed to change; the shadows jumped, the moonlight danced, the shutters groaned, the wind whispered.

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Selma blinked, she could still see the up-side-down milk-crate and the unfinished drink it supports. Selma can still taste the sweetness of its sugar and the bitterness of something that should have kept her awake. Selma's vision blurs as she tries to remember how the Center managed to drug her. She hadn't eaten any of their food.

Selma looked between the bottle of green juice and her nurse lifting her eyebrow in question. At her nurse's prodding she leaned forward in her stool eyeing the drink with suspicion.

"It's something new I put together for you." Nurse Jenny said turning away from the light that seeped through the barred windows.

Selma looked doubtfully at the drink and then shook her head warily.

"It'll help keep you up." The old gray nurse whispered encouragingly.

Looking at her old friend Selma nodded in understanding. She grabbed the bottled drink unfastening its lid.

"Thanks, I'll see you later. The usual place, make sure no one follows you this time." Selma said gesturing with the bottle before taking a sip.

Making a face she forced down the shockingly bitter drink.

"I'm sorry Jenny but this is gross, where's the sugar." Selma said eyeing the bowl sitting on the counter.

"Sorry but beggars can't be choosers." Jenny said pulling the bowl out of reach as Selma tried to grab it.

"If you can find someone else to knock together some meds to keep you awake then you can ask them to poison you with sugar." Jenny said sugar like it were a swear word.

"You'd better get going now." She said shoeing Selma out the room.

Swinging her bag over her shoulder Selma left the nurse station wondering what the old lady laced her drink with this time. Selma grinned as she took out a packet of sugar from her pocket.

Ripping it open she poured it into the green drink, glancing back to be sure Jenny wasn't watching. Satisfied Selma recapped the bottle. Giving it a good shake she walked down the hall.

"I don't get it," Said a figure leaning against the wall. He wore a baseball cap low over his face. "You know she puts her own sugar in her drinks, so why bother banning it?" His arms were crossed over his chest he looked about sixteen. His raggedy black hoodie, gray pants and bare feet clashed with the Center's hospital clean floors.

"Hello Liam, you don't have to understand it doesn't affect your mission." Jenny said unfazed by his sudden appearance, she was used to it.

"I remember Will saying it was because your kid and your dad had diabetes. Which doesn't explain much because Selma isn't your daughter and sugar has little effect on her." Liam said coolly walking over to the counter.

"It's not like she'd become diabetic by eating sugar either. I looked it up." He picked up a spoon and began to stir the sugar in the bowl.

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"I know." Jenny said quietly.

She stared at the boy before whispering, "You really are a different people."

"I only look like him. He might be wonderfully good at reading people but he's weak. I'm stronger than he is." The boy said picking up a spoonful of sugar. Jenny rose her eyebrow at him as he bent close to smell the sugar.

Liam frowned it didn't smell sweet like he thought it would. He tasted the spoonful and widened his eyes in surprise it was sweet. This world was strange and wonderful in ways he hadn't predicted. How could anyone give this up?

"Don't confuse me with Will. He was stupid enough to make a deal with me. Stupid enough to think magic and a girl was equal in any way to this." He mumbled.

"I'd never confuse you with Will. Will has a soul." Jenny said pointedly.

"He has a soul? So what. I'm the one getting you what you want and Will's incapacitated because he's trying to be heroic." Liam said dropping the spoon. It fell against the sugar bowl leaving a mess. It was the first time Liam had shown emotion since Jenny had met him, it seems she'd hit a nerve.

"That there is something you could learn from Will, sacrifice. Will knows what he's given up. You aren't able to understand." Jenny said watching Liam study the sugar on the counter. She was half expecting him to lick the counter or the pen he was using to prod the pile of sugar. Liam had only recently discovered his taste buds and was still experimenting.

Liam scowled. "Would you stop comparing us? I don't care why anyone sacrifices anything as long as it doesn't interfere with the plan and as long as the plan gets me what I want, my freedom." Liam said angrily.

"You people have no idea what freedom is worth. But that's because you're from this world. Whatever, as long as you're committed. You are committed to doing whatever it takes aren't you?" Liam asked pointedly.

"You know I am." Jenny said giving the boy a look but he'd already disappeared.

The sugary mess he'd made had gone with him; it was like he was never there at all.

## Chapter 2: Visionary part 2/3

Selma slipped into the bathroom and kicked open each stall. Content that the bathroom was deserted she took the maintenance 'closed for service' sign from under one of the sinks and attached it to the outside door.

Selma pulled on the chain around her neck checking the watch that hung on it. She pressed it to her lips.

"I'm sorry Will. They'll kill me if I stay." Selma whispered.

Liam materialized behind her the moment she touched the watch. He watched Selma curiously with his hands in his pockets blinking in and out of existence like a flickering light bulb, he didn't want her to see him watching.

Selma smiled wistfully before she hurriedly replaced the watch; there wasn't time to for sentiments. There never really was. The boy tilted his head at her and disappeared when she turned toward him. Selma frowned she thought she felt someone standing behind her.

Selma unzipped her bag and laid out some of her escape tools for what she hoped was the last time. She quietly hummed a song as she tied up her long copper hair. From her collection of escape tools she chose a tiny screwdriver she had taken from her aunt on her last visit home.

Selma stepped on the trashcan as she unscrewed the lock on the bathroom window. She pulled out the secure looking grate prying it off and tossed her bag out the moment the small window was open. Selma smiled as she heard a thud and guessed it landed on the shelter that held the Center's back-up generator. She tossed the grate on top of her bag.

Selma then dropped back into the bathroom and quickly stashed her escape tools; the screwdriver, a set of lock picks and a security key card behind the sink, just in case she needed a second or third chance at escape.

Using the trashcan and the hand dryer as footholds Selma lifted her self out the small window. She noticed the shoe prints she left on the dryer but decided that no one would notice it until it was too late.

Selma carefully lowered herself onto the generator. She patted the building goodbye, replaced the grate, grabbed her bag and leaped off the shelter landing gracefully on her feet in the building's shade.

Selma stayed in there for a moment longer gathering herself before she peaked around the edge.

The bright sun burned her tired eyes as she assessed the distance between the shelter and the cut she'd made in the fence. She'd been awake for a long time now, inhumanly long and she was tired of feeling tired all the time.

The fear that she wouldn't wake up again was getting harder and harder to remember. She could feel time slipping away. Her tired eyes begged to stay closed with every blink.

The tick-tick-tick of her watch was the only thing that reminded her; this was her only chance to be free. She would not let them put her under and she would not let them kill her. She would fight and she would run.

Selma sprinted across the grassy yard pulling down her baseball hat over her blood shot eyes. She kept running, slipping through the cut in the chain link fence and past the thin wooded area that surrounded the Center until she found the dirt path.

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Selma ran with a smile on her face letting her skin soak in the warm sunlight. She hopped over a log and giggled nervously as she splashed into puddle. She half expected someone to step out from behind a tree and scold her. Selma smiled when nothing happened. She stepped out of the puddle and began to run again.

In just a few hours her nurse would finish her shift at the Center and get her out of the city with a new identity, new home and new life.

A small voice in the back of Selma's mind whispered that infected people had no lives and that they were never safe no matter where or how far they ran. Selma squashed the thought and kept on running.

"Hello Will. How are you feeling today?" Nurse Jenny said as the large heavy door closed behind her. She frowned at the bare white walls, the glaring bright lights and the swivelling black camera. This wasn't a hospital room it was a prison cell. Jenny walked forward to the figure sitting on the only furniture in the room, the bed.

"I was just with Selma. It's been a while since you've seen her, almost four months I would guess." Jenny said sitting down beside Will who looked straight ahead in a daze. As far as the Center knew he'd been like that for months.

Jenny sighed glancing at the camera. "Oh dear it looks like you've got something on your face." Jenny said reaching into her purse. Instead of taking out a Kleenex Jenny pulled out a necklace Will once gave her as a present.

"Seriously? You call me now? How am I supposed to work if I have to keep pulled back to you?" Liam complained the moment he appeared. It took a moment for him to notice Will.

"NO." He said crossing his arm, "No way, I'm not going back." He hissed at Jenny.

"I need to talk to him." Jenny said once the camera shut down. Liam had that effect on security cameras.

"What about?" Liam asked scowling.

"He needs to be ready for when she goes to your world. If she doesn't make it or if they don't meet up the deals off and then you'd have to go back forever."

"I get it." He sighs "I hate this par-" His words are cut off as he disappears into a bright light.

"Let go of me. Ugggh." Will yelled jumping back away from the light. He took a moment to steady himself as he examined his new surroundings.

"The Center." He said relaxing before he turned to Jenny and smiled "Hey Jenny Benny. What do I owe this wonderful vacation?"

Jenny smiled back and simply said. "It's time."

"You mean Selma's coming?" He said standing up he smiled wide. If Jenny didn't know better she would of bet he'd break into a dance like he had when he was younger. Thankfully he resisted the urge if he felt it.

"Not yet, but we're close." Jenny said smiling at Will.

Will suddenly stopped smiling. "There something wrong isn't there?" He said watching Jenny carefully.

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"No problem. She just needs to fall asleep so we can do our magic. You know remove the hypnotic suggestion." Jenny said quietly.

"You want her to fall asleep! How are you going to do that I mean without her seeing Liam and without the center getting their hands on her?" He said suspiciously. He subconsciously touched the pink scar that stretched from his right hand to his collarbone.

"Liam can be very sneaky." Jenny hinted.

"I wouldn't rely on his powers. They're not as good as you think." Will said sceptically sitting down again.

Jenny pursed her lips "That's what this is for." Jenny said holding out a bright yellow pill.

"Is that the back up plan?" Will said unimpressed

"Yup, by the time Selma will notice the sedative she'll already be asleep." Jenny said nodding.

"She won't need a sedative, she'll fall asleep in two hours trust me." She continued.

"I wouldn't count on it, she's stronger than that. You'd better have one heck of a full proof back-up-back-up plan" Will said frowning. "Even then it might not work."

"Will, I think you're overestimating Selma."

"I'm not Jenny. I know her better than anyone." Will said staring off into space. Jenny waited a moment for him to finish but whatever made Will himself was gone. Which meant Liam was back, somewhere.

Selma's leg twitched begging her to speed up, but she couldn't not in this neighbourhood, someone would notice her running, especially when the police got involved.

Selma stopped at a bus stop fighting the instinct to keep moving and sat down. Selma waited for what seemed to be forever before the bus pulled up at a painfully slow crawl. Sitting at the back corner of the bus she fingered her watch necklace thinking about the one person she would miss when she'd run away.

Selma took the bus to a more crowded part of town, a part where she could blend in. She wandered for a few blocks to make sure she didn't have a tail but she couldn't shake the feeling she was being watched.

Liam put on his hat and pulled up his hood as he stepped onto the road in front of Selma. He bumped into her and held out his hand to steady her.

"Careful there, Miss." He said in an artificially deep voice.

"Sorry!" Selma said stepping around him.

Liam raised his hand to lower his hat further down his face, "You might find yourself sleeping at the center."

Selma had taken a few steps before she realized what Liam had said, she spun around but he was gone. Selma shook her head; was he real or a hallucination her sleep deprived mind created?

Selma made it half way into a public library before she felt her knees buckle. She looked down as though the tiled floor could tell her why.



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"No." She whispered they'd gotten to her. She reasoned that who ever it was who'd bumped her had probably injected her somehow.

Selma ran into the library's bathroom and washed her pale face. Already her hands were shaking and the world was falling out of focus. She had refused the food the Center had given her knowing it would be drugged and now her refusal to eat would be her down fall.

## Chapter 3: Visionary part 3/3

Selma stumbled out of the library and into the cool November air. Finding herself near her old neighbourhood Selma bought a bag full of sugary food from the corner shop. She didn't smile at the cashier's joke about the warm weather and sat out on a bench eating the food.

To finish off her sugar high Selma took another healthy sip from Jenny's miracle drink. She tried to ignore the dregs of plant matter floating to the top of the plastic bottle. Selma took deep slow breaths staring long and hard at the shop's brick wall. She closed her eyes and tried to 'think' herself awake.

Liam appeared in front of her with his arms crossed his lips were pressed into a firm line. He pressed the palm of his hand to Selma's forehead and said, 'You're really tired, all you want is for this to end. You just need to take a nap. You just need to relax. Don't fight me!' Liam sighed and looked at Selma curiously as he pulled something out his pocket.

"No wonder Will likes you so much. You could survive in my world better than anyone." He said as he opened her drink and dropped in a yellow pill. "I'm sorry no one should have to go there." He whispered.

Liam bent forward into Selma's face and gently brushed a strand of hair out of her face before he disappeared.

Suddenly Selma's hands stopped shaking. She opened her eyes and looked around again, Selma smiled she must of built up a tolerance to whatever drug she'd been injected with.

She stood up and froze something she couldn't put her finger on was different, every fibre in her body screamed danger. Suddenly Selma felt eyes on her but she couldn't tell who was watching. Everyone looked suspicious.

Selma picked up her drink and walked away, looking for the eyes she knew were watching her.

The cashier from inside the shop waited until Selma had jogged away before he took the phone out from under the cash register. He held the receiver to his ear using his shoulder while he dialed a number he read off a business card.

"Yeah, she was here. She just left." The cashier said tossing the business card. "I think she's headed to her Aunt's house or their clubhouse. Same direction" Then checking his watch he answered, "Yup, I'll be here." and hung up the phone.

"Can I help you?" He asked turning to the customer who'd been standing next to the drink refrigerator for the last ten minutes. He looked about sixteen and was deciding between an orange cola and a cherry cola. If the cashier hadn't been so preoccupied with watching Selma jog away he would have asked him sooner.

"Yes, actually I think you can." Liam said turning around he placed both drinks on the counter. For some reason the boy looked familiar to the cashier but he just couldn't place him to a name or a place.

It annoyed the cashier that the boy had left the refrigerator open and that his hat cast a shadow that hid most of his face. He liked to see whom he was talking to; he resisted the urge to knock his hat off.

"The girl you just sold out is very important to me-for a plan and it would help me if the Center found her after we finish. I'd like you to forget she was ever here. You have no idea who Selma is and you have never seen her before and most importantly you don't know about the clubhouse"

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"Sell out? Who are you to speak to me this way?" The cashier growled.

"You won't remember this, so there really is no point in telling you. But your subconscious might hold on to something so just try to keep onto the idea that I'm an ally of Selma's and she doesn't deserve to be locked up. She can't do her part without me helping her a bit."

"Selma is a very sick girl. I've just called her doctor. He'll be here any minute." The middle-aged man said picking up the receiver again. He looked down to dial the number but suddenly stopped.

"Who was I about to call?" He said looking up he finds himself alone in his shop. The counter was clear and the refrigerator was closed. He looked out the window of his shop and shrugged his shoulders putting down the phone's receiver.

The cashier had the sudden craving for soda, but he just couldn't decide if he wanted cherry or orange. He took both out taking a bill from his wallet he put the two cans behind the counter without opening them.

Selma jogged past familiar roads, houses and trees with her head down until she found an empty lot snuggled between two tidy looking houses.

Selma took a deep breath before she stepped into the lot and pushed through the thick underbrush that consumed the back half of the lot. Selma found the wooden fence that bordered her Aunt's unsold house and followed it to a gate that led to a large shed dozens of feet from the house.

It was practically invisible from the house and few people knew where to look. Selma unlatched the small gate and went directly to what the neighbourhood called the clubhouse. It's where she and her friends had played growing up.

This was her secret hide away, her own personal fortress of solitude. This was home. The clubhouse was a brown structure that sat at the back edge of untouched park property. It had one window and large barn doors that made up most of the wall. Selma and her friends had long ago graffiti the walls.

She could still see the names they'd written in permanent marker on one of the doors. She skipped her own name tracing the names of the four friends who knew the truth:

Will Mikael Kendra Ashley.

Ashley and Mikael, were the only ones who were left. The Center had made sure of that.

Liam appeared beside her as Selma touched the names on the door. He frowned when Selma's hand hesitated above Will's name and disappeared when Selma turned in his direction.

Selma took out a key from her bag opening the lock that protected the shed from animals and thieves and pulled one of the large doors open. The door opened slowly with a familiar groan.

Selma took out the note she'd prepared, the one she'd mail to Ashley when she left Alliance. She tucked it into her journal and sighed crouching next to the leather couch. She felt along the bottom of the couch until she found a tear in the fabric.

The tear created a pocket on the underside of the couch so Selma put the journal there in the bottom of the old leather couch to keep it safe in case the Center found her before Jenny did.

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Selma felt around the hole for a second letter just to make sure it was still there. It was

She uncapped the bottle and finally took the ruinous sip from it. It was a few minutes before Selma felt a wave of exhaustion that nearly knocked her down.

The middle-aged cashier shakes his head. "I don't know who Selma is. I've never seen her before." He puts down the photograph confidently.

"Mr. Bennet on the phone you said she was outside your shop, and that she was headed to her Aunt's house." A skinny man in a brown suit says reading from a notebook.

"We have it on tape." He leans forward in his seat and slides the tape player across a large table to the cashier.

"You can press play if you want to hear your voice again but I think we've been over it enough times for you not to bother denying."

Mr. Bennet shrugs his shoulders. "I don't know what you want me to say. I don't know anything about this girl or a clubhouse or anything you've asked me."

The man in the brown suit shakes his head slowly and watches Mr. Bennet as though his answer would change if he waited long enough. A tall heavy man standing next to the interrogation room's door stares at Mr. Bennet with an intensity that makes Mr. Bennet uncomfortable.

They sat for several minutes without saying anything until Bennet suddenly breaks the silence, as the man in the brown suit knew he would.

"Who are you guys? You aren't doctors." Mr. Bennet asks eyeing the man who stood beside the door but he only smiled coldly. Mr. Bennet rubs his sore arms remembering how he was brought in.

The man in the brown suit took a deep breath before speaking. "Normally I sit around observing and recording things at this Health Center, they don't call me by name they call me by my title the Observer. Kind of creepy don't you think?" The man says smiling faintly.

Mr. Bennet frowned and the man continued. "I guess it doesn't help that I keep my name confidential for legal reasons. Just between you and me, it doesn't get me any favours with the people who use their names. It's a trust thing, I guess. I'm the odd one out here but it's been like that since I was kid. But with us, you know the people on the sidelines that get to know all the secrets that people let slip." The Observer pauses expectantly.

"You have to believe me. I'm telling you the truth." Mr. Bennet exclaims. The Observer's face immediately hardens. "But you don't care about what I normally do, do you? What you need to know is today I'm an investigator, assigned to find Selma by any means necessary. And him" the Observer says jerking his thumb at the man in the dark suit. "We call him Guy and he's-a doctor of a sort who specializes with people who have Selma's condition. But I hear he has many skills."

Guy snickers bleakly and Mr. Bennet gulps, "I don't know anything." He mutters looking at Selma's photo again.

It was eerie; her face gave Bennet's mind an itch he could not reach. There was something about her face. He could almost remember her in his shop. But that was impossible; he'd never seen her before.

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"We've checked her Aunt's house and not only is she not there but it looks like no ones been there for weeks. You mentioned a clubhouse, I need to know where it is."

"What clubhouse?" Bennet asks exasperated, he couldn't understand how or why this was happening to him.

The Observer stood up from the stool he sat on revealing himself to be fairly short. He checked his watch; he'd been interrogating for over three hours and was getting nowhere.

Selma had been missing for a little over four hours.

"Mr. Bennett, this is foolhardy. It's not like we won't find her; we always find our runaways. You see if I fail to find her, I forfeit a lot more then a finder's fee, a career or bodily fluid and so will you if you keep lying to me." He said glancing at the bruise that had begun to spread across Bennet's cheek.

"What I can't understand is why you would send us on a wild goose chase. I mean it would make us look one way while she ran another, I get that but why are you helping her? I know they can't be offering you more then we are. At most whatever Selma and who ever is helping her could give you is a half-baked fortune telling." The Observer walks over to Mr. Bennet and sits on the wide desk in front of him. He glares into Mr. Bennet's eyes holding his uncomfortable gaze.

"Tsk, tsk. We would've paid you well, Bennet." He says putting his hand on the other man's shoulder and squeezes hard. Mr. Bennet nervously glances at the Observer's hand but the Observer pulls his face forward with his index finger.

"Playing dumb won't work for very long. We will find her no matter how far or how fast she runs. It'll be a lot less painful for you if tell us what you know right now."

"But I don't know anything." Mr. Bennet says pleading with his eyes. 'He wouldn't take to physical violence well,' the Observer noted. He shrugged 'he should have just told us what he knows.'

The Observer sighed, patting Bennet on the cheek roughly. He stood up and straightened his tie. He gave Guy a nod and walked out of the room. He could hear Mr. Bennet scream as the door closed behind him. He had tried to warn the man but some people don't know what's good for them.

## Chapter 4: Capture part 1/3

Two

“And why would that be a bad thing?”

“Because they would drug me. When I fall asleep before the voices go away-things-happen. Like to Kendra and Doctor Ben.”

Selma shivers, it's only been twenty minutes but already she's half asleep. She tries not to think about it but the visions are closing in.

Selma tosses down the Gameboy. Pulling out the blankets from under her knees, she puts them over her shoulders. Behind her a window is open to the woods where Selma could spend the night with less fear than in bed. Like she had the first night she'd found Kendra's note when she'd seen Will's scar. When she'd first realized what monsters ran the Center.

It had been a warm April night over a year ago when Kendra had been gone missing and with few leads and no evidence of foul play, the police had chalked it up to her being another runaway.

In their last conversation before she had left, Kendra gave Selma a warning.

“If I'm right about the Center then we're in trouble.” She said with a serious glance. “Whatever you do Selma, don't tell them about your dreams anymore. Not if Blackfly's in charge.” She said playing with one of her braids.

“Ok sure, it's not like I tell them everything anyways.” Selma said shrugging.

“I'm serious Selma. Until I know for sure, you can't let them know about the future or the places you see or the people.” Kendra said strangely grave.

“Fine, I get it.” Selma said in a voice filled with discomfort. “But how do you know Blackfly's so bad anyways?”

“When was the last time you saw Will?” Kendra hissed.

“A while, I guess.” Selma hedged around the issue of her missing boyfriend.

“It's been a month Selma. He's been missing a month now and no one's reported him. He's not like us; he never runs away”

“Maybe that wasn't the Center or Blackfly. We don't actually know.” Selma said quietly.

“Selma, they had my sister institutionalized and then killed.” Kendra grabbed hold of Selma's arm; her deep brown eyes had lost their usual jovial spark. They were dark with an anger Selma rarely saw. “Now they have Will. They'll go after you next so you have to promise me. It's life or death.”

Selma nodded and then swallowed slowly as Kendra loosened her hold on Selma's arm. After a long moment, Kendra smiled and punched Selma, lightening up the mood. Selma laughed but frowned worriedly when Kendra turned her back.

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"Well then, I'll see you when I see you." Kendra said as she stuffed her bag with snack food.

"You're disappearing again?" Selma complained, watching Kendra overstuff what Selma recognized as a runaway bag. It was something they had in common, the urge to leave and never look back. That and the identical looking bag they used to do it with.

"You bet, I can't do squat at home and this whole Center puzzle needs my whole attention. You know what my house is like." Kendra's voice sounded cheerful but the look on her face made Selma's heart constrict.

"How long?" Selma said trying to sound casual.

"I have no idea but I won't be around, if I can help it." She said scowling at Selma's real question. Kendra knew Selma was really asking how long before she should call the cops.

"Be careful then." Selma said awkwardly. She briefly wondered if two weeks was long enough for Kendra.

"Don't worry about me, I always am. You'd just better not tell them about your visions." She warned before walking out the door.

There were signs: the sounds, the lights, the exhaustion and most importantly, the feeling.

Selma could feel it coming like a big slow wave crashing in on her before pulling her out and into the sea.

She could feel it in her bones, on her skin, in her hair and in her lungs, days before it happened, getting stronger and closer to pulling her under.

She could feel it now.

The visions came when they came so Selma felt there wasn't any reason to tell the Center. They were supposed to be the good guys; at least that's what Selma kept telling herself.

Even when Kendra had discovered that people mysteriously went into the sublevels never to remerge, Selma hadn't believed.

The people who disappeared had their names on a strange list.

Jenny had told her of the rooms under the Center but they weren't supposed to be used for patients. The list kept getting longer and longer and the people on it kept on disappearing. Still Selma wouldn't believe. Not even when Will's name went on the list.

The Center couldn't be evil.

She couldn't have put Will or Jenny or any of the people she knew in danger. She couldn't have let them give Will that God-awful scar.

Selma shakes her head, it didn't matter what she had thought now she knew the truth. She stands up on the couch and ducks to avoid the dream-catchers she and her cousin had hung up years ago and finally closed the window.

She stayed standing leaning to her right trying to get a glimpse of what used to be Kendra's house before she had run away, over a year ago.

## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

Selma steps off the couch, clutching on to a stack of boxes to help her now unsteady legs to the floor. She's getting worse by the minute; she was barely holding on to consciousness but suddenly Selma didn't care, all she could think about was Kendra's legacy. Selma crouched down to touch the sticky residue on the side of the couch.

Kendra had suspected the Center's good intentions from the very beginning; she always said there was something wrong about the Center but then again, Kendra didn't trust doctors, not since her sister had died, since she'd first heard the name Blackfly.

It had been two months when Selma's promise was finally put to the test and she fell into a psychic coma. She awoke three weeks later screaming, ending her coma before its time.

Selma refused to say what she saw; only that Kendra was gone.

Whatever Selma saw haunted her every dream and every thought until she began to feel that her visions were threatening to pull her under again, threatening to give her the whole story.

Frightened, Selma had left the Center and went to where she could be alone to fight off the visions. Where she didn't have to see her friends die.

When Selma walked into the clubhouse that night, her nurse had been waiting. Selma forced the old woman to stay the night, taking her car keys and cell phone from her.

When Jenny finally fell asleep on the couch, Selma got up to get a blanket from the bin. It was only then she noticed the writing scrawled on a nearby box in red permanent marker.

It wasn't written on just any box but the box full of things that the Center was looking for, things that were like Selma, special.

ICFD in the old whale

Selma pounded the dust out of the blanket, frowning. It was written in Kendra's handwriting.

'How long was that written there?' Selma thought as she walked to the couch.

She squatted beside the couch, pausing to touch the sticky residue of where Kendra had once put a large whale sticker there before she began to look for the rip in the bottom of the couch.

The sticker had come off years ago but they still called the couch 'the old whale' because no one wanted to carry the heavy thing out of the clubhouse so it stayed but not before it earned its name and some battle scars from every attempt at moving it.

Selma found the tear and a letter tucked inside. She opened it and read it slowly and carefully. Halfway through the letter, her hand had begun to shake.

When she finished reading the letter, she calmly folded it up again, placing it back into the couch. She stayed crouched near the floor for a moment, wiping the tear running down her cheek.

Selma stood up and rushed out of the clubhouse, holding her stomach and clutching her mouth.



## Chapter 5: Capture part 2/3

The fear was so strong then that it made her jump off the rotted porch. It pushed her through the minefield of junk she called a backyard. It compelled her to run down a path and urged her to climb a tree.

She spent the rest of the night sitting there, waiting for the lights to leave her eyes, waiting for the voices to be silent. She vowed not to have another vision as long she lived.

Selma shivered with fear, realizing that Kendra, who was the strongest and bravest person she knew, was likely already dead.

Each time her eyes had fluttered closed with sleep, she slipped further off the branch.

She slipped once, twice and then fell.

She climbed the tree again and sat there until she fell again; all night she kept herself awake that way and by morning, the light in her eyes and the voices in her mind were gone. She'd won against the alluring pull of sleep.

She made her way back when the sky was bright and her nurse was awake, sipping a can of iced tea on her aunt's porch.

"Its over. It'll be a long time before the lights comes back, I'm sure." Selma had said tossing the car keys at the elderly woman. The old nurse caught the keys with one hand and raised a single white eyebrow.

"Does this mean I'm free to go now?" Nurse Jenny said sipping slowly. Jenny watched her carefully as she circled around the porch and staggered toward the Volkswagen.

"Yes." Selma said too tired to roll her eyes. "Okay look I'm sorry for stealing them, but if I let you go, you would've told them where I was." Selma said opening the back door to Jenny's car.

"And why would that be a bad thing?" Her nurse asked with a frown.

"Because they would drug me. When I fall asleep before the voices go away-things-happen. Like to Kendra and Doctor Ben."

"That wasn't your fault, Selma. You aren't making these things happen; you're just seeing them before they do."

"How do you know that?" Selma snarled, slamming the car door shut, "You don't know anything. I have a vision with Kendra in it, and now she's gone-and what about when I dreamed about Doctor Ben, he went missing too. I'm making them disappear; it's all my fault. They're probably dead." Selma said with a cracked voice.

"Selma, I think you're running away for a different reason. You know you're not making them disappear. You're afraid of what you'll see when you fall asleep."

'Or of how my visions will be used when I fall asleep,' Selma thought but she only shrugged her shoulders at Jenny before dropping into the back seat of the classic Volkswagen.

## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

Jenny stepped into the driver's seat, balancing her drink, her sunglasses and car keys in her hands. She sighed before she started her car, which began bellowing a calming Jazz tune.

"Jenny, do they hurt them? Does the Center hurt the people I dream about?" Selma asks quietly after watching her nurse back out of the driveway.

"If you really want to know, all you have to do is let the visions in. You haven't let them in since Kendra disappeared. Is there something going on?" Jenny said watching Selma in the rear view mirror.

Selma looked out the window at the house she used to call home, she didn't answer Jenny's question. Onto the car window, she traced the letters ICFD and quietly, she whispered the meaning of the old code: In Case of a Friend's Death.

"Don't worry, I'm certain Kendra is alright." Jenny sighed, patting Selma's leg.

As Jenny drove Selma back to the Center that morning, Selma fell asleep without strange visions getting in the way.

The sound of a dog barking makes Selma jump. She has trouble feeling the fear she had that summer night. Now as she smells the damp air full of pine trees and fallen leaves, Selma only feels sleepiness.

She knew the moment she closed her eyes, none of it would seem real. The room, the blankets, the strange tasting drink and the cold wind would be far away.

'Maybe the dark was the only thing real and this was all a dream my mind made up to make me feel better,' she thinks darkly.

Selma tries to stand up, fighting the apathy but the effort throws her body into a violent spasm. She turns to steady herself against the couch, gripping the leather as tight as she could.

Selma feels a frightening numbness hold her; it wasn't the sleep aids she was used to. It was something much stronger finally taking effect. Selma crashes into the couch face first.

"Jenny, are you there? Help me! I know you're here. You're always here." Selma says rolling over, trying to pull her self up but no one answers her call.

For the first time Selma could remember, her nurse was late.

Selma rolls up her sleeve and pinches her arm. The pain helps and Selma break the sleeping spell but she can hardly sit up.

She sits forward as her nails dig into the couch, trying to force her body to stay up.

"I'm awake. It shouldn't be possible but I'm awake." She whispers to herself.

Selma brushes back her hair with a shaking hand. She looks up when she hears the sound of gravel scattering outside and the familiar click of the latch on the clubhouse door.

"Jenny, where were you? I just had a close call." Selma says, turning her head in time to see a flash of something shiny at the door and feels a pin prick in her thigh.

## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

Glancing down, Selma finds a dart protruding from her leg.

"How?" Selma yells out in shock.

As Selma fights the sedative, her leg drops out from under her, knocking her off the couch. She topples over her soda and stumbles into the crate. Selma looks around for her assailant but she couldn't make anything out as the visions become blindingly strong.

"P-puh please, don't let me fall asleep. I don't want to go back. I promise I'll do anything just please." Selma begs as she sinks to the ground, gripping the crate.

Jenny steps into the room, tossing the dart gun to the side.

Reaching over, she silently lifts Selma back onto the couch and smiles at the young woman as she yanks out the dart out of her leg.

Her long grey hair was beginning to fall out of the tight bun she had tied earlier in the day. There were dark circles around her deep brown eyes, ones Selma never noticed before.

Selma tries to reach out and touch Jenny's suddenly unfamiliar face, trying to understand her actions.

The nurse gently pats Selma's pale cold hand with her warm wrinkled ones, pressing it down to Selma's side.

"It's okay, Selma. I know what I'm doing. Just relax and focus on the ticking of the watch. That'll help you find him when you get there. It's going to be okay. I've taken care of everything. All you have to do is watch out for Mr. Smith. His people will come after you." The rest of her words were unintelligible as Selma finally falls asleep.

Her body feels as though it was dissolving. It took all her strength to keep her eyes open long enough see a blurry figure step into the room.

"No, stop." Selma whispers, jerking awake.

Selma blinks and finds that time itself has folded. She's lying outside in the grass as a hooded figure crouches over her.

He grips the back of her shirt and loops his arms under her knees.

In a last ditch effort, Selma screams and hits at the figure as he lifts her up and places her into the back of a car. Nurse Jenny's car, Selma realizes. There was something familiar about the figure but Selma was in no state to figure out what.

"Where did they take them, Jenny? What do they do to the people in my dreams? Why do they all disappear? You know, don't you?" Selma babbles in her half-sleep as she fights the sedatives with a supernatural strength.

She could open her eyes again, but she could only see two blurry figures in the car seat in front of her. Selma's eyes close and this time they weren't going to open for a very long time. Nurse Jenny glances back from the driver's seat to the slouching teenage passenger.

## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

"Even if I told you, sweetheart, you wouldn't want to believe me." Jenny said as she watched her head lull back into the seat.

"Will she be alright? Should I do something more?" Asks the hooded figure as he shuts the passenger side door. His voice is strained with worry.

"I don't know but she does have an incredibly strong constitution for sleep aids. I think she'll be fine. Will, don't stress yourself out. She's fine." Jenny says when she notices Will looking back at Selma. Will grunts, turns and continues to frown.

## Chapter 6: Capture part 3/3

Jenny's smile fades away as she remembers that all this was Will idea.

Jenny didn't blame him; he'd been in a place where the darkest of night terrors were born and bred for what must of seemed like an eternity.

"We've done all we can from our end. It's all for nothing if the Center figures it out before she uses her real powers." Jenny says, driving onto the main road.

"I see. This is far enough. I'll find my way from here, Jenny. When you take her back there, watch your back, they'll want to know why you took so long bringing her in." The young man said as the car came to a stop. He opened the door but didn't exit.

Instead, he turned to face her.

"You have something to say." He says suddenly tilting his head. "We both know what it is but you don't want to offend me because of what they did to me. Don't worry Jenny Benny, you can say anything to me."

"Was it necessary to send her back? She isn't ready. You can see it. I know you see she isn't ready. This is your plan, Will, and you know what kind of betrayal this will be to her when she finds out."

"There's no more time. She needs to fall asleep for it to all work. You think I'm selfish, demanding and manipulative. That I'm using my doppelganger to do my dirty work so when the time comes and Selma finds out what happened, she couldn't be angry with me. That she couldn't stop loving me. Jenny, I've given up everything. In comparison, this is only a small request."

"The sacrifices that have to be made, I understand themâ"

"No you don'tâbut you still think she should have the choice. The choice is out of our hands; the Center made sure of that. This is the only way for all of us to be free." Will says, touching Jenny's arm. His sleeve fell away, revealing an array of scars on the back of his hand. Jenny knew that they reached well past his shoulder. Will pulled down his hood, further covering his face.

"Jenny, you will have to fight your way out so remember the plan. You have to be prepared to risk everything. That's the only way this is going to work."

"I'm prepared." Jenny said, trying not to stare at the scar. There was a long silence as the car was filled with cool night air.

"It's about time I get back. Liam doesn't like switching back no matter how long. He thinks I'll go back on the deal, like I could make that choice." He laughs bitterly.

"Goodbye Jenny, and thank you." Will steps out of the car. He waves and in a flash of light, Liam appears where Will had been standing.

Selma falls deeper and deeper into a place where there is nothing at all. No sound. No smell. No taste. No anything - only memories of what was and what could be. A place where everything was mute and dull; a place like the bottom of the sea.

## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

'Welcome to Oblivion,' thinks Selma as the sense of nothingness welcomed her like an old friend.

Selma fumes at her parents for abandoning her, at her aunt for letting the Center take her and at her nurse for betraying her. She shouts into the void in frustration. She needed them to believe her, to protect her from places like the Center.

There was a time, Selma remembers, when none of it existed; when falling asleep would mean waking up the next morning with only a foggy dream. Then there were no secret agencies, no cursed objects, no lost friends and no psychic comas.

But one fateful night six years ago, everyone-the whole world-had the same dream. Selma vaguely remembers a grassy hill and a moon with red rings. Selma remembers reading in the newspaper that the dream was 'a modern example of mass hysteria' that 'gripped entire continents' like it was some disease.

A hysteria that could continue for weeks at a time, where there were regular and sudden sightings of mutants, monsters and fiends but not one ounce of proof.

The monsters, wherever they came from, and the powers they brought, rendered cameras and other recording devices useless and left most witnesses crazed with wonder or worse, fear.

Selma's cousin Ashley, one the few people who knew the truth and was not crazy, infected or missing, was Selma's only hope of ever escaping the Center's clutches.

The problem is Selma hadn't had time to tell her before she ran and was caught.

As far as Selma's friends knew, she would be another mysterious disappearance, another name on the list.

Another Will and Kendra. Selma assumed that she'd finally been transferred to the sublevels with the machine that read her dreams.

No cop or reporter would believe the stories and those who did were either crazy or working for the Center or Blackfly.

After what seems like an eternity, Selma hears someone whistling a song. The whistling breaks off and on and then off again like a wind was blowing the vision just out of reach.

The whistling breaks in again and Selma recognizes the song, and perhaps even the whistler. A bright light shaped like a crack appears in front of Selma.

"Will?" Selma calls out afraid.

Suddenly, Selma feels the weight of her necklace watch and the sound of its ticking.

"Will?" she asked again, but the feeling was gone. Instead, she heard something out in Oblivion. But that too disappeared when the vision opened up to her.

## Chapter 7: Oblivion part 1/3

### Three

"Doctor Ben, who was on the phone?"

"A man. He said his name was Henry. It's so strange, that's the name Selma just gave us and he wanted Selmaâ !

Disappointment hits Selma harder than a speeding truck when she smells the disinfected air of the Center and the strawberry mint candies her Doctor, Doctor Ben, used to carry.

The whistling had reminded her of Will but he'd gone into the sublevels and no one ever came back from there, not even in her visions.

She wasn't going to find Will in a vision, she was sure of that.

Selma wondered if he was still alive, if he was nearby. She could still remember him laughing at her as he skated past her at the ice rink, but that was more than a year ago. She'd seen him once since then but it was not the same; it was like he was asleep - only his eyes were open and staring.

Selma recognizes the day the vision was taking her-she'd been wishing for it when she thought the Center was good but later dreading it when she knew the truth.

This is the day her doctor disappeared and the day the Center finally believed in her powers.

It was during the first months after the mass hysteria had started. The Center was busy sorting out the ordinary crazies from the real freaks - the ones who didn't just see the monsters but who were the monsters or who could become them.

At first, the vision shows her a glimpse of the floor, somewhere in the Center. Then the light expands until through it she sees the sides of Dr. Ben's brown loafers and then Jenny's white sneakers.

Selma could hear their incoherent voices as they shuffled into the room.

The light dims then explodes into a full room and Selma sees her own crossed ankles hanging over the side of a bed and her hands picking at the Center's issued grey PJs.

Her normally red and bitten-down fingernails are long and neat. Her hair is shorter, redder and is tied up in pigtails, a style she stopped wearing years ago. There are tired looking bruises under her eyes. This ten-year-old Selma now whistles an old nursery rhyme Will had taught her.

For a suspended second, the ten-year-old Selma stares at the older one.

But then the second was over and the younger girl's eyes wonder away. Already, she whistles a new song.

In a Center containment room in Sublevel Four, Selma's body lays connected to an IV and a heart monitor while a third mysterious machine's mechanic arm hangs above her head.

The arm trains a light on Selma's face while its monitor reads standby.

## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

Selma's closed eyes produce tears that roll across her temples and into her neatly combed hair just before her lips twitch into a strange smile.

She hadn't moved on her own in two days but late last night and early this morning, her heart rate and blood pressure had gone up and now she was crying.

By the time the machine with the mechanic arm starts to generate an image, a flutter of activity had already begun across the planet behind bolted and screened doors as people bartered. They bargained for access to the security tapes, audio recordings and most importantly, recordings from that special machine, a machine they've dubbed the DI: the dream interpreter.

At the Center everything was business as usual; they had a Doctor on call, nurse Jenny in house and as usual as ever a shady official with the title of Observer sulked around.

It has never been clear what the observer was supposed to be observing whether it was patients, the machinery or staff members but he never failed to show up during patients' sessions.

The only change this time other than being on sublevel four is the Center's sedative specialist and his equipment was prepared to treat Selma.

At the moment he was with another difficult patient one who made fires with her mind if she wasn't heavily sedated.

The specialist is prepared, if she ever opened her eyes, to pump Selma with enough sedatives that would kill most horses.

It wouldn't kill her, he's pretty sure particularly with her tolerance for sedatives, but she wouldn't be running away and refusing to sleep anymore.

Jenny uncrosses her arms and checks the MDR's monitor and nods at a skinny short man waiting outside of the room.

He wore a silk tie, a dress shirt and a fowl expression. He struts into the room like a proud parrot.

"Hello, my name is Jennifer Lodging, but you can call me..." Nurse Jenny says stretching out her hand.

"Shhh, she's working." The man says pushing past Jenny and ignoring her outstretched hand. He drags a stool in front of the DI screen as a very dim image of a neat white room with a little red head girl sitting on a bed appears on screen.

The image flickers as Selma shifts in her cot moving out of the light that lit her face.

The observer frowns in Selma's direction, now that the Center had this machine it was no longer necessary to put up with the moody teenager and her frustrating issues. They just needed her well enough to have her visions. Perhaps they should invest in restraints he thought briefly before dismissing the idea. It would be a waste of money; she wasn't going to wake up again, he'd pump her with tranquilizers himself if I came down to it.

The observer shook his head the Center should have hid the machine from Selma better; there were ways to block her visions. It was just a matter of hypnotic suggestion and specially made storage spaces.



## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

Selma had tried to escape at every opportunity since she'd figured out what it did and what it would mean for her.

Abruptly the DI machine begins relaying the sound in Selma's vision. The Observer suddenly turns his attention to the nurse who'd miraculously found the runaway psychic. He had a few questions for her, but it could wait until after Selma has had her vision quota for the day.

Selma watches as a fly buzzes past her and thinks she can feel the air off its wings. She shakes her head; she knows it's impossible but she has a feeling that this is more than a vision. It feels closer than the others, almost like the glass between here and there was gone.

Like whatever was stopping her from dropping into her visions was gone.

It reminded her of the visions she had at the beginning before the Center had believed. Back then anything seemed possible.

Back then she felt like she could do or 'go anywhere she wanted'. Selma suddenly caught her breath the thought felt odd and almost familiar to Selma like she'd heard someone say it to her before. Then quite suddenly she remembered the hooded figure, the grassy field and Jenny's Volkswagen.

Selma shivered remembering the mind games Will and Kendra used to play trying to test how much Will could do.

Selma never liked it when Will used his powers; there was something criminal about pushing people around with your mind.

Selma reaches out to the image her fingers shaking in the light her hands touched the cold water like surface of the vision with surprise.

Normally she'd be jerked away if she tried to touch and jerked or toward it like it when she tried to turn away, but not anymore. Something had changed.

"âbreathe in through your nose and imagine the air travelling from the top of your head then all the way down your spine. Then breathe out. Think about your safe place and relax." Jenny's voice floats out as she softly lifts her hands for emphasis.

Doctor Ben rolls his eyes catching the younger Selma's eyes they suppress their smiles.

Dr. Ben never did like Jenny's idea of 'helping' patients. He only put up with it because it seemed to have a calming effect on Selma.

Selma pulls her hand away from the light as she watches Jenny. She feels a smile spread across her face but the tears that float off her face ruin it. Selma tries to close her eyes but they are already closed and again Selma thinks about leaving.

It made no sense; Jenny would never betray her they were closer than that, they were always closer than that. Selma was missing something. She had to be.

Selma suddenly remembers that the Center is watching this vision with her and she feels disturbed; her mind wasn't hers anymore.

## Chapter 8: Oblivion part 2/3

The younger more naive Selma nods at Jenny and asks when she can go back to school.

Selma calls out. "Selma, if you can hear me; Don't trust them."

"If you're feeling up to it we can do your math drills when Dr. Ben and is finished." Nurse Jenny says glancing up as almost as though she heard the older Selma's warning.

"Did you hear that? Never mind these machines play a number on my ears." She says looking at the younger Selma like she couldn't figure something out.

"You were asleep; these things you see are just dreams. That place isn't real." Doctor Ben said jumping in.

"Wait, can you guys can hear me? Hello? Hey!" The older Selma yells.

"Doctor Ben do you have an uncle named Swaran?" asks the younger Selma sliding off the bed.

"Selma, sit down you've been asleep for almost two months. You're still weak." Doctor Ben says as he and nurse Jenny rush forward to support the wobbling ten-year old, but she stubbornly brushes them away.

"You do don't you. I thought so. You were very sad that he missed your tenth birthday when he promised he'd get you that model car." She says cheerfully despite the exhaustion arranged her features.

Doctor Ben crosses his arms over his chest. "Selma I don't quite understand what you're trying to say."

"Yes, you do. I know that your mother loved to wear this red and brown hat but it got torn the day before your tenth birthday so she wasn't wearing one when you took your birthday picture. It's the only picture you have where she wasn't wearing that hat before you went to boarding school."

Doctor Ben takes a surprised step back from the young Selma and nurse Jenny takes hold of Selma's hands wrapping her fingers around them in a familiar way.

"I'm not finished." She said brushing away Jenny's hand away.

"I know why your uncle Swaran missed your tenth birthday and why your mom looked so angry in the picture. It's wasn't because he was working like you always thought, it has to do with money he borrowed from Henry and the work he had to do to pay it back, it was so you could go to school so you would be a doctor and work here. Find Henry he had powers before everyone else, he had the dream first."

The doctor is silent, and Jenny grips a folder looking from the doctor to Selma and back again.

"I'll figure out what's going on here, don't worry Selma once I do, we'll find a way to deal with your unique problems." Doctor Ben says at last shaking his head.

"Doctor Ben, you don't believe me, you think I'm tricking you." The ten-year-old Selma says angrily gripping the bed her voice sounded hurt.

"I didn't want to say, but I know about the cat and why you want everyone to call you doctor Ben instead of your real name, Benidiar. Ben was your neighbour's name."

## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

"What are you talking about?" a look of sudden panic spreads across Doctor Ben's face.

"It's OK you got away with it. His parents never figured out how it happened, neither did the police. But you know I can't smell burnt matches without remembering what the two of you did. Do you still remember the cat do you still hear it screaming? I do, and that's not all I remember. I remember everything. Everything."

"No. Stop it." Doctor Ben says stepping forward interrupting Selma but his pager suddenly goes off. He stops to read the page before rushing out the room nearly crashing into a nurse standing outside the door.

"You shouldn't do that Selma." Jenny says anxiously watching the chubby young nurse collect the things she dropped when Doctor Ben bumped into her.

"It's the truth, besides you didn't see what he did, it was horrible." Selma said jutting her chin forward.

Nurse Jenny shakes her head and starts to fill out paper work.

"Selma I don't think you should be advertising what you can do. There are people out there who would be in danger because of it." Jenny said putting down her clipboard.

"That only because they've done something bad. Besides I'm not afraid of anyone, it's not like I'm the only this sort of thing is happening to. I'll bet it'll be on TV pretty soon." The younger Selma said nodding.

"Did you see that in one of your-um dreams?"

"Not exactly, but come on you can't believe that this sort of thing could be kept secret, I mean people aren't stupid they're going to notice when toddlers lift cars, when old ladies are flying and when people disappear into thin air. "

Jenny taps her pen against the clipboard worriedly as a young Selma chatted on about the future.

The observer glances at Nurse Jenny. Jenny doesn't move she doesn't even blink. The observer grins, he could practically hear Jenny's heart speed up in fear.

He can tell that she was afraid of what he might ask. The Centre knows how to take care of threats and they know how to do it well. Now time to get her to say something damning.

The machine produces sounds that mean that Selma's emotions and thoughts are interfering with the connection. The machine beeps again and this time the observer feels his own heart speed up in anticipation.

He always wanted to touch a fragment of this power, the power to see through time and space. He wanted to have control like no one else before him.

The machine whimpers louder and more violently then ever before. Liam appears out of thin air but nurse Jenny and the Observer do not seem to notice him. Nurse Jenny leans forward to touch Selma on the arm.

"Why is she dreaming about this?" the observer asks Jenny as he curiously watched the old nurse tightly wrap her fingers around Selma's hand. Liam walked over to nurse Jenny's bag and began rifling through it, he stopped to make what he was touching invisible before taking out a small bag. Liam began to quietly make his way across the room to Selma.

## Sleeping Planet: Escaping from Superstition

"How on earth am I supposed to know? Look at the God damn machine, maybe it'll tell you." The old woman says glaring at the observer who continues to watch the old nurse with suspicion.

"I was wondering if it was because it's about you because you double crossed her." The observer grins, "You do know what happens if she dreams about you, right? You have to go through an intense screening process. That could be weeks, months or even years in isolation or you might be too dangerous for even that. At your age they might not bother and just put you in the morgue."

"That's only if the vision shows me doing something stupid enough to threaten Blackfly. I'm pretty sure Alliance's crime bosses have people who are actually infected to deal with. Besides who are you trying to fool? I was fully briefed before bringing her in. As long as I'm not infected, I'm fine." Jenny pursed her lips disapprovingly at the Observer as he smirked.

"And you claim you don't know who helped Selma escape. That you haven't done anything you don't want Blackfly to know about."

"I was the one who brought Selma in. I don't understand why you suspect me. There's nothing that points to me." Jenny says leaning in on Selma and finally unwrapping her hand the sleeping girl's in practiced flourish.

Liam steps in between Jenny and Selma. He touches Selma's hand gingerly and glances past the observer to the DI screen as it goes blank.

"Why did you do that, anyway?"

"Bring her in? The money of course." The old nurse says smiling slightly as she notices a flicker of what was Liam's reflection on the blank screen.

"Well, that makes things simpler, doesn't it?" He says still glaring at the old nurse. "It makes all the hard questions go away, doesn't it? You did it for the money. But you know to me it all seems weird. The two of you were like mother and daughter, poor little girl with no mommy and an old bat with no one to live for, anymore at least."

Liam turns to look at Jenny with raised eyebrows, which she missed because he was still invisible. He shrugs and turns back to his task he took from Jenny's bag and began to slowly put into Selma's pocket.

"I'd prefer if you'd be quite now." Jenny said through gritted teeth. Liam begins to slowly put his hand in Selma's pocket watching the observer. Liam might be able to make things invisible but someone would notice if Selma or her pockets disappeared.

"Hmm," The Observer laughed "I'm sure you would your daughter is a rather sore subject. But besides that, I really would like to know why it took you six hours to bring Selma in, I could have gotten her in in two."

"Then you should've, but you didn't, now would you let off with the third degree I'm trying to watch this?"

"There's nothing on screen anyway." The observer sighed turning around in his stool and tapping on the side.

Liam pulled his away from Selma breathing a sigh of relief.

"Piece of junk!" The Observer said slapping the machine hard. The observer picked up his radio and began a rant about faulty machinery but stopped as if began working again

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Liam circled around Selma's bed and again he put something from the bag into her pocket.

## Chapter 9: Oblivion part 3/3

"I think she's dreaming it doesn't seem to be an actual vision this time." Jenny said just before the machinery malfunctioned a second time.

"And how do you know that? Look at it unexplainable static, recording out of order, white outs." He said using the radio to point at the screen. "It's acting like an ordinary machine recording an ability and here I thought modified objects were immune to abilities." The observer says with a strange look in his eye, Jenny could almost feel him thinking Unless...

He puts down the radio slowly.

"It is, but we don't know if and when Selma has normal dreams. This machine can't tell the difference she might be having normal brain activity and this thing doesn't know how to translate ordinary dreams into images."

"So what?" The observer replied wondering what Jenny might be hiding. He knew she was hiding something. He could feel it.

"So maybe this is a dream an ordinary illogical dream." Jenny says as the DI machine played the image of Jenny dropping her clipboard before freezing again.

"What we were looking at was Doctor Ben's last day. Selma's convinced the Center has something to do with his disappearance and we both know she can't have a vision of Doctor Ben anymore, not unless he stopped his work with Mr. Smith?"

"He's still working with him." He said absently.

The observer paused and gave Jenny a look. "But you know I think you're lying. I think you're hiding something, you know doing all that weird things you do to her when she's sleeping. Finding her when out best finders could not and taking an extra four hours to do it." He said looking at Jenny's hand. "It just adds up to a whole lot of strange."

"This is the third time a machine we've modified has malfunctioned. One of those times was when Selma went into a shop we were keeping tabs on, the security camera went haywire just long enough for Selma to buy something and walk out. I don't need to mention that the camera was modified so that wouldn't happen. Someone's helping Selma and I want to know who." The observer said pointedly.

"I understand that the people you represent have a lot on the line here but no one not even Selma can fully control what she sees and when she sees it. You are going to face the fact that this one, at least is probably a dream and that we don't really know how any of these things work." Jenny said with a small smile.

"You're not just a nurse playing mommy who's gotten greedy. You're a lying manipulative freak."

"What?"

"You're something suspicious-a dangerous element. You know the type I'm supposed to report."

"Yes, you caught me. I'm a kidnapping evil no good fairy godmother. Please tell me you realize how ridiculous you sound."

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"I don't know about the fairy bit but you've seen the things in here, what these freaks are and what they can do. So don't patronize me, besides sounding silly won't matter if I'm right."

Jenny pursed her lips and didn't say anything. She just wished Liam would be quick about his work.

Liam put his hand in the bag and picks up a receipt and frowns not sure if it was supposed to go into Selma as well. He turns it over and notices the note Jenny had written on the back. Liam takes time to read it. As he stopped interfering with the DI it begins to play again.

*"â that was so many years ago, I nearly forgot about it, but she knew. I can't believe her. No, she's just a mischievous child."*

"Doctor Ben who was on the phone?"

"He said his name was Henry. It's so strange, that's the name Selma just gave us and he wanted Selma. Something strange is happening hereâ !." The DI stops as Liam slowly and carefully puts the receipt into Selma's pocket.

Jenny catches the expression the Observer makes as he hears the name Henry. A thin layer of sweat began to break out across his forehead as he loosens his tie.

Jenny frowns, who was Henry and why was the Observer so nervous about him.

Selma watches herself walk out of the room. This was the last time Selma saw Ben in real life.

The noise in the corridor swallows up Selma's voice and Doctor Ben's conversation on the payphone reaches her through the open door.

"What do you mean? I can't tell you that. I'm sorry sir but exactly who do you think you are?"

Doctor Ben snorts. He pauses for a moment before starting again.

"What, no. What are you insinuating."

"There is no problem. I'm free tomorrow. Yes, my office is fine. But wait what does Selma's condition have to do with it?"

"Classified! I'm her physician." Selma's doctor pauses for a long time.

"No, is this a joke? May I have your name again? Henry, and who do you work for? Confidential? I cannot believe that anyone with this much clout would support such an idea."

Doctor Ben is silent for so long Selma begins to think that he had hung up and left the pay phone.

"Yes, I've seen it. Very. Goodbye." This time there was a resounding click as Ben replaced the pay phone's receiver.

Doctor Ben puts down the phone down and walks into the room clearly dazed.

"Who was that?" asks Nurse Jenny.

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"Huh, just some lawyer." Doctor Ben said quietly as he put on his coat. "Before I leave, Jenny. Do you know anything about Selma's extended family?"

"Her dad came in with her Aunt for a visit yesterday and her aunt and cousins are coming in again on Saturday. I don't think her grand parents are taking time away from their store this time, but they'll be around."

"No not visitors maybe a far off uncle or estranged grandparent who might want access to her records. "

For the first time since she picked up her pen Jenny stopped writing.

"No, not anyone who would need a lawyer."

"I see. That's a bit strange, then. Well, see you tomorrow."

"Yes, goodbye Jeffery. Wait, sir what did they want?"

Doctor Ben doesn't turn around and stares at the door instead.

"How did she know about Ben and the cat? Jennifer that was so many years ago, I nearly forgot about it, but she knew. I can't believe her. No, she's just a mischievous child."

"Doctor Ben who was on the phone?"

"A man. He said his name was Henry. It's so strange, that's the name Selma just gave us and he wanted Selma. Something strange is happening here today, Selma isn't the only one they've asked for."

"What? Who else did they ask for and what do they want?"

Doctor Ben's shoulders climb toward his ears but he doesn't answer the question. He walks out the room with his soldiers still hunched.

"Henry? Who's Henry?" Selma calls out hopefully. Jenny gasps spinning around she drops her clipboard.



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