

Dream Angel-Revised

The brisk November wind blew Tommy's unkempt hair in his face. He wished he hadn't lost his favorite Eagles hat. The gray BMX Magnum squeaked and squealed under the pressure of his 200lb frame, but Tommy kept pushing the bike up the hill on Market Street. Rivers of sweat ran down his back, while his ears began to hurt from the cold. A threadbare Temple hoody and worn blue jeans were all that kept his body's warmth from escaping. His bloodshot brown eyes scanned the street, and he slowed to peer down the dimly lit alleyway.

Even at 11 am, the alley was dark. Only seven feet in width, with graffiti covering the concrete walls on both sides, any sliver of sunlight attempting to bring life died before reaching the street. Addicts looking to score littered the sidewalk, waiting, pacing, chewing their nails. Some tried to get freebies from the working girls on the corner, who always laughed in their faces. This was a great source of amusement for Tommy. He was friends with the hookers, but refused to allow them to take any of his money. That was for the smack. Now, if they wanted to give him a freebee, he wouldn't complain. Too bad that never happened.

Day after day the street played the same scene, with Tommy begging and pleading with Johnny for a hit of anything. Today was no different, as Johnny stood leaning against the ripped-out payphone next to the bodega, a cigarette hanging out of the corner of his mouth. "Yo, Tommy. What up, man? Whatcha lookin for?"

"Don't worry about it, Johnny. I'm cool. "

Johnny took his ever-present Newport out of his mouth as he walked towards Tommy. "Why you sittin there on that corny ass bike lookin like you seen a ghost?"

"Man, just go away. I ain't got no money."

"Ok, Ok. Don't get all worked up. Just askin." Johnny looked Tommy up and down. "For real, bro, you look fucked up. Somethin wrong?"

"A girl. I'm lookin for a girl. Blond hair, pretty eyes, looks like she don't belong round here. Three weeks ago I had a dream about her. Then today I seen her walkin down the street. You believe that crazy shit?"

“Dude, I just seen her! No shit! Just walked down the alley. Don’t think she’s goin make it without one of these scumbags gettin to her, though. You better hurry.” He laughed. “Wait a dream? You kiddin me?”

“Crazy, right? I don’t know. Maybe just the drugs talking.”

“Maybe ya need some more. Gotta special—two bags for twenty. You in?”

Tommy couldn’t waste anymore time. He had followed her for an hour now, before he lost her around the alley. He was afraid of letting her get away. There was a reason she was here, not that he believed in God or anything. More like some deep-seeded longing for a reason to live. She had come to save him; to lead him out of this hell, or so he hoped. His angel. “See-ya Johnny.” His stained brown boot pushed down on the pedal and he entered the darkness as Johnny’s high-pitched hyena laugh echoed down the alley.

The dream had kept Tommy alive. The night the first dream appeared was to be his last. He had saved his money and planned on buying enough smack to stop his heart. Life had become unbearable, the devil in a Ziploc flowing through him, forcing him to do things he was too ashamed to think about. His family had disowned him years before, after he stole his parent’s furniture and sold it for \$100 bucks and a bag of dope. He had found out his dad died from reading his obituary in the paper. That was his breaking point. Shame and self-loathing had been all that was left of the person he once was. Through his tears, Tommy had laid out his final plan.

Except now, a new obsession had taken over. The past three weeks had been filled with the dream. As a junkie Tommy didn’t usually dream, but now he saw her nightly, a young blond woman, opening her creamy white arms to him like she was offering him a hug. Sometimes speaking to him, sometimes not. And then this morning, on his way to the Y, he saw her. He had never seen her in person, but there she was, walking down the street, her long blond hair like rays of sunshine emanating out from her. Immediately he recognized her, his mind trying to twist itself around her being real, here in front of his eyes. Having no idea what to do, he followed her on his bike.

He made his way down the alley, fellow addicts trying to talk to him, but he barely noticed. All he could think about were her piercing blue eyes. She had become the one good thing in his life; the one person he could count on to be there for him every night while he slept.

Maybe I'll go back to Jersey and see mom again. Maybe she could help me get into a good rehab program, one with that group therapy and counselor crap.

The uplift his spirit had felt was unbelievable. Who knew a dream could make a person want to change? Tommy was surprised by these new ideas he had, like eating, and showering. He had started going to the YMCA around the block to clean himself up. The people there were really nice, and he felt almost like a regular person. But, then he would go see Johnny, and it all seemed worthless.

His thoughts pushed him further down the dank alleyway; the bike narrowly missing a number of sleeping sacks along the sides.

Tommy reached the end, and a flood of sunlight assaulted him. He closed his eyes and waited for his sight to return. After his temporary blindness subsided, he searched the area for any signs of his angel. Something was telling him to turn right down Race Street. He wasn't sure why, but Tommy felt like he had been here before, following this girl, on his gray bike, down this street. Maybe it had been in one of the dreams. Maybe this was a dream.

The bike under Tommy was louder than the addicts screaming in detox. After riding all morning, his leg muscles were starting to feel like jelly. This was the most exercise his body had seen in years, and it felt like all the drugs he had ever put into his body were being expelled in the sweat running down his back. But he refused to quit. *What else do I have to do. Nicky will still be there in a few hours if I don't find her.*

While waiting at a red light, Tommy heard a voice call his name: "Tommy! Oh my God. Tommy, is that you?"

He turned around and almost fell off his bike. "Mom!" Tommy dropped the bike and waved his hands in the air. "Mom!"

His mother ran over to him and threw her arms around his neck. Sobbing, she clung to him and thanked God over and over.

"Mom, what are you doing here?"

She pulled away and looked into his red-rimmed eyes. “Looking for you.” She smoothed down his hair, and wrapped her arms around him, warming him. “We came to find you and bring you home.”

Tommy looked up to see his sister Kelly and brother Michael coming towards them. They embraced as a family for the first time in years.

Tommy wiped his eyes as they separated. “How did you know where to find me?”

His mother dropped her head for a moment, then, after seemingly gaining strength, raised her eyes to Tommy’s. “You’re never going to believe this, but I was visited by a young woman with blond hair in my dream last night. She never spoke, but she grabbed my hand and led me to this street. Before she left, she hugged me and I felt a comfort I haven’t known since before you ran away. Somehow I knew I would find you here today. I called your brother and sister and we’ve been here for about hours, waiting. But I knew you would show up.”

By the time she had finished, Tommy was sobbing uncontrollably. He didn’t know who the blond woman was, or why she picked them, but now it didn’t matter. He was going home. He collapsed into their arms, allowing all the built-up emotion to be released. “Take me home. Please, mom, take me home.”