

## The Dreamcatcher<sup>468</sup>

Violeta Vázquez Llamas<sup>469</sup>

On a foggy Friday night of the year 1974, I was sitting on a booth at *Brenda's Diner*, just doing my homework and taking sips every now and then of my chocolate milkshake. I was minding my own business when suddenly I heard the loud sound of wheels squeaking on the ground. I knew right away where that din was coming from, and just by the sound of it, all my muscles got tense. When I heard the little bell that was on top of the door greeting the unpleasant customers, I lowered my gaze to my math notebook, knowing what was about to come. I could hear their rowdy footsteps coming straight to my booth. In the blink of an eye, I was face to face with the one and only Jack Cusack, the degenerate who loved picking on nerdy boys just for fun. He wasn't alone though, he always came with his little gang of stalkers who obeyed every single thing that he said.

He cleared his throat and crossed his arms, making me look at him apprehensively. I noticed that he was wearing his signature rings, the ones with which he tormented all of his victims when he had the occasion.

"What's a little crap like you doing away from home on a night like this?" He said with a devious grin on his face.

"Hey, look! The nerd's doing homework on a Friday night! Don't you think we should give him a lesson, Jack?" The shortest one of the gangs took the milkshake and spilled it all over my notebook. The rest of the gang hollered with laughter.

"You're lucky I'm in a good mood today, Madden. 'Cause trust me, the next time I see you doing homework on a Friday night, I'll give you the thrashing of the century. Do you hear

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me?” Jack made a fist and shoved it right in front of my face, making his voluptuous rings shimmer.

“Y-yeah, it won’t happen again, Jack.”

“Good boy,” he lowered his fist. “Now, do me a favor and get out of my sight.”

I took the stained notebook and stood up. Then, the gang sat down noisily on the booth I was occupying.

I sat on one of the chairs in front of the counter and tried to remove the chocolate from the notebook with a napkin, but it was useless. Once again, Jack and his gang had made a fool out of me, and I could feel the rage boiling inside my body. All I wanted at that moment was to give Jack a lesson, but I didn’t know how: I was just a scrawny boy, and he was well-built and hefty. I had no chance.

I was so concentrated on my thoughts that I didn’t notice that the man on the chair beside me was saying something.

“Sorry, what did you say?”

“I was asking if you were okay. I saw that those guys were bothering you.”

“Oh, yeah I’m fine. This happens almost every day, especially if I run into them in high school.”

“You should stand up for yourself one of these days, kid.”

“Yeah, as if it was that easy. Have you looked at them? They look like five apes, and they sure know how to fight.”

The man, who was short and stout, had a sympathetic smile on his rounded face. He patted my shoulder with his chubby hand, and then turned in his chair to reach for his briefcase.

“What’s your name, kid?” He said rapidly. I couldn’t help but stare at his thin lips, which were slightly stained with ketchup.

“Dustin. Dustin Madden.”

“Well Dustin, what if I told you that I have something that could really help you?”

“Do you have a gun or something like that?” I scoffed.

“No, something even better,” he took out from his briefcase a little dreamcatcher. Its wings wiggled slightly when he handed it to me. “This makes all your dreams come true on full moon nights. The only thing you have to do is hang it from your ceiling, right above your bed like a regular dreamcatcher, and dream. But be careful, this tool can be really dangerous depending on what you dream.”

I thought the man was out of his mind, so I decided to play along and looked at it with amazement.

“If it’s so valuable, why are you giving it to me? And if it has to be hanging from a ceiling, how come that you have it in your briefcase?”

“This dreamcatcher was made by a sorcerer from the *Ojibwa* tribe. My great-great-grandfather assassinated him with his own fusil in Pontiac’s war, back in 1764. We read in his diary that the old sorcerer was carrying it with himself as an amulet, but my great-great-grandfather, who was a cold and heartless man, stole the striking dreamcatcher from him right after he killed him, and it’s remained in our family ever since. Now that my biggest dream has finally come true, I’m giving it to you, ‘cause I was just like you, kid,” he lowered his grieving eyes as he made a pause. “I’ve been picked on my entire life because I was a nerdy, chubby boy. When I saw you, I knew you were the one. I’ve been carrying it around for months, trying to find somebody who needs it. Now it looks like my search has come to an end.”

“Well, I don’t really know what to say. T-thank you, I guess,” I stuttered.

“Just go home and do what I told you. And remember: be careful what you wish for.”

That was the last time I saw that baffling squat man in my entire life, and to be honest, sometimes a part of me wishes I had never encountered him.

That night, when I came back home, I went straight to the calendar and counted how many days were left until the next full moon night, which were exactly seven. Then, I did as the man told me, and hung the dreamcatcher right above my small bed.

Of course, at that point my biggest goal was to show Jack and his gang that I wasn’t somebody they could harass, and that’s something I had been trying to reflect in my dreams.

However, a feeling of despair pervaded my tormented mind, as I was seeing that no matter how hard I tried, every night I dreamed that Jack defeated me in one way or another.

That entire week I had been Jack and his gang's main target in high school. They harassed me so hard to the point that I sprained my left wrist when I fell to the ground when Jack pushed me in the cafeteria. My feelings of anger towards them were getting stronger every day, and I couldn't think of anything but revenge.

I started to lose the little faith I had in that old feathered object, even though it was my last hope. Some suicidal thoughts started to creep into my mind, since the feelings of solitude and desperation were growing deeper each day.

Nevertheless, Friday was a full moon night. That night I didn't go to *Brenda's Diner* as I usually did, because I stayed at home concentrating all the strength I had on dreaming something extremely vengeful towards Jack, and it finally happened.

In my dream, I pictured a majestic wolf going to Jack's house, and coming right through his window. The imposing animal made a thud as it landed on the ground, obtaining a startled Jack, who was already in his sleep, in response. He saw as the wolf started to climb up his bed, opening its maw full of sharp teeth. Jack started to cry for his life, but there was no escape for him: it was the end of Jack Cusack. The dream ended with the victorious howl of the wolf in the still of the night.

The next day, when I woke up I saw that my pajamas were torn. I could remember every single event that happened in the dream very lucidly, but I couldn't find an explanation as to why I woke up half naked.

To my surprise, that Saturday the news was all over town: eighteen-year-old Jack Cusack had been found completely dismembered on his bed. That's when I realized that the powers of the dreamcatcher were true. That's when I realized that I had become a killer.

Jack's case was never really solved, as police couldn't figure out the reason of his atrocious death. The autopsy revealed that he had animal bites all over his body, but they couldn't find any evidence of an animal entering his place.

Nowadays I still have the dreamcatcher, and so far most of my dreams, even the deepest and darkest ones, have come true.

Sometimes a man's despair can make him have extreme desires, turning him into an animal that would do anything barbaric, until he achieves his goal.

### Notes on contributor

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