



MR. SANDMAN, BRING ME NO DREAMS

by

Debbie Kuhn

So, you wonder why I'm such a caffeine junkie, why I hate to fall asleep.

Well, it's very simple: I'm afraid to dream. I'm terrified of the responsibility, the painful memories, and the torturous uncertainty.

Few people know the truth about me. It hurts too much to talk about it. But I've always liked you, and since you have nowhere else to go and nothing better to do, I'll tell you my story.

The only time I laugh nowadays is when someone says my name: "Joy." It just cracks me up to hear it, since I've been miserable for most of my life.

All the trouble started in 1977, when I was eighteen. Over Memorial Day Weekend, I tripped in the backyard and fell into our pool, hit my head and sank to the bottom. My father pulled me out in time, obviously, and I was revived – but not before I'd had an out-of-body experience.

Most people see their deceased loved ones when this happens – or a beautiful, bright light that welcomes them to the other side.

Not me. No, not Joy.

I found myself standing on a path littered with piles of burning debris, surrounded by a dark, spinning tunnel that roared like an F5 tornado. Shadowy, faceless entities leapt out of the writhing walls, shrieking at me to go back – to return and fulfill my destiny.

I ran, trying to find the end of the tunnel, but I soon lost my balance and was swept into the vortex.

The next thing I know, I'm in a speeding ambulance with sirens wailing.

A few weeks later, I began having dreams – premonitions, actually. It was little things at first – and I remembered them as déjà vu experiences that people routinely shrug off.

But then the dreams became more vivid – and real.

My best friend wrecked her mother's car, and I saw it all in a dream the night before. I dreamt that our neighbor backed over her new puppy with the family station wagon – and it happened the next day.

I knew the northeast coast would suffer a blackout on July 13 – and on the morning of August 16, I informed my parents that the King of Rock'n'Roll was lying unconscious on his bathroom floor – and he wouldn't recover.

You can trust me when I say that Elvis really has left the building – forever.

My older sister, Hope, was on tour that summer with her country-blues band, The Katydids. They were pretty famous by then. Hope told her drummer boyfriend, Luke, and the other members, Cass and Cindy, about my special "gift."

Around 5:00 A.M. on September 15, I had the worst premonition I would ever experience: I saw my sister and her band perish in a fiery plane crash.

I was there with them – in the dream – strapped into a narrow seat, coughing and choking as the cabin filled with acrid, black smoke – my face wet with tears.

I could hear the girls crying.

"This can't be happening," my sister gasped out.

The small plane took a nosedive and began spiraling towards the earth. All I could hear now was a ferocious roaring in my ears. An unseen object bashed me in the head – and then I awoke.

I jumped out of bed, shaking and sweating and sobbing. The band was in Nashville, over four hours away from Atlanta – and I was counting on a phone call to save their lives.

“Calm down, sis.” Hope sounded sleepy. “I believe you. I’ll make the others listen, okay?”

“Promise me, please.”

“We won’t take our plane up today. We’ll have it checked out – is that what you want to hear?”

“Yes,” I said, sniffing.

“I love ya, kiddo.”

“You’d better.”

I went back to bed, still trembling, and lay awake until my alarm clock went off.

Around noon that day, I was having a snack in one of the cafés on college campus when the news broke. A national radio show was being broadcast over the loudspeakers.

A cold paralysis gripped my body when I heard the words “plane crash.”

The rented craft, carrying a popular country music band, went down a few miles away from the Tulsa airport, its final destination. The musicians were scheduled to give a concert that evening, an event the governor of Oklahoma had planned on attending.

There were no survivors.

I bit my lip until it bled. I couldn’t feel the pain. I couldn’t feel anything.

They trusted me, and I never told them not to fly. I assumed it was their private plane that caught fire in the dream. If not for my warning, they would still be alive.

And that’s why I wake up screaming in the middle of the night.

THE END