

Tracy Kingston is an average teen but, as she slumbers, Tracy is unaware that she holds a defining role in a centuries old war and becomes the target of greed and obsession. Rick Hopman is thrown into the complex struggle for all that is good and to defeat a greater darkness once a mutual friend dies under mysterious circumstances. Ancient kingdoms...medieval prophecy...hideous warriors...and a climactic battle round out this intense thriller.

The Dreamkiller: Book 1 of The Great War Saga

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Book 1 of the Great War Saga

THE DREAMKILLER



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Part 1

Eve of the Great War

She ran after Lars as fast as her large body could muster. Her clothes were once beautifully ornamented; now her gown was nothing more than shards of fabric which had been torn as she and her husband fled through the forest that chilly night.

“Wait!” she called down to Lars; the man she had picked to become her husband and king of the Grendels.

Lars stopped his decline, turned and sprinted back up to where his wife had been panting. “We must not stop. Darvon is not far behind,” he reminded with panic behind every syllable.

“I know,” she exclaimed and reached out her arm for support. She screamed and fell to the ground and slid several feet down the hill. “Get it out of me!”

Lars reached his wife and took her hand and squeezed it. “It’s not time, Love. We must wait; the prophecies – your prophesies – must be fulfilled,” he tried to calm her, but to no avail.

She turned her soiled head in his direction with tears of blood in her eyes. “The child is not yours, yet you wish it to survive. I wish it to die – there is nothing good about this conception.”

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Lars stood erect and reached down and pulled out his canvas bag. He tilted his head back and drank several gulps of water and just as he was about to take a fourth, an arrow came through the back of his neck and out the front, sending a small geyser of blood in Nanaac's direction.

She was not sickened by the atrocity but merely stood up as best she could, picking up her beloved's sword as she did so; she knew there would be time later to mourn her loss. She scanned the horizon in every direction and soon saw the silhouetted outlines of her enemy lining the crest of the hill she had just walked down. With what strength she had, she brought the sword up over her shoulder in attack position.

As if that were a cue, two large horses, black armor plates hung from their head and forelegs, leapt the crest and screamed down toward Nanaac, who remained motionless as she studied her attackers.

She saw that the two riders carried a large net between them. So, she thought, they intend to capture me. Bent on not giving them that pleasure, Nanaac swung hard as the first rider passed. Her aim was precise as her blade struck the first pursuer in his side and he fell from his mount and as he did so, she drove her blade through his chest with all her might.

She knew deep down that her fight would be short-lived and she was correct when, just as she killed the first, another one approached from behind and knocked the sword out of her hands and instantly put his large arms around her body.

She fought with what little strength she had left, but it was no use. Her battle was lost and all of Grendel would either die or become enslaved. She had failed her people. She deserved to die.

Then she saw him – the one who had changed her entire life. The one who had planted his rotted seed inside her womb. The guilt she was feeling toward her people had changed to that of hatred as she watched King Darvon dismount his battle steed and turn to look, first, at the guards holding her arms behind her back.

He reached up and pulled off his helmet and let it drop to the ground before his feet. He approached Nanaac and ignored her icy glare, but

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instead he paid close attention to her large belly. He reached out and gently ran his gloved hand across it, also ignoring the act of his enemy spitting on his head, and glanced back at his minions. “The gods of Orion spoke to me again last night!” he called out and turned in a circle, arms out-stretched, as his horde came closer to the action.

“They have commanded that the time has come for your new leader to arrive,” Darvon announced and then turned to Nanaac. “Lay her down.” The guards did as ordered and found that she was unwilling to allow Darvon any access he might get to the child before she could end its life. Once complete, Darvon smiled. “That’s better,” he sighed and reached into his boot and pulled out a dagger that glistened in the moonlight.

The Queen looked and saw that the hilt of the dagger had a snake coiled around it and the blade protruded from its mouth. “The child must not live – it is an abomination! The prophecies – a girl will destroy this child,” she screamed and he shook his head.

“My dear lady, do you understand why I have done this to you?” he began, knowing that she did not. “I was truly hoping that by impregnating you, we might have been wed and that our two kingdoms would be as one – the war would cease.” He shook his head and drew his head closer to her. He gently ran his hand across her abdomen and then stopped once he felt his child kick. “Here,” he whispered and brought the dagger to her flesh.

Chapter One

“HE raised his right hand high in the air, blood-stained hatchet in his iron grip, and...and...” he read out loud in a silent whisper, then, “This is beginning to piss me off,” Connor Barker commented as he lay, stomach down, on his bed with a stack of paper at his right side.

He had been trying, endlessly it seemed, to continue a novel he began only one month ago.

His sister Robyn had once told him that all he ever tried writing were sequels to his favorite movies – primarily in the horror genre. Connor did have a passion for continuing his favorite films, however during the writing, he always discovered that his particular sequel had already been written by someone else and filming was usually wrapping up by the time he completed his manuscript.

The positive outlook to all this was that the novel he was writing now was his own personal novel. An original piece of work which the idea centered on a bounty hunter who falls in love with his prey; even though she was a ruthless murderer.

He was a writer. An imaginative writer. However, being fifteen years old, he knew that it would be some time before a publisher would even glance at his manuscript.

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Connor thought not of this at present time. He was content to wait – it would give him plenty of time to perfect his novels, maybe even dig up his sequel material and combine the three stories that he had already written into one book.

He sighed, pen no longer in motion, and raised his head and read ten o'clock. Another sigh escaped his nostrils and he placed his still incomplete novel on the floor, something else to clutter his room along with his CD's, books, and all the other papers that occupied the floor. He stood up and walked with a cat's grace over his belongings and out into the living room where he found his mother watching the end of a movie.

Connor looked from the television – end credits now rolling – and then over to his almost-asleep mother.

“Good-night,” he said as he bent down and gave her a quick kiss on her left cheek.

With a tired smile, “Good-night. Love you,” she replied.

She had not known of her son's writing and had always been on edge with worry when he entered his room and remained there for hours on end.

There were many things about her son that she did not know – things which he wished to keep hidden from her. Connor loved his mother very much, but they did not talk to one another very often. He really didn't want her to know that he was picked on at school and was made fun of in front of his peers.

Once the nightly ceremony was complete, Connor made his way back to his dwelling, *The Cave*, as Robyn called it, place and quickly lay down on his warm unmade bed.

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It bothered him that Robyn worked evenings at the local grocery store and would not be home until after midnight. He longed for the days where they would talk about anything that would come to mind.

He reached up, pushing the depressing thought of his sister out of his mind, and pulled the cover over his bare chest, turned off the light by reaching for the switch just above his head, and took off his glasses and placed them next to his clock.

With the moon rays being the only light in the room, Connor looked over at a poster of The Doors and said a mental “good-night” to the four band members – even though one has been asleep for over twenty years now.

Slowly, he let his heavy lids close over his eyes. “Come on, Tracy. Where are you?” he whispered in hopes of dreaming of his girlfriend Tracy Kingston.

In reality, Tracy and Connor were nowhere near girlfriend and boyfriend. All they really were just friends – nothing more and nothing less.

Connor on the other hand, had been trying to pick up what nerves he could find to ask her out on a date. He became an enormous bundle of nerves every time he thought of the idea – asking her out.

The thought of being nervous put Connor into another world.

A few moments later and Connor’s eyes sprang open. “I’ve got it,” he whispered excitedly and fell back into deep slumber.

His hopes of having pleasant dreams of Tracy were shattered by the soft hissing voice from within the darkness of his mind. The voice called out, “Connor, I need you. I can give you your fantasies – your every desire.”

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“Who are you?” Connor called back into the darkness, he was almost positive that he never left his bedroom.

Connor was proven right when he could see once again. He stood just at the foot of his bed and there, standing in front of the doorway, was a tall cloaked figure. “Who are you?” Connor asked once again.

The figure chuckled beneath his brown hood – Connor could not see the figure’s face. “I need your assistance. In return I shall give you everything you desire,” the cloaked figure seemed to be staring at Connor.

“What is it you want?” Connor moved closer to the doorway – closer to the cloaked one.

“Tracy Amanda Kingston,” was all the cloaked one said and then vanished from existence, leaving Connor to ponder what had just happened to him.

Before he could ponder too much about this figure, he heard his alarm sound within the walls of his subconscious.

Another few moments later, Connor heard his alarm abruptly sound in his consciousness, waking him from a dream that he could not, for the life of him, remember.

He glanced at his clock; he knew it was seven-thirty-five. He always looked at it expecting it to read something different.

Damn, I didn’t get enough sleep, he thought. Then again, I feel great.

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Perhaps the idea of being able to ask Tracy out without making him a nervous wreck rejuvenated his spirits.

He took off his sweat pants, holes in the legs and back, and slipped into his dark-blue khaki pants and then put on his blue standard short-sleeved shirt and tucked it in. He really didn't like having to wear the uniform, but at least everyone else had to wear the same clothes.

After slipping on his black shoes and his glasses, he walked out into the living room where he found the money his mother had left him for lunch on the couch. He grabbed it and put it into his front pocket and headed out the front door.

His mother had already left for work an hour earlier and would not return home until five. Yet, another latchkey kid.

Once outside, he made sure the door was locked and then began walking up the sidewalk – keeping his head down.

A few short seconds later, he heard a loud clanking sound and turned his head in time to see the bus heading toward his stop.

Perfect timing, he thought with a grin as he picked up his pace into a trot and was, as usual, the last one on the bus.

Connor sat in the same seat, every day, for two years straight and since no one sat next to him, it gave him ample time to himself to think.

Now, all I have to do is give it to her. Hopefully, with any luck from God, she'll call me tonight. But what if she doesn't? What if she rejects me? Shit!

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With the horrifying thought of rejection still fresh on his mind, the bus stopped in front of the school and Connor exited the bus and entered St Williams High.

Standing at his locker several moments later, Terry Carlson brushed past Connor. “Get the fuck out of my way, Geek,” he grunted and walked away with a sneer and slammed Connor’s locker door shut as he walked by.

Already, Connor thought, he’s already begun his daily ritual. And it’s not even Pre-Algebra yet.

After the irresistible urge to force a ruler down Terry’s throat just to see how far down his intestines were had passed, Connor sighed and reopened his locker and went back to his thoughts of Tracy Kingston.

As he passed over his Spanish textbook, he began thinking all about the things he and she held in common.

There was the main similarity in that they love horror movies. She plays softball for the school; although not very sports oriented, Connor knew a thing or two about softball. Above everything else, Tracy liked Connor. Or so he thought by the way they talked without end.

Not as a boyfriend. Just a friend.

Connor thought not of that. He wanted something else. A relationship, perhaps. Not the kind where they relied only on sex holding them together, but one where they could love one another.

Tracy wasn’t the most beautiful girl in school, but she was very far from the worst looking. In fact, she rates a ten on Connor’s scale.

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“Did you know that they’re planning on making thirteen parts to the Friday series?” Tracy had asked and Connor smiled.

“Yeah, I know. I wrote that piece in the paper,” he replied.

“You wrote that?” she asked, in awe.

“I sure did.” Then, “But, I don’t know how they’re gonna do it. They don’t make that much money to begin with.” Connor explained.

Abruptly, the bell rang, awakening Connor from his memories.

The first part of the morning went by so fast that he was surprised when he entered his Study Hall room which, as usual, always goes its normal never-ending pace.

After writing a note to a friend in a notebook, he closed the cover and made sure that no teacher was looking in his general direction.

The notebook Connor had written the note was received by Dave Straub, a young boy sitting directly behind him.

Connor and Dave had been friends only since the middle of the school year, so they weren’t the closest of friends. They did, however, get along well and shared the same Study Hall.

Dave took the notebook, opened and read what was written.

*Dave – I found out how I can tell T – rather ask her out.
Here’s her letter. Connor*

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Dave read the note written to him and found another folded piece of paper. He unfolded it and began reading.

Tracy,

I was curious to know if you would like to go out with me this weekend. Call me tonight at 555-1590 and we'll discuss it. Even if you have a game, I'd like it if you would call me. I know people like to play games this way, but this is no joke – I wouldn't do that to you.

Connor

Smiling, Dave thought about what to write, and then put his pen to paper.

Connor – pretty cool. Give it to her and tell me what happens. Later

Once read by Connor, he folded Tracy's letter and placed it into his book bag and placed his head down on his arms, which are now crossed on top of his desk. Although he looked it, he wasn't fully asleep.

T was a symbol he and Dave used for Tracy's name. It was used as protection for her just in case the notes being passed were intercepted by an authoritative figure and save her the embarrassment.

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Once the bell rang, he stood and draped his book bag over his right shoulder, he turned and faced Dave. “I’ve got three bells left,” he commented, as if it was the end of the entire world.

Grinning, “Don’t worry about it. ‘Sides, I got Christene to think about.” Dave explained.

For as long as he knew Dave, he knew that Dave was after Christene Kirkland. Connor knew, too, that he didn’t have a snowballs chance in hell of getting the twin sister of Anette Kirkland. Dave was not in any of her classes. Connor, on the other hand was, so for good measure, Connor said he would find out if Christene had a boyfriend – and whatever else he could dish out.

“Thanks, Man. I’ll stay on the look-out for Christene for you.” Connor said as they walked out the double doors and headed downstairs and separated in different directions.

When the next class ended, the school was free to relax for lunch, but Connor never ate in the cafeteria; in fact, he rarely ever ate at all. He ventured out the front doors where the students were allowed to roam.

Standing six foot even, Rick Hopman vacated a small alcove near the side doors outside – waiting for his friend.

Connor found Rick several minutes later and Rick handed over a piece of gum as Connor took it and shoved it into his pocket.

“So, what do you want to do this weekend?” Rick asked as he pushed another piece of gum into his already protruding mouth.

“I don’t know. How about catching a movie?” Connor suggested after a shrug.

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“Sounds good.” Rick replied, then, “Am I staying at your house, or are you at mine this time?” Rick asked while scanning the area for Monitors from Hell who thrived on catching people with chewing gum.

“I think I’m at yours this time.”

After a pause, “Have you asked her out yet?” Rick asked, reminding Connor of the task which he has yet to do away with.

Connor and Rick had been best friends for three years and had presently been attending the same karate classes together every other weekend. Although Rick had been placed in all academic courses, they remained friends even though they didn’t share any courses. They had met in Home Room and had not spoken to one another on the first day of school. It wasn’t until several days later, when they both came to the startling revelation that they were both picked on, that they began talking and had bonded rather quickly.

Just as Connor was about to explain about the letter he had written and the rest of his plan, a Monitor from Hell walked over to them.

Rick quickly pushed the piece of gum over to one side of his mouth with his tongue – trying to conceal it as best he could.

“What’s the deal with your mouth, Richard?” asked Mr. Karns with a smirk from beneath his gray beard.

Rick, to begin with, hated it when anyone, including his own parents, called him Richard. Second, Rick had the impression that Karns was making fun of him, another thing which caused the adrenaline in his veins pumping – to the point of wanting to choke the living shit out of him, his face had turned red.

“Nuthin’,” Rick slurred, avoiding any eye contact.

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“His mouth’s always like that. That’s just the way he talks,” Connor put in, attempting to cover Rick’s ass.

Pausing to look Rick up and down, he sighed. “Is that so?” Karns finally asked.

“Yes, Sir,” Rick slurred out, now looking up at Karns.

Another nerve-wrecking pause, then, “All right.” Karns replied in conclusion and walked away.

Once he was well out of hearing range, both Rick and Connor burst out in laughter.

“Man that was a good one. Thanks. I owe you one.” Rick said with a smile.

“Hey, what are friends and stupid teachers for?” was Connor’s reply.

There was only one more class which he had to get through before meeting his destiny and when that time did come, he walked to the classroom with sweat forming on his forehead and a stomach that felt like it was going to explode.

Once he got to his Spanish classroom, he sat down, third row from the door, second seat back.

The Late Bell rang and Miss Sullivan entered. “Buenos tardes, clase,” she greeted with a smile.

“Buenos tardes, Miss Sullivan,” the entire room responded in unison.

Casually, Connor glanced in the next row, first seat. There sat Tracy Kingston, wearing a dark-green jumper-skirt – like every girl at

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the school. She had always sat sideways in her desk – practically facing Connor. He didn't mind, though. He didn't mind at all.

Connor had been surprised and bewildered when she never caught him staring at her. Her short sandy-blonde hair was always pulled back. She didn't sit in her desk like a dainty or pristine girl, never had, but it was just fine with him.

The only obstacle that Connor could see standing in his way now was actually giving her the letter.

Sure, he knew that he could go on through the rest of the school year, one month and one week, in his own little fantasy world where he is King and she would proudly be his Queen, where in reality, he would never know her true feelings while they continued talking without end.

He had decided on giving her the letter after the class let out, and then leave.

Time goes quickly when you're nervous.

Five short minutes left, but to Connor, those short minutes were the most crucial of all.

Four...His nerves were, again, acting up.

Three...He thought his face was losing color of the flesh.

Two...Sweat began dripping under his shirt from his pits.

One...The Final Countdown.

As the deafening bell rang, everyone remained seated until Miss Sullivan looked up at her favorite class with a smile. "See you

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tomorrow,” she concluded and the entire room stood and quickly exited the room.

For some uncontrollable reason that was way beyond his comprehension, Connor let Tracy go without giving her the letter – which he held in his right hand.

Instead of nerves, Connor thought that it was actually sheer panic controlling his actions.

The rest of the afternoon, and well into the evening, Connor sat in a chair in the living room – staring into oblivion.

Robyn, sitting on the couch and catching up on the evening news, looked over at her brother who was staring into the television. She couldn’t help but to notice his strange (if any) behavior.

“Are you all right?” she inquired.

Connor shook his head and blinked. “What? Oh, yeah. I’m fine,” he replied.

“Whatcha thinking about?” she pressed further.

“Nothing, really,” he answered, stood up and walked into his bedroom where he closed the door and laid down on his bed and continued staring.

Connor had told Robyn that he wasn’t thinking about anything. The truth of the matter is that if one were to see inside his head, going passed the pain caused from his classmates, they would find that he was actually thinking. Thinking of someone. And that someone lives and breathes by the name of Tracy Kingston.

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He blinked and looked around his room. His first glance was that of his dresser. A large collection of CD's were scattered helter skelter on the top. Directly centered was a ceramic skull with a skeleton hand holding it which lit up, although he had never plugged it in – he just liked the look of it.

His next glance was out the window near the foot of his bed. His window faced the front of the house, overlooking the street – which had long silenced of traffic.

He, then, looked at his shelf and next to his clock and found a book. He reached out and took it in his hands and opened it to the first page.

Am I going to Heaven or Hell? Probably neither. Until my past has been cleared of all charges my soul will forever perish in the coldness of Purgatory where the killer of dreams awaits me.

Slowly, he closed the book and placed it back on his shelf and closed his eyes.

The second encounter with the Cloaked One answered more questions, yet left more unanswered. As before, he stood before the doorway with Connor standing at the foot of his bed.

Connor moved quicker this time. "You want Tracy. Why?" he asked, fearing what might come from the ominous figure.

"Simply, she has something that I want. A book. Once I have my book, she shall be set free and you may have your way with her flesh as you so desire," the Cloaked One answered and Connor closed his eyes and pictured Tracy in his mind.

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The only images he could conger were those from his Spanish class. Even from these images, he could hear the satisfied sigh of the Cloaked One. "Yes, give her to me," it replied and Connor opened his eyes and shut off any further images.

"Why do I feel like you're not telling me the whole truth? Why do I get the feeling that you don't care at all about her?" Connor had an evil image run through his mind. "You're going to kill her aren't you?"

"Only if she opposes me. If she hands over my book, I don't see why she would have to perish."

Connor shook his head in disbelief. "You lie," he said and the Cloaked One advanced on Connor.

Once they were several inches apart, "You will give her to me," hissed the foulness of the Cloaked One and then Connor heard his alarm erupt, waking him once again from another weird dream.

After the alarming dream, Connor awoke in a cold sweat and jack hammering heart. Fortunate for him, he could not remember his dreams (or, at least, the ones that scare him so badly).

He completed his morning ritual as he got ready for day two of the letter.

Walking out into the living room and picking up the dollar bill, he glanced down at his book bag. Lying on top was the folded letter with *Tracy* written neatly on the back.

"Today's the day," he said to himself just before stepping out of his house and into the misty May air.

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Up until Study Hall, the day went by so quickly that Connor had forgotten if he had any homework. Another two classes and it was on to Spanish class.

Once he got there, he saw Tracy wearing her bright yellow softball shirt with the number 12 printed on the back in blue.

Forty minutes into his fantasy world, Tracy, along with Christene and Anette Kirkland, stood up and said something inaudible to Miss Sullivan and then headed for the door.

Jesus Christ! Connor's mind screamed as he watched every step Tracy made until she vanished out into the hall.

"Just when I was about to give her the letter, she leaves early." Connor explained to Robyn later that day.

Robyn was twenty years old. Considering the age difference between them, it seemed odd at how close they really were. Connor tells her everything, and in return, she tells him everything. "Get her tomorrow. Don't let her go," she smiled at her brother.

Just as soon as she had said this, there was a knock at the door and Connor stood to answer the call and was not surprised to see Rick, Dennis Carl, and Dave Straub standing there. "Game day," Rick announced with a smile and Connor nodded and stepped to the side to let them enter his house.

"All right," Connor announced as he sat cross-legged on the floor with Rick to his left and Dennis Carl to his right. Between those two sat Dave Straub with a confused expression on his young face.

They all looked down at the game board which lies on the floor in the middle. Towers and castles decorated the landscape of the

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game, highlighted with canyons and fires which represented hell. Cards were issued out to every player and a fresh deck had laid to the boards' right side.

Connor glanced up and noticed Dave's look and grinned. "You've never played Wizards and Gods?" he asked and Dave threw him an apologetic nod.

"No," he acknowledged and then looked over at Dennis. "Den said you guys needed a fourth player so I said I'd come."

Dennis looked over at Dave and smiled. "It's an easy game once you get used to it. You'll be okay," he said and picked up his cards and studied them. He, then, showed Dave one of his cards, making sure that the other four were face-down on the floor. "That's the Killer of Dreams card – worth ten points if you can destroy his powers before he kills you."

Chills raced down Connor's spine as he looked down at the horrid creature drawn on the Killer of Dreams card. He felt a terrible sense of déjà vu as he looked down at it. Inner demons he was fighting, but it didn't look like anything he had ever seen in reality.

The game concluded and Dave was finally able to grasp the concept pretty well and had earned himself quite a few points along the way. Connor thought that he had a formidable opponent with Dave and he shared his feelings with Rick when everyone else left his room. "So, what d'ya think about Dave?" Connor asked as Rick placed his body down on Connor's bed.

"He's all right – has issues with the temptress though." Rick replied and shoved the game under the bed. "But, all-in-all, I'd say he's a well opponent – one that is well up to the battle."

He stared at Rick for a minute and then smiled when he saw Rick's lips curve slightly upward. "Jack-ass. Don't use your *advanced*

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knowledge to make me think too hard,” he grinned, mocking him. “You’re the smart one around here, not me.”

Rick stood up and draped his arm over Connor’s shoulder. “Some day,” he began and looked at his friend. “Your brain may catch up to mine. But believe me, it’s more of a curse to have a higher educational mind for my age,” he explained with a smile.

“Shut up, Smart-ass.” Connor said and they burst into laughter as Connor walked Rick to the front door.

Spanish class came the next day and Connor looked up at the clock forty minutes later.

Five more minutes...just don't leave this time, he thought.

When the bell rang and Miss Sullivan concluded the class, everyone stood and headed for the door. Connor was just a short pace behind Tracy – he could smell her perfumed flesh.

“Hey, Tracy, I meant to give this to you earlier, but I forgot,” he said to her as he handed her the letter.

Stupid-ass. That line about forgetting made you look real smart.

He continued walking with her unintentionally, and noticed that she had already begun reading the letter – in his presence.

He sure as hell didn’t want her to read it in front of him; fearful of her facial expressions, if not for the answer, and it felt as if he had been punched in the gut. “Would you like to go out sometime?” he found himself asking.

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“What?” she asked, not leaving the letter, and then glancing up at him. “Who? Me?” she asked, slightly confused.

Grinning, “Yeah, you,” were the final, face-to-face, words ever spoken from one to the other as people cut between them, separating them forever.

“We’ll talk about it later!” Connor yelled and then disappeared into the crowd of faceless students.

As he walked back to his locker, Connor almost burst into laughter. “Jesus...shit. You actually did it,” he whispered to himself.

Connor Barker had finally overcome his only big fear – asking a girl out on a date with him.

He felt nervous and excited during his walk home that day.

In the morning, he took the bus to school and on the way home, he walked the three-mile trek to his home. He enjoyed the walk and the spring air; it had a cleansing feeling to it. It also gave him ample time to himself to sort out his thoughts.

“Thanks, God,” he whispered to himself with a smile on his young face as he enjoyed what the Big Guy had to offer in terms of the weather.

Thinking, he did.

But not of her reply. He was hoping in his heart that she would say “yes” and complete his dreams. He just continued thinking and wishing and hoping all the way home.

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Throughout most of the evening, he sat near the phone – expecting it to ring every second he waited. About five o'clock it did ring.

Pausing, Connor shoved all nervous feelings aside as best he could and picked up the phone with a sweaty palm.

“Hello?” he asked, listened, and then sighed. “She’s not here right now. Can I take a message? All right,” he concluded and then hung up the phone.

Throughout the remainder of the evening – and well into the night – it was that same exact scenario which repeated itself several times, which felt as if it may drive him insane. Then came nightfall and Connor went to sleep.

Connor walked home from another long day of school. In his hand, he held a folded piece of paper. Inside this paper was the answer to his ultimate dreams, actions, and overall being. Slowly, he opened it.

Connor,

I'm sorry I didn't call last night, but my game didn't get over until late last night and my boyfriend came over. I can't go out with you this weekend, but thanks for asking my anyway.

Tracy

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Connor paused, looking down at the paper; not re-reading it, just looking at it – the way she coiled the Y at the end of her name, and then gently folded the paper back the way he had received it.

He bent his head back facing the blue, cloudless sky and suddenly let out a loud roar of anger and disappointment and sorrow.

Connor awoke, again, in a cold sweat. He placed his wet hands over his equally wet face trying to shake the dream – this one he clearly remembered – away and let out a long sigh. “Just a dream,” he reassured himself.

Although he had never, before now, remembered his dreams, he had never had one such as this: So damned realistic.

He arose from bed and turned off his alarm. It wasn’t until then did he notice the ink in his right palm. It was dried orange marker.

When the hell did I have an orange marker?

He explored his entire memory and finally came up with the most “logical” answer.

From the letter Tracy wrote me.

“But, that’s impossible,” he whispered.

Just as he completed his morning ritual, it hit him – like a ton of bricks right between the eyes. He has yet to hear from Tracy.

Chapter Two

*I*really don't want to do this, but, Connor thought, feeling his stomach churning, as he got ready for another nerve-wrecking day of school.

The only upside to all this madness was that it was finally Friday – the beginning of the weekend. He would not have to wait to go out with Tracy, the girl of his future, his goddess of love and beauty.

Walking into the living room, he was slightly annoyed that his mother had forgotten to leave him any money for lunch. Once outside, he accidentally slammed the door too hard and it hit his knuckles hard enough to cause blood blisters.

And even on the bus, someone else was sitting in his seat, causing Connor to have to share a seat further in the back with a girl with spiked black-as-night hair and wore a necklace with an inverted pentagram for a charm. Connor sighed to himself and slightly shook his head. *She'll get kicked out before first bell*, he thought.

It didn't stop there.

While at school, walking through the congested halls, Connor felt as if everyone were looking at him as he walked passed them;

Book One of the Great War Saga

staring and gawking, he thought. As if they knew something he didn't.

"Well, I gave her the letter," Connor explained to Dave during Study Hall.

"Cool, Man. What'd she say?" asked Dave with a smile.

"Don't know yet." Connor replied with a shrug. "I'll find out later, I guess."

"Looks like you'll have a date tonight." Dave said, and then thought of something. "Have you checked on Christene yet?"

Grinning, "I have a feeling she's already got herself a stud. You might wanna look elsewhere."

"Hey, I ain't giving up on her until I know for sure." Dave concluded, hurt by Connor's remark, and then sat down in his seat.

During Spanish class, Connor realized that it was "Cooking-in-class-Friday," where a student would prepare a Spanish dish and let the others sample it.

When Connor entered, extremely nervous as he looked around, he was taken aback to find Tracy sitting in the far back of the room with her friend Pam.

Why would they sit back there, thought Connor. *They both sit next to me.*

Several minutes into the class and she still had not acknowledged his presence yet. *She's ignoring me.*

The Dreamkiller

Already feeling rejected, he let those thoughts exit his head. *Besides, she may be just as nervous about all this as I am. Maybe that's why she's not talking to me.*

After the very nerve-wrecking class ended, Connor stood and headed for the door, walking as slow as he could without getting run over – to let Tracy catch up with him.

Instead of Tracy, Pam caught him and handed him a neatly folded piece of paper. “Tracy,” was all Pam needed to say.

“Thanks,” came his reply as she went back to where Tracy stood, gathering her books. He made sure to memorize every curve of her body and every fold of her clothes that day. And then he entered the crowded hallway full of students yearning for the weekend.

Connor didn't bother opening it until he was well away from the school and all the torments it brought with it.

On his way home, he finally picked up enough nerve to open the letter.

Connor,

I'm sorry I didn't call last night, but...

Connor began reading and quickly felt a cold chill race down the flesh of his neck and run down his spine. “Just like the dream last night,” he whispered out loud.

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With that, Connor looked down at his hand. Orange ink from a marker.

That was when, staring at his hand, and thinking about the dream, Connor became light-headed and felt as if he would pass out.

Ten minutes later, Connor entered his house and noticed Robyn sitting on the couch, still wearing her uniform, watching her soap opera.

As he made his entrance, she looked up. “Well, Lover-Boy? How’d it go?” Robyn asked with a grin.

After a sigh, “There are a lot of fish in the sea. I just didn’t make the catch,” he answered as he placed his book bag down on the floor next to the chair.

Robyn had always known her brother to be very shy, and asking a girl out was a very large step toward the breaking point. “I’m sorry,” she replied with a sorrowful grin.

“Thanks,” he said. Connor knew that she was very sincere and felt bad for him. “It’s all right. Really, I’m fine,” he concluded with a reassuring smile and made his way to his room.

Within the next hour, Connor had a piece of paper laid out in front of him and was searching for the words that would decorate it.

Another hour later, Connor called Dave on the phone and in fifteen minutes, Dave met Connor in his room.

“Here, Man. I want you to give this to Tracy. I don’t care how you do it, but you must see to it that she gets this. Can you do

The Dreamkiller

this for me?” Connor explained as he handed Dave a piece of paper, sealed with melted wax.

After a pause, “I don’t know. What’s all this about?” Dave asked while looking down at the paper he now held in his right hand.

“I can’t tell you right now. But you’ll find out soon enough, though.” Connor answered then took a deep breath and exhaled.

Dave had already guessed that Tracy dumped him, so he didn’t press for any further information. “All right,” he agreed, then, “She’ll get this,” he accepted the mission.

An hour later, Connor called Rick.

“Hey, Rick, you know how...there’s another world?”

“Yeah, Man. Why?”

“Well, then...I’ll be where the killer of dreams awaits.”

“What are you...” the phone went dead.

“You cannot have her,” Connor shouted when the Cloaked One entered his bedroom that night. He had had enough of whatever game the Cloaked One was playing – he just wanted his own dreams back.

The Cloaked One laughed beneath the hood. “We shall see about that. When I’m through with you, you’ll be begging to give her to me.” Connor watched as the Cloaked One reached up its arms toward him. Its arms were no more than skeletal arms, pieces of flesh dangling here and there.

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Connor looked around his room for a weapon as the Cloaked One advanced on him. If I just had a gun, I'd blow the fucker's head off. And that was when he felt something bulging out of his pocket. Reaching down, he pulled out a pistol from his pocket and he stared at it with slight confusion.

He didn't have time to ponder the weapon too long; the Cloaked One was still advancing. Without aiming the pistol, Connor pulled the trigger and closed his eyes. A second later, he opened his eyes and saw that the Cloaked One stopped advancing and just stood there.

Both Connor and the Cloaked One stared at one another for some time before Connor's nemesis spoke in an irate tone. "You do not know what you have done. By striking me first, you have continued the war which was at a stand-still for centuries," it said and then chuckled. "I don't know if I should thank you or not. Now, if you don't mind, I will no longer need your assistance. My Dreamkillers and I can take over from here, thank you."

And Connor's eyes snapped open to the horrifying realization of what he had just done. Continuing a centuries-old war was not one way to ask a girl out on a date. *That's okay*, thought Connor. *She rejected me anyway.*

Then his conscious got the better of him. *She will need help now. If I've unleashed a horde of evil beings who want Tracy, I must help her.*

Around ten the next morning, Dave walked to the ball field where he guessed Tracy would be practicing at. Once he got there he looked around at the three different fields. He squinted his eyes and found his target in the middle field.

The Dreamkiller

“Hey! You’re Tracy Kingston, right?” Dave yelled as he sprinted his way over to the girl, feeling odd at what he was doing and for whom he was doing it for.

“Yeah,” she replied, turning around. “Why?” She studied Dave up and down. “Do I know you?” Tracy asked – she recognized him from school but knew nothing about him.

“Well,” Dave began and sighed as he held out the paper. “This is from Connor,” he explained his unannounced appearance, ignoring the girl’s question, and handed over the paper.

She broke the seal and opened the paper and began reading. She read it to herself, but once reread, the words found sound.

Tracy,

I know that we can’t even try, but I still love you. We could’ve been happy together – you and I. Love awaited us, but you shut the awaiting door. I’ll miss you. I’ll probably won’t see you anymore, so...Good-bye and thank you for being a friend.

Connor James Barker

She read the complete letter, quietly, and began forming terrifying images within her head. “When did Connor give this to you?” Tracy had to ask.

“Yesterday.”

“Damn it,” she shouted. “I don’t like the sound of this letter. It’ll give him plenty of time to,” she hesitated. “To...Oh my God.

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No!” Tracy screamed, unaware of her showing emotions toward a person she had only rejected a day ago.

He caught on to where she was heading with the questions and formed a horrible image in his head that involved Connor killing himself. “Come on,” he said and ran toward the main sidewalk. She followed close behind and both were cursing their ages under their breath. One more year and they wouldn’t have to worry about running anywhere.

Once they reached the outside of Connor’s house, they heard a song called *Fade to Black* coming from Connor’s room, and Dave knew that everything was all wrong.

Time against them, they entered the house without knocking and sprinted through the living room, down the hallway to Connor’s room – where they found the door closed and locked.

“Connor, don’t do anything! Let us in! It’s Tracy,” she screamed, trying to get her voice heard over the music.

Mrs. Barker stormed out of her bedroom with a frightful expression on her confused face. “Who the hell are you?”

“I’m Tracy Kingston, Mrs. Barker. Connor’s fri...girlfriend,” she answered, hoping Connor would hear.

“I won’t let you kill Tracy – I will stop you,” Connor announced when he met up with the Cloaked One. He almost hated giving Tracy that letter – she may come and try to wake him up just when he was going to stop the creature.

The Dreamkiller

The Cloaked One burst out in laughter. "You and who?" It shook its head and sighed. "You are in my way, Son," It replied and shoved passed Connor and walked over to the door.

"No!" Connor screamed. He heard his friends screaming from the other side of reality. He must warn them not to step beyond this point of reality – they weren't ready to face the things he has faced.

"I have nothing further to say to you," they had heard. "Leave while you still can! Don't step beyond the point of Eternity! You're not ready yet! Turn back while you still have the chance," they heard Connor yell, apparently addressing Tracy.

The Cloaked One turned around and faced Connor. It was now looking down the barrel of the same pistol it was shot with last night. It only grunted.

"No matter how many times," Connor glared at the beast. "I will shoot you dead, I swear it," he spat out as fire erupted in his hazel eyes.

A pause filled the room. "I like your spunk, Kid. I'll make you a deal," the Cloaked One began. "I'll let her go if you'll become one of us." The sweet deal was dealt, it thought.

Connor stared, hypnotized into the beasts hood and felt numb as it lifted Connor's trigger hand up to his own head. "Turn back while you still can!" he screamed, in hopes of reaching his friends.

Connor never felt the dry bony fingers wrap around his numb finger. He did not feel the push as it forced him to pull the trigger.

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Connor never felt the bullet scream into his mouth and up as it lodged itself in his brain.

“What the hell is going on around here?” Mrs. Barker asked, hysterics erupting in her soul.

Dave tried to knock the door in but failed the first time with just his shoulder. Picking up his strength and his right leg, he managed to have kicked the door off its hinges.

It crashed open and just as the door crashed against the wall, they saw Connor fall over the side of his well-made bed.

Blood splattered throughout his room, covering three walls and giving his Doors poster a new look. Not much of the room – or its contents – remained their natural colors. His face was blown apart beyond recognition; his bottom lip seemed to have been the only thing that survived the atrocity.

Just as they crashed through the door, Connor’s hand fell to the floor, revealing a small pistol – the nose was still hot and smoking.

After a short series of screams, Mrs. Barker ran from the room screaming and throwing curses at invisible people and Tracy fell, face first, into Dave’s chest as he placed his arms around the weeping young woman.

All he could do was to stare at his deformed lifeless friend.

Chapter Three

Tracy Kingston half-sat, half-laid on her bed most of that Sunday. There, she continued weeping and damning herself while Connor's final words were clenched between white-as-snow knuckles. "I'm sorry," she repeated endlessly aloud.

Yesterday, following the horrifying sight of her dead admirer, Mrs. Barker called both the police and Tracy's mother. Shortly thereafter, she collected her daughter and brought her home, Dave walked to his house in a silent daze, where Tracy has not left her bedroom since.

It had taken several days to arrange the funeral; Tracy still had not left her room all that much and did not bother going to school. Visitation for Connor's closed-casket had been conducted on Tuesday. Mrs. Barker hadn't the money for a large expensive funeral, otherwise she would have bought the best reconstructive surgeon to help her boy's face so they could leave the coffin open.

Early that Wednesday morning, Tracy had decided to skip one more day of school. Instead, she put on her best black dress and attended the morbid funeral service to pay her respects.

The cemetery was located directly across the street from the school and Tracy had walked there – despite the light late-May rain.

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Once there, she located Mrs. Barker and the other mourners and walked over in that direction. Scanning the crowd, she noticed Mrs. Barker and her ex-husband standing with their daughter Robyn, and other older relatives – heads bowed and listening to what the minister was saying.

She noticed Dave Straub standing behind Robyn. Standing next to him was another young man about their age.

Feeling out of place, Tracy bent her head and said a silent prayer for her dead admirer.

She had little faith in any religion; she did not attend church – at least not in the past twelve years or so, and found it hard to believe that God had any reason to take this kind young man from the earth.

She felt her heart breaking and tears oozing from her eyes as she watched Connor Barker’s casket lower, forever, into the ground.

As the funeral ended, family members embracing family members, Tracy decided on walking over to Mrs. Barker.

Lowering her eyes, “I’m sorry, Mrs. Barker. I didn’t know...” she couldn’t find any further words to describe her anguish.

Mrs. Barker didn’t need her words to know how she felt and they embraced one another and that was when Tracy exploded into another series of tears.

That night in Tracy’s house, her mother had been busy mending a sock and Herb had been involved in an intense baseball game – he had a hundred dollars riding on this game.

The Dreamkiller

Tracy's mother and father had been divorced for a long time and she had remarried a deadbeat named Herb Jordan. Tracy and Herb rarely saw eye to eye on anything.

Although it was only eight that evening, Tracy had decided on going to bed and try to get some sleep – the past week had been hell.

She walked over to her mother and gently kissed her cheek. "Night, Mom."

"Good-night, Honey," her mother replied as she looked up and smiled.

Once she was well on her way up the stairs, she turned back around. "Night, Herb."

Herb's only response was by lifting his hand, not his eyes, in a small, if that, wave of 'good-night.'

Well, now, that was easier than I thought. She sighed under her breath and headed up the remaining five steps.

When she got to her room she instantly closed her door behind her and turned off the light. As she sat down on her bed, a loud squeaking noise exploded from somewhere inside the room.

Tracy quickly jumped up off her bed, looked down, and practically burst out in laughter. There, she found her old squeaking clown doll that her father had won for her at a carnival when she was eight years old. She reached down and grabbed the doll and lay down once again, this time next to the doll, and closed her eyes.

Not ten minutes passed and her eyes sprang open due to another peculiar sound within the dark room. A strange dripping noise which came from inside the darkness of her room.

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Damn, don't tell me we've sprung a leak in the roof. She slowly reached up and turned on her lamp. Without moving from her bed, she scanned the area and came up blank.

Herb had fixed the roof last summer – and it isn't even raining outside.

That was when she moved onto her bare knees and slithered over to the foot of the bed and looked down onto the floor.

She was taken aback when she found the last letter that Connor Barker had written, on the floor and opened – and not on her dresser where she thought she had left it the other day.

And when she found out what was making the dripping noises, Tracy had become frightened.

On the paper, red blotches were appearing out of nowhere.

Even if Herb had screwed up the roof, there was no way in hell it would be raining red – besides it's not even raining damnit!

When she heard the dripping noise, another blotch of red appeared on the paper.

Slowly, Tracy moved her hand toward the letter and with her middle finger, she touched one of the blotches; it was warm and wet. When she brought her finger to her nose, she discovered that it had no real distinctive odor. But, when she brought it to her lips, however, she discovered a salty flavor; she had the feeling of cutting the inside of her mouth and tasting – *Blood*, she thought.

Blood...Blood! Her mind screamed as panic erupted.

The Dreamkiller

Tracy abruptly awoke as sweat drenched her face, neck, and chest. Her hair clung to her forehead and neck. All was still and quiet except for her jack hammering heart.

When she regained some control over her nerves, and was able to move her joints, Tracy stood up and made her way over to her dresser and found Connor's Dead Letter, which still remained closed.

She opened it, found the dried red blotches, and Tracy passed out – hitting the floor with a hard thud.

Meanwhile, Herb and Leslie were still downstairs and had been arguing. Herb, obviously drunk after his seventh beer, pointed at his wife. "She's your daughter, Les. All she is to me is a nuisance – another mouth to feed. She's a bitch...just like her mother, the ugly good-fer-nuthin slut!" he slurred loudly.

Leslie on the verge of tears, barely winning back the flow, protested. "You're drunk, Herb. And yes, she is my daughter." Then, almost as an afterthought, "I wish I had never left Paul for you."

Herb had heard enough and brought his fist to the right side of her face, knocking her to the floor in the process and cutting her sleeve on the coffee table.

Shortly thereafter, they heard a loud crash coming from Tracy's room.

"What the Sam Hell was that?" Herb asked, accusingly, as he looked at Leslie.

The pain had left her right cheek. "I don't know," she answered and sprinted up the stairs to Tracy's room.

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When they opened the door, they saw Tracy, unconscious, lying on the floor with the letter clenched tightly in her hand.

“...Racy...Tracy?”

Tracy’s eyes opened revealing wet sockets and she first looked at her mother. Then she looked down and realized that she was now back in her warm bed. She began looking around her body. “Where is it?” she asked, hysterically.

“I threw that damned thing away. It’s probably why you fainted.” Herb explained after a sigh as the strong scent of beer rolled out of his mouth.

“Are you all right?” asked Leslie.

Tracy paused for a moment, making sure that nothing had broken when she hit the floor, then, “Yeah, Mom. I’m fine,” she finally answered.

“Good. Well,” Leslie began with a smile, “Good-night,” she concluded and kissed her daughter on her wet forehead and they left her alone.

Alone...all alone, Tracy thought. She never liked the feeling of being alone. That was her fear – her dread.

Tracy grabbed her clown doll and clenched it, tightly, to her chest – hoping that it would bring a good night’s sleep.

The Dreamkiller

Tracy had not gotten any further sleep that night. *Perhaps it was for the best that Herb had thrown away that letter. Idiot, it's all in your fucked-up head*, she thought that morning while getting ready for school.

She got ready for school as she always did – quietly – and then walked downstairs and quickly exited the house before Herb woke with his usual hangover.

She tried to see little of her step-father. The less, the better. Ever since Herb and her mother married, two years ago, he had been drinking and gambling all of their hard-earned money away.

When Tracy arrived at school that early morning, she went directly to her locker without conversing with any of her so-called friends. She knew how cold they would be about such a sore subject as suicide, and since this was her first day back, she knew that it only fanned the flames for other people who couldn't stop talking about it.

After turning her combination, she opened the door and grabbed the first two books that she would need today and before she closed the door, something caught her eye.

A letter was attached to the inside of her door by the magnetic mirror hanging inside the locker. At first, she thought that Pam had written her a letter of apology, but when she pulled it down and opened it, saw the paper, she passed out once again.

Tracy came to some three hours later and when she opened her eyes, she scanned the room and realized that she was lying on the green sofa in the off-white office belonging to the school nurse.

Tracy had been awake for about two minutes before Sister Catherine entered the room with a sympathetic smile on her face.

Book One of the Great War Saga

“How’d I get here?” Tracy asked, lifting her head off the pillow, finding her head still swimming and laying it back down again.

“You passed out right before Home Room. Do you remember what might have triggered this spell? No breakfast, maybe?” inquired Sister Catherine.

“No, sorry.” Tracy answered with a grim smile.

She hesitated before saying any further, then, “I understand that one of your friends just passed away last weekend. When you were found, you were holding this,” Sister Catherine replied and handed Tracy the letter.

At least now Tracy had discovered what was causing these things to happen to her. The red letter from her admirer, Connor Barker, now deceased.

“Suicide? That’s what I heard.” Sister Catherine continued.

Feeling light-headed and uneasy about talking about this subject, “I guess that’s what it was,” she replied, then, “Look, I don’t feel too good. Can I go home?”

“Sure, Honey. Go home and get you some good sleep. Tomorrow I’ll sign you up so we can talk about all of this. Your life has changed now and you need guidance; your prophecy is unfolding,” Sister Catherine said behind a hopeful smile.

Sleep? Tracy thought sarcastically, without really catching anything else the weird nun had said. *And why would she want to talk with me? Like, I know my life’s changed – I saw my friend blow his brains out.* “Thanks,” was all she said and then exited the building.

The Dreamkiller

Sister Catherine looked after Tracy and knew that everything was in motion now. She would have to resign her position at the school and return to Ireland and inform the Sisterhood that the prophecies are about to take place.

When Tracy got home later, she opened the front door, walked up the stairs, and immediately entered her bedroom and closed the door behind her.

Back facing the full-length mirror hanging on the door, Tracy sighed and turned around – looking at her reflection. She reached up and rubbed her fingers through her hair and pulled out her hair clips. Letting her hair down, it was only an inch different than up. She rubbed her fingers through it once again.

No matter how much will power she had, she couldn't stop thinking about Connor's Dead Letter and the sight of his bloodied body dangling lifelessly over the side of his bed.

Looking harder at her tear-stained face, she noticed that she had become pale and decided on moving over to her bed.

Without taking off her shoes, she crawled on top of her bed and closed her eyes. Ironically, it felt good.

Damn, I'm more tired than I thought.

With her feet, she managed to have removed her shoes and placed her bare feet up on the bed.

An odd scene entered her sub-unconscious mind, the place right before dreams come to the person. Tracy saw a tall castle and

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several nuns who were standing around someone she could not see yet. Tracy walked over to them and then peered over their shoulders and saw a tall naked man. He had turned his unblemished body to look at the three nuns and that was when Tracy saw the long scars going down his back – beginning just under the shoulders on either side. She heard the nuns chanting the word “Ilias.”

And then her unconscious mind took control and Tracy found herself going to the movie theater that Friday evening. It was very unusual for Tracy because she seldom went to the movies; she would always rent films with Pam and watch them over at Pam’s house.

She felt a warm hand holding hers and she smiled as she looked over to her right. “Which one are we seeing?” she asked.

“Whatever you want to see.” Connor Barker answered as he returned the young woman’s smile.

What seemed two minutes later, they exited the theater, hand-in-hand. While walking toward the parking lot, Connor moved closer to Tracy. “May...may I kiss you?” he asked politely and sincerely.

“Yes.”

At that, Connor Barker and Tracy Kingston touched lips, passionately kissing, tongues dancing some old obscene art, tickling the other, with their eyes closed. A kaleidoscope of colors and images raced through Tracy’s mind as her heart pounded harder and faster.

“Tracy Kingston, you wake up this instant!”

Tracy’s eyes sprang open. She saw that her mother had been standing over her, staring down at her with a grin on her face.

The Dreamkiller

“Must’ve been some dream – judging by your face. It was a guy, wasn’t it?” her mother teased.

Tracy had become a beautiful shade of pink as embarrassment took her away on a different plane.

“Anyway, suppers on the table,” she explained and headed for the door, then, “Hurry up ‘fore it gets cold.” Leslie concluded and exited Tracy’s room.

An hour later, they were watching the news at six o’clock. “Next up, the tragic incidences of teen suicide, and how parents can help prevent it,” announced the newscaster.

“I’m pretty tired. I think I’m going to bed.” Tracy said while standing up and abrogating the newscast.

She said her good-nights to everyone and went upstairs and closed her door behind her.

Herb sighed and turned to face his wife. “She must’ve been really shaken up about that kid’s suicide, or whatever the hell they’re calling it now,” he replied.

“What do you expect? He died of a broken heart.” Leslie defended her daughter.

“So? A lot of people die of broken hearts. Every day for that matter,” he explained then took another sip of his beer and let out a small belch.

Leslie shook her head in disgust and sighed.

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The judge looked over at the jury, then to the paper in his hand. "Is this your unanimous verdict?"

"It is, Your Honor," answered juror Number One.

"Very well. What say you?"

"We find the defendant, Tracy Amanda Kingston, guilty in the first degree of the murder of Connor James Barker."

At that, Tracy fell back into her chair, legs giving out on her as they became putty. "No," she whispered to herself. "I'm sorry."

"Stand and behold your punishment," ordered the judge and Tracy forced herself to stand once again. "At one-thirty tomorrow morning, you are to be executed by lethal injection. Do you, Tracy Amanda Kingston, have any final words before the jury and the court?"

"Wait!"

Everyone turned and faced a black-suited young man who waltzed his way down the aisle.

"She's not guilty, Your Honor," explained Connor Barker as he formed a mischievous smile on his face. He approached the judge's desk. "As you can see, Your Honor," and then he turned to face the court. "If I am here before you, surely this beautiful young woman did not murder me."

Tracy smiled as he winked at her from where he stood.

The judge looked down, and then slammed his gavel down. "We must recess for twenty-four hours and figure this all out."

The Dreamkiller

Tracy ran over to Connor and just as they were several inches apart...

...her alarm went off.

Tracy got ready for another hectic day of school and exited her house that Wednesday morning.

When she entered her school, Tracy was approached by several of her friends. It was Pam who spoke first. "Tracy, we're glad you're back."

Tracy began to think that everything was back to normal once again.

"Can you believe it? He asks you out and then kills himself when you told him you had a boyfriend." Pam commented in awe.

Shaking her head, "I don't know how you even got me to tell him I had a boyfriend." Tracy replied behind hatred.

"Come on, Trace. It's better to have no boyfriend than to have gone out with *him*." Pam continued.

"He wasn't really like you said he was. He was nice." Tracy countered, still unable to get *his* name from her lips.

"You're absolutely right. He was worse. And now, he's a stiff." Pam replied with a smirk.

Tracy frowned in disbelief. "You're such a bitch. You know that? A bitch," she said and left their company.

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Perhaps Connor would have liked it better for Tracy to have stood up for him while he was still alive. Nevertheless, wherever he is, she's sure he is happier.

During lunch, more people were still talking about Connor's suicide and how "dumb" and "nerdy" he was. And from her first encounter with Pam, whenever she heard bad things being said about him, Tracy always stood up for the deceased's pride.

Passing the table that seated the football players and their girlfriends, "Can you imagine? A dick committing suicide? That's only for the cool people, like Jim Morrison." Darick Turnback had replied and received laughter.

"He was not a dick! He was a...a," Tracy cut in and was cut off by another one of her friends.

"Don't do it, Trace. You're lowering yourself to *his* level," she warned.

"Connor was nice – a good-hearted person." Tracy said, finally able to get *his* name from her lips. "That's a helluva lot more than I can say about all you guys," she shouted and then stormed out of the cafeteria.

Tracy Kingston is an average teen but, as she slumbers, Tracy is unaware that she holds a defining role in a centuries old war and becomes the target of greed and obsession. Rick Hopman is thrown into the complex struggle for all that is good and to defeat a greater darkness once a mutual friend dies under mysterious circumstances. Ancient kingdoms...medieval prophecy...hideous warriors...and a climactic battle round out this intense thriller.

The Dreamkiller: Book 1 of The Great War Saga

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