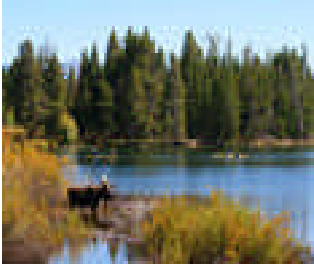


Dreams, Nightmares, and Meaning

By G. E. Gorfu



Tassew dreamt he was on his way to school and had stopped by a lonely lake to throw some pebbles on the water. This was something he loved to do, but there was a lonely duck clacking loud, and she readily came to him. Tassew thought the duck must be hungry. So he opened his lunch box, took out some slices of bread from the sandwiches his mom had freshly prepared that morning, and started to feed the duck.

Tassew was gleefully excited to see the duck hungrily feeding from his hands. That was pure joy, giving freely without expecting anything back. The duck was happy too, being fed with bread she did not work for. This went on for quite sometime until the two became good friends, and the duck would come running to meet Tassew on his way to and from school, and feed off his hands.

One day while feeding the duck Tassew reached out to pet and rub her head. As does happen in dreams, instantly, the duck morphed into a mermaid, and said: “Hello Tassew!”



Tassew could not believe his eyes or ears. Can this be true? His surprise soon turned into joy and happiness, “What is your name? Can I call you Mermaid?” “No. We mermaids have a siren voice. So, call me Serena.”

Serena had a beautiful and seductive voice and she would sing for Tassew. They soon became the best of friends. Tassew took food and flowers to Serena on his way to and from school, and he would play and spend time with her, and she sang for him.

This went on for a while until Tassew started falling in love with Serena. She was beautiful, had a beautiful voice, sang beautiful songs, and told interesting stories. What more could one ask for? This was a wonderful turn of events.

There are fables of ugly frogs that turned into princes when kissed, but whoever heard of an ugly duckling turning into a mermaid? Is this a miracle, Tassew thought to himself, and he was very happy. Serena was happy too, to have found love in that handsome young boy who fed her, gave her flowers, and played with her.

Tassew started to think: ‘I am falling in love with Serena, but how is all this going to work out for us? She is not human and cannot come out on dry land to live with me, and I am not a merman to live with her in water.’ He was puzzled about that for a long time.

Serena too, wanted Tassew to marry her and live with her in the lake. But they could not come to an understanding. The tugging went on for a while until the mermaid started to show her true colors. She became too demanding on Tassew, and became a nag. She complained he was neglecting her, and leaving her lonely and hungry for too long. “Why

did you do this? Why didn't you do that? Where are you? Where were you?" The duck clacking call had now become the clocking of Tassew on his way to and from school.

Finally Serena asked Tassew, "Tell me Tassew; you don't really love me. Do you?" "Of course, I do love you. Why do you even ask that? You know I love you." He said. "Then, if you really loved me, you would marry me and live with me. Wouldn't you?" "But how can I do that? Can't you see that I am human, and must live on land, and you are a mermaid, and must live in water? Let us just forget marriage and remain lovers the way we now are, and be happy in the love we have!"

But Serena was not satisfied. She wanted to turn their love into fetters and the lake into a prison dungeon for Tassew. Her face and demeanor started to change, and her beauty began to fade and turn ugly. Her nails too, grew into ugly claws, and her once beautiful fins turned into sharp and thorny spikes. She really became wild.

She said, "Why then did you ever come into my life? You should never have stopped to feed me to begin with! I wish I had never set eyes on you. You are cruel. I hate you!" She turned into the real brute she really was, and screamed in her loud, deafening siren voice. Her eyes became bloodshot with rage and anger.

"Listen Serena, I stopped by the lake, as I always do on my way to and from school just to throw some pebbles on the water, and you came clacking after me, hungry. I was very happy to feed you. How does that make me cruel? You are totally unreasonable!" Tassew pleaded.



Serena had no reply instead she struck out and grabbed Tassew. Her sharp claws dug in and started pulling him forcefully into the depth of the lake. Instinctively, Tassew fought back and pushed her away screaming, "You ungrateful, evil creature, let me go!" At that instant, Serena morphed again into a monstrous and evil looking, vicious, Red Dragon!



The Red Dragon bit Tassew's hand and gobbled up his whole arm. It wrapped its coils around him tightly and began dragging him deeper and deeper into the center of the lake. Tassew thrashed and fought for dear life. Finally, the dragon gave up, released Tassew and slid back into the darkness of the abyss, never to be heard of or seen again.

Tassew woke up and found himself in the safety of his own warm bed, totally drenched in cold sweat. "Wow! What is this? Biting the hand that feeds you... Thank God it was not real!" He contemplated if the dream might have any meaning. After a while Tassew told himself: "Not all dreams have meaning, and this was not a dream. It was only a meaningless nightmare." He rolled over and went back to a night of peaceful slumber.

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