

Best Sleep of Your Life

by Wrestlr

[M/M, MC]

Synopsis: Sure, the fraternity's new pledge is a little weird, but is he really an incubus like Trevor says?

Disclaimer: The naked hypnotist strides confidently into your room. His lips curl in what might be a smile as he dangles his shiny crystal pendulum before your eyes and announces, "Listen and obey. If you are not of legal age, or if you are offended by sexual situations, you will leave this place immediately. From here on, no matter how realistic it may appear, everything will seem like fiction to you, a pleasant dream where scientific possibilities and laws may change according to my suggestion. Now, if you are willing, sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride."

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1.

Fall semester is always crazy, with new classes, new pledges, football on three screens in the TV room all blaring at once, the chapter meeting schedule held to the fridge with a magnet in the shape of a bare ass--oh, and the perennial debate over whether that magnet was a man's ass or a woman's. Chaos was always the fall semester status quo.

Okay, so I hadn't paid much attention to the pledges. Why would I? I had more important concerns, like football rankings--college on Saturday, pros on Sunday, team updates and projections during the week. Also, theoretically, like all the brothers, I had chapter parties and sorority mixers to attend. The theory part mattered because my hit rate was ... not great. I work out and I'm a good-looking guy, *at least* an eight-point-five on the looks scale, maybe even a nine on a good day; I've got a nice dick that's big but not freakishly big; and I never underperform in the bedroom when the moment arrives. I just, uh, never seemed to get to the moment. My texts didn't get responses. Phone calls went unanswered. Every girl was "busy" tomorrow, and the day after, and *you know what, I'll call you sometime when I'm free*. Okay, maybe I was a little football-obsessed

and never noticed much else, but sometimes I felt like a secret committee of sorority sisters had posted a profile of me in their group chat with *Reject* stamped on it so all the sisters knew to stay away. Yeah, I was horny as fuck, but how was I at fault if I kept my priorities simple?--Football mattered, and keeping the rankings straight was important to me. Hoping one of the sorority mixers finally played in my favor wasn't number one on my priorities list.

Still, this was fall semester, a new school year, a new beginning, blah-blah-blah. At least once in a while I had to sideline the football obsession and try to get laid. I think it's in the chapter rules or something.

That was the fall that the house's water heater and air-conditioning broke almost at the same time. Both were going to be expensive to repair; and Melv, the treasurer, was stressed because the repair budget could only cover one of them. Forty actives taking cold showers versus forty guys in the sweltering not-quite-fall-yet heat? Replacing the water heater won; plus it was the less expensive of the two repairs, the one fully in our budget. But the late September heat meant the temperature and humidity in the house were going to be oppressive. Fans appeared in every window. Shirts got shed. We'd make do, all pull together, get through this until some alumni donations came in, because shared struggle makes the bond of brotherhood stronger, all that *blah-blah-blah* horseshit. But hanging out in a house that was sometimes hotter inside than the air outside?--That wore on some of us. A couple of guys were lucky enough to have girlfriends they could stay with, or took to sleeping in sleeping bags in the basement where things were a little cooler, but the rest of us had to tough it out. At least the air-conditioning broke after rush started--we'd have never gotten anyone to pledge if the house had been an oven during the rush parties. But the shared challenge really meant shared stress.

What I did notice was that lately a few of my fraternity brothers, four or five of them, went against the shared-stress current and developed a permanent half-smile. Not the usual *dude I'm so fucking drunk* smile--more like they found a great source for killer pot gummies. They looked like they were floating through the chaos without a care and nothing bad could touch them. That definitely was new and also unexpected.

Trevor had noticed too, and he had ideas. *Of course* he did.

"Hang on a minute, Trevor," I told him, trying to stop the inevitable. "It's fall. 'Pumpkin spice' everything is back. Maybe they just like pumpkin spice lattes."

"Pumpkin spice," Trevor smirked with his usual overstated seriousness and a finger jabbing the air for effect, "is a war crime against humanity's taste buds."

I rolled my eyes. Typical Trevor drama. Though I gotta admit he wasn't wrong about the pumpkin spice part. Bleh.

"This is more than lattes, Joe. Hear me out--"

Uh-oh! Here it came. *Hear me out* was Trevor-speak for *I'm about to say something really dumb and I'm gonna try to convince you it's fact*. Trevor was a marketing major, and he loved pitching these crazy little dramas just to see how far he could push them. He deployed this seriousness and full-tilt intensity that made even the ridiculous sound plausible as long as you didn't think about it too hard. Like last year when he tried to have chicken wings banned from the house because *of course* chicken fingers are superior. Or when he tried to convince everyone to amend the chapter bylaws to require mid-meal toasts. The guys loved his campaigns because they're entertaining and just so ... weird. Compared to midterms and finals, his dramas could be fun distractions, *but*. Yeah, there's always a *but*. Seven months out of the year, Trevor was just about my best friend ever--but for the five months of football season, I didn't have a lot of time or patience for whatever new foolishness he dreamed up. So I braced myself for the insanity he was about to unleash.

"Hear me out here: I think the new pledge is a vampire. Or an incubus, maybe." Trevor waggled his eyebrows. "He doesn't sleep much or eat much. I think he feeds at night. Eats your life force. Sucks you dry"--conspiratorial grin--"sexually, you know, through your dick. Leaves you weak and smiling."

"Trevor," I groaned, "sometimes every word out of your face lowers the house I.Q. This is even sillier than the time you tried to convince us that Auggie is a werewolf after he stopped shaving his chest and started growing out that *thick* amount of body hair."

"Still not convinced he isn't," Trevor grinned, unfazed. "But the pledge?--Definitely the real deal. Only thing I'm not sure about yet is whether he's a vampire or an incubus."

"Trevor, it's still September--too early for some Hallowe'en-themed shit; we haven't even made the pledges put up the decorations yet. Plus, vampires and incubuses, incubi, whatever, they're just stories monks in the Middle Ages made up to explain why they had wet dreams. They're even more mythological than unicorns and werewolves."

"Exactly my point! Exactly what they'd want you to think. You'll see." Trevor thrust a finger dramatically into the air. "The evidence will mount."

"Trevor, don't make this personal. If that pledge takes your bullshit personally and decides he's being hazed, he'll bring the dean, the administration, and the national office down on us, and that will *not* go well. Just drop it. Find something else. You go through with this and I will personally replace all the coffee in the house with the worst pumpkin spice flavored blend I can find."

"But I have evidence. You'll see!"

Evidence? Right. No telling what Trevor would make up but, see, he didn't need actual evidence. All he needed was to create a catchy rumor. In this frat house, a rumor took about two minutes to reach everyone, from one side of the house to the other, and in about four more minutes it became doctrine. And the brothers?--They loved a fun rumor more than almost anything else. Maybe some of Trevor's nonsense was what the fraternity needed to get our minds off the heat. The other brothers must have thought so too because by Wednesday, I'd heard *incubus pledge* three times and *feeds on your dreams* twice. I ignored it. Then game day hit, and the TV room filled up, volume cranked loud on all three screens, and not until halftime when the commentators were instant-replaying that tackle in the second quarter for the fifth time did I have time to look around.

There he was. New pledge. Carl? Cal? I thought his name was Cal. Clean-cut, vaguely handsome, never flashy. The kind of pledge you don't notice until someone else points him out. Awkwardly helpful, kept his pledge chores--doing some brother's laundry, bagging empty cans before carrying them off to recycle. Quiet. Steady gaze. I guess I'd clocked him without really clocking him before.

Melv the treasurer was shirtless--as nature intended, if you asked Melv--on the couch, his laptop open to the fraternity budget in a color-coded spreadsheet that always looked to me like an Easter egg factory exploded. Everybody liked Melv, big friendly guy with a head for accounting who was the only one who could figure out our finances and keep the fraternity solvent. He'd been half watching the game, half trying for the hundredth time to juggle the numbers to come up with the last four thousand dollars we still needed for the air-conditioner replacement. The fraternity operated on a thin margin at the best of times, always just enough dues and donations coming in to cover expenses, and most of the funding was earmarked for expenditures or in particular accounts that made diverting funds difficult. When I noticed the pledge Cal, he was in the process of sitting down beside Melv, and in the corner of my eye they talked quietly about the budget for a minute, Melv pointing at this or that in the spreadsheet. Give me football statistics any day over accounting bullshit!

Cal said something that didn't seem to be about the spreadsheet but maybe was intended for Melv personally. Melv laughed as he took a swallow from his beer. By the time another commercial came on and I could look at him, yeah, Melv was obviously already done for the day, toasted, drunk, brain-fried by thinking too hard about all those numbers, whatever. He looked half-asleep, long bare torso tilted a little to lean against Cal's shoulder. Melv yawned and stretched, long arms, long bare legs in shorts. Yawned again. He was always a lightweight, passing out easy after not much alcohol. His head tipped onto the pledge Cal's shoulder, mouth open, dead asleep. Cal's hand, behind Melv's head, was in his hair, combing slow and absent, like you'd do to calm a dog after fireworks. That nagged me a little: Melv didn't *look* drunk enough to be out cold, and Cal's hand moved with steady patience, like he had all the time in the world. Around here, guys passed out around each other all the time, sure--but Cal stroking Melv's hair felt ... off, definitely kind of strange, maybe a little gay. Not that I cared. This was a frat; we were big into hetero posturing but sometimes the posturing collapsed into a pile of contradictions. We were all the time hugging and saying *I love you, man*, and I guessed maybe a dude could stroke another guy's hair if the guy was basically a big friendly Labrador with nice abs like Melv. Still, something about this, like the intimacy of it in public, pinged my weird meter. Was I seeing a lump in Melv's shorts-crotch? Was he getting wood from having his hair stroked?

I sipped my beer and tried to go back to caring about halftime stats. But Trevor next to me also clocked the scene, nudged my shoulder. "Observe: Exhibit A," he stage-whispered in my ear. "The demon at work. That's the hunting stance before feeding."

"Hunting stance?" I groaned. "You learn that in Bio 101 or something?"

"Urban myth studies," he said. "Liberal arts elective."

"Shut up and pass the chips," I said. Because sex-demons didn't exist. Neither did unicorns, vampires, or Trevor's brain.

The pledge glanced over then, sensing our whispers maybe, but kept stroking Melv's hair. The pledge's eyes were steady, not challenging us, but just ... watching. He had the kind of gaze that held your eyes for a beat longer than you expect. Held my gaze, and I seemed to hear something quiet in my head. Two beats. Three. My ribs did a weird little hummingbird thing, and my cock lurched a little, and I forced my eyes to look away first, irritated with myself.

Cal leaned down, murmured something to the sleeping Melv, then spoke up to the room at large. "I think he overdid it," he said. His voice had a way of carrying without volume, like you wanted to listen when he spoke. "I'm gonna take him up to his room."

The guys hooted and tossed fake catcalls. "Tuck him in, pledge!" someone yelled. "Kiss him goodnight!" hollered another. "Consent first!" someone else yelled.

Cal's mouth twitched like he was willing to play along. "I'll get verbal." He slid a hand under Melv's shoulder, another behind his head, and got the human Labrador standing upright without waking him in a move that looked easy but I know leverage and that wasn't easy at all unless you're really strong. Just how strong was this pledge? Melv mumbled something that included the word *nachos*, smiled in his sleep, and let Cal half-lead and half-carry him like Melv was on a leash.

They passed by where I was planted. Up close, Cal smelled like clean laundry and the soap the house bought in bulk. No cologne, no sweat, no beer breath. He gave me a cordial nod in the way of pledges everywhere who try not to offend a brother who might someday vote them into or out of the fraternity.

"You his nurse now?" I said, not unkind.

"Just the guy who's there for him," Cal said. "He's had a long day."

"That happens," I agreed.

"Yeah," he said. "That happens."

He moved Melv along toward the stairs, which was how I realized Melv never quite woke up. He wasn't dead weight--he was cooperating--but his eyes stayed closed, and his feet found the path like they knew where to step already. Cal steered him around the coffee table like he'd done this several times before.

"See," Trevor said as they left, smug and whispering, "classic ambivalent behavior."

"Ambivalent? Is that even a word?"

"Ambi--whatever. Melv's a two-sport athlete. A lot of testosterone that makes him real horny, a tasty meal for an incubus. I bet the moment that pledge gets him alone, he's gonna chow down on Melv's--well, you know what I'm saying, right?"

"I know you need a lobotomy," I said.

He toasted me with his beer. "I'll schedule one for right after the exorcism."

"Please don't use fancy words you got from some movie you downloaded."

The room fell back into the kind of halftime jabber where everyone becomes an expert on what the teams should do next. Someone argued about red zone efficiency. Someone else rambled about possession times. I watched the hallway for another second, like I'd catch a stray clue, then turned back to the game. Third quarter was going to matter. It always does.

Still, the scene stuck with me more than it should've, the image of a pledge stroking a brother's hair like he was soothing a skittish puppy. The steady way Melv let himself be led. The way Cal's eyes had held mine for that extra beat--as if testing me.

"You're doing that face again," Trevor said without looking at me.

"What face?"

"The one where your brain can't figure something out, like you're trying to divide by zero."

"I'm thinking about coverage schemes," I said, pointing at the game.

"Sure. And I'm thinking about how best to ward the TV room against nocturnal entities."

"Sometimes I think you're allergic to sanity."

Trevor grinned. "Don't fall asleep out here tonight, Joe. Just in case."

"Uh-huh," I said, because agreeing was easier than trying to remind Trevor that incubi don't exist outside gothy fanfic lit and bad horror movies, or that teasing some pledge about being a dick-sucking incubus could be construed as hazing. Guys pass out around other guys in frat houses because guys plus beer equals passing out around other guys; it's a law of statistics or something. If a percentage of the house was walking around weirdly mellow, that was someone having a good stash of pot, or getting laid, or the placebo effect of Trevor whispering sleep-vampire stories in between swallows from beer cans. That was all.

I had another beer. The third quarter kicked off. Somebody yelled that the ref needed glasses. Life continued, which is what it does.

When Cal returned who knows how many minutes later--empty-handed, unrumped, posture still church-straight--he slid into the same spot on the sofa, stared at the TV like he could decipher the game's outcome in advance and found football boring. He didn't look over at me. I told myself I that was normal. I told myself I didn't want him looking at me. I told myself a lot of true-sounding things. Cal and Melv was weird?--Sure. Maybe a little gay?--Yeah, okay. But not my business. And definitely not whatever Trevor wanted to call it. Not a vampire. Not an incubus. Not a demon. Just a pledge with a steady gaze and an inconvenient talent for being nearby when guys fell asleep on couches.

I took another pull of my beer, fixed my eyes on the field, and let the game be loud enough to drown out the part of my brain that wanted to keep watching Cal.

2.

By dinnertime, Melv was back. Shirt still off of course, fresh shorts, hair still damp from a shower, a smile plastered to his face like somebody had slipped him a perma-chill pill and cut his stress level in half. He slid into a seat at the long table, blinked slowly at his plate, and sighed like barbecued chicken was the secret of happiness.

Trevor was on him immediately. "Look at him. He's gone over."

I rolled my eyes, and though I knew better than encourage him, I asked: "Gone over what?"

"To the dark side, the incubus side." Trevor leaned in close, stage-whispering like he was narrating a nature documentary. "Classic incubus victim. Seduced. Drained. He's one of the incubus-bros now. Look at that post-feed glow."

"Post-feed glow?" I repeated. "Dude, we're having barbecued chicken for dinner. Everybody knows Melv loves barbecued chicken."

But I had to admit: Melv did look like he'd just been through something. He wasn't the stressed guy from the couch anymore; he laughed easily at jokes and ended dinner by standing up and declaring, "I have an announcement: Today has been a really, really good day, guys."

"See? Dark side," Trevor whispered to me again, solemn as a priest.

I hissed, "Hush."

Melv continued: "Just before dinner, an anonymous alum donated five thousand dollars for the house's new air-conditioner. That's the last four thousand we needed plus some extra we can use on other stuff. Tomorrow I'll call the contractor and get the replacement scheduled. Brothers, we shall soon have comfortable air in the house again!"

The guys cheered, and nobody complained when Melv went for a third piece of barbecued chicken. I smirked my *told ya so* smirk at Trevor and said, "See? Just regular good news. No dark side."

The next couple of days, though, something weird seemed to spread, and I couldn't deny that or explain it away. Two or three more brothers were floating around on cloud nine, still just a handful of guys total--smiling for no reason, volunteering to take out the trash, humming songs they couldn't name. None of them looked stressed--which was insane, because midterms were looming and this house normally melted down at the thought of a textbook. This was a coincidence. Had to be. Maybe someone had a new weed hookup. Maybe somebody was spiking the coffee again. Maybe everyone but me just finally got laid.

Still, thanks to Trevor's silly-assed rumor campaign, the whispers kept piling up.

"I bet that pledge's not human," one guy muttered in the TV room.

"I heard he doesn't even sleep at all," another insisted.

"Bro, I swear he looked at me once and I almost blacked out."

Trevor was eating all of this up, of course. He'd taken to calling Cal *Pledge Nosferatu* and doodling stakes and crosses on the whiteboard next to the refrigerator.

Finally, during a lull between quarters in another football game, one of my buddies elbowed me. "You should just ask him, Joe. See what he says."

"Ask who *what*?"

"That pledge. Ask him if he's one of those, you know"--he made fangs with his fingers at his mouth--"or the other thing."

"Incubus?" Trevor piped up from the other side of me. "Yes. Confirmed. I have evidence!"

I shook my head. "Nope. Not happening. I'm not gonna be the guy who harasses a pledge with shit-headed rumors about his ... imaginary species or whatever."

Trevor smirked. "Scared?"

"No, just sane," I shot back. "Because demons don't exist. And neither does your brain."

Several eavesdropping brothers snickered. Trevor grinned and flipped me off. And that was that.

Except later, as I passed through the kitchen, I passed Cal. He glanced up, caught me watching, and gave a small smile-and-nod. His gaze was calm and steady, like always. I told myself this was just a pledge being polite. But why did his eyes seem to hold mine a second too long?

3.

By the end of the week, Trevor had seized control of the whiteboard by the fridge, the one we usually used for grocery lists and doodles of women's anatomy that would have failed Biology 101. In bold green marker he'd written: *How to Spot an Incubus*. Underneath were bullet points, helpfully illustrated with stick figures:

1. *Don't fall asleep in the TV room.* (Accompanied by a picture of a stick-man lying on a couch, Z's floating up from his head, and another stick-guy with horns tiptoeing closer.)
2. *If he stares into your eyes longer than six seconds, YOU'RE TOAST!!!* (Picture: stopwatch counting down, stick-figure with tiny spirals for eyes.)
3. *Dream snacks are permanent snacks.* (I didn't have a clue what that meant, but the drawing was obscene.)
4. *Always wear socks to bed.* (Picture: a sock, of course, though it looked more like a Christmas stocking.)

"Okay, Trevor," I muttered, standing in front of it with my beer, "what's the socks one for?"

"So an incubus can't suck the energy out through your feet," he replied, like the answer was obvious. "Lowest friction point. Preferred place to feed."

I could practically feel my brain melting over that one. "Friction? Either you're confusing demons with static electricity, or you've got to stop getting your information from foot fetish sites."

"Laugh now," Trevor said, scrawling a new line:

5. *Incubi LOVE athletes and jocks.*

No drawing, but he underlined that one three times.

By the next day half the house must have offered additions. Someone wrote *Beware of Lullabies*. Someone else added *Incubusses h8 garlick bread*. The board was getting ridiculous--had started out ridiculous--and that was exactly the kind of situation that took on a life of its own around here. Trevor was pleased as shit.

I was still rolling my eyes when Cal walked into the kitchen with a bag of cans for the recycling bin. He stopped, tilted his head at the board, and smiled. "Nice art," he said.

The room erupted in catcalls. "He admits it!" laughed one. Another yelled, "Look how guilty he looks!"

Cal shook his head, unbothered. "Maybe I should start charging for nightmare prevention services."

Trevor jabbed a finger in the air. "See? Confession!"

"Relax, guys," Cal said. "I'm not confessing anything." He poured the cans into the bin, dusted his hands, and turned toward me.

For a second, just a second, our eyes met. Not long, not dramatic, but long enough that my ribs did that hummingbird thing again, that sound in my head again. Two beats ... My dick starting a relaxed glide toward hardness ... Three ... And my thoughts were starting to feel ...

I blinked first. Cal smiled politely, looked away, and shifted past me toward the door.

I exhaled, shifted my legs to hide my semi-wood, heart thudding harder than it should've.

Trevor noticed. Of course he did--he was standing right there watching everything. "Six seconds, bro," he said smugly. "Good thing he walked away. He had you halfway hypnotized."

"Shut up," I said, too fast.

Trevor grinned like someone just handed him the winning ticket for the lottery.

And I found myself staring at the whiteboard again, the dumb bullet points, trying to convince myself they were just jokes. Part of me, the part I didn't like listening to, was wondering if maybe socks *were* a good idea tonight.

4.

The weird thing? I wasn't even *taking* calculus this semester. That was my first clue this was a dream--but knowing I was dreaming didn't make things better.

I was in a lecture hall I hadn't stepped into since last year when I'd finished my last math class, rows of

squeaky plastic chairs, the noises of a fifty other students taking notes. Definitely calculus. And then came the kicker: I was stark naked. No boxers. Not even socks. Naked.

Yep, there I was: the *naked in calculus class* dream *again*, with me standing bare-ass in the front row, my cock hard as hell, as Professor Whitcomb--who'd retired the previous year, by the way--droned on with *mur-mur-mur* about integrals. My erection bobbed in time with sound of the professor writing on the board, and I had nowhere to hide. I crouched low, fumbling for a backpack that wasn't there, trying to cover myself with a half-folded notebook. The whole effort was useless, because I had a hard-on that refused to be concealed: big, obvious, throbbing. The kind of dream erection that had its own smug life-ruining attitude. Every time I tried to cover myself, whatever I'd grabbed for coverage faded out and I was left exposed again.

Any second the other students would notice. They would stop scribbling equation notes and look at me standing there bare-ass, and they'd laugh, laugh, laugh. But right now, only one person had turned to look. That pledge, Cal? At least I thought it was--the guy's face was blurry, indistinct, like it had been smeared, or maybe my eyes were just a little too dream-blitzed to focus. He was sitting two seats down in the front row, relaxed, like he belonged in this math lecture. He met my eyes and smiled, watching me like this was a whole show put on just to entertain him.

"Oh, no way," I muttered, trying to cover myself with a textbook that didn't exist.

The dream-pledge who might have been Cal stood, smiled, moved toward me.

"You can't be here," I hissed, covering my stiff cock with my hands. "This is *my* dream, just a dream, and you can't be--" Dream-pledge licked his lips, and suddenly my cock and brain both lit up with the same idea: *blow-job!* "Oh, fuck, no!--Not in front of--"

He knelt, calm and confident, and I couldn't make my legs move me away. Everyone else kept doing whatever, but the sound blurred, muffled, as if just the two of us mattered.

"Relax," the dream-pledge purred as he took my wrists and pulled my hands away to reveal my iron cock-rod. "This is only a dream, you and me."

My breath came ragged. My cock jerked against the open air. "This is insane, fucking insane!"

"Dreams usually are." The pledge's eyes caught mine. My arms felt like sandbags, my legs like anchors. I couldn't move.

"So horny, aren't you," he murmured. "Let me take care of that dick for you." He knelt in front of me. I couldn't move, couldn't resist. "You haven't cum in a while--so much pent-up energy for me. Yum."

His tone was calm as ever, which is what unnerved me the most. This wasn't a fraternity joke anymore. This was intimate, serious, and--*fucking hell!*--making me hornier and hornier. I gasped, arousal zapping through me. His breath, a guy's breath, on my prick was warm, impossibly warm, and then his lips took me in--and *holy fuck*--and--

And then I was blinking awake in my own bed, in the dark, back in the frat house, with the shock of his mouth on my cock still ringing through me. I wasn't supposed to have woke up, was I? I looked around, trying to orient myself. Was this reality or another dream? Dark room. Posters on the wall. My sleeps-through-anything roommate quietly snoring in the next bed. My sheet was pulled down to expose my body. And Cal was there, hovering over me, still sliding my cock into his mouth. The front of the boxers I slept in had been opened and pulled down enough to expose my erect dick and balls. His mouth was drawing out these throbbing pleasure pulses, and he was grinning like he was pulling off the world's greatest prank.

"No, no. Not time to wake up yet, Joe," he came off my dick to murmur as our eyes met. One beat. Two. My heart did that flickery hummingbird thing. Three. That whisper of a song curled through my mind--*Back to sleep ... Back to sleep ...*--and my head felt fuzzy and I couldn't look away. Four. How many seconds meant I was hypnotized? Five. Six. Seven? He said, "Let's get you comfortable," and I felt a little pressure from his hands that made my hips lift so he could pull the boxers I slept in down to my ankles. "Sleep well, Joe," Cal said, almost singing the words. Each syllable felt like an iron weight dragging at my thoughts, and my eyes closed as I was pulled ...

... Back into the naked calculus dream, round two, sort of, the space smaller and less distinct--or maybe just more focused on what mattered. Already the walls, the professor, the farthest rows, has disappeared into darkness as the circle of light surrounding us shrank. I was in a front-row desk chair, naked and sprawled back in the seat, my legs stretched out and spread wide, and Cal was kneeling between my thighs, and his mouth was on my cock. The dream had changed, or maybe it had stopped being a dream at all. His suck-job wasn't just a physical act; it was an invitation, a seduction, a call to surrender, some kind of physical conversation between his soft, full mouth and my hard, jutting cock. His lips applied a teasing suction, gently at first. He wasn't aggressive, just confident and hungry, his tongue slow and deliberate. His mouth formed a warm, wet cavern around my meat, and it moved up and down my shaft, pulling at something inside me. His tongue traced the sensitive underside, swirled around the head, found every nerve-ending and made them all stand at attention. His lips created a vacuum, an irresistible pull that made my hips instinctively push toward him. A low moan slid from my throat.

He didn't rush. He did vary the pressure, the depth, the speed, as if trying to find the way I responded best. Sometimes he'd use a shallow, teasing flutter that made me want to beg for more. Other times, he applied a deep, pulsing draw that made my vision blur, threatening to pull me apart entirely. His throat worked my dick with efficiency and skill.

The space around us was narrowing, dark creeping closer. I felt something coming loose inside me, melting like ice cream on a hot day; I felt a strangely arousing intimacy as if my cock was meant to be in his mouth, like he was going to use it as a straw to suck me dry of whatever was inside me. His hands, meanwhile, weren't idle. One continued to massage the base of my dick, adding another layer of exquisite sensation, while the other strayed, stroking my inner thigh, tracing a path over my abs, or cupping my testicles with soft, firm pressure. Each touch, each movement, seemed timed to boost the pleasure coursing through me. My own breathing had turned ragged now. Cal seemed to enjoy tasting me the way a gourmand enjoys a good meal, and that shared connection, his investment in causing my pleasure and mine in experiencing it, seemed to elevate what we were doing beyond mere *peg A into slot B* sexual mechanics.

The circle of light was now down to just the two of us, an end nearly here. My horniness shifted to urgent, and he changed his technique: deeper, faster, more insistent, but always maintaining an intense level of control. My body arched, every muscle taut, trembling on the edge.

Then, my release--a sudden, visceral shudder rippled through my entire being, like making the world's best touchdown. A thunder of sensation, electric and profound, roared through me, a stunning surge, as something in me rushed out into his mouth, more than just my sperm, feeding him. I was cumming harder than I ever thought possible. I came so hard what little I could still see blurred. My shout of ecstasy echoed through the nearly dark space around us.

"You're welcome," Cal said, licking away the last of my load from my slit, my cock still twitching, still throbbing, and the last of my dream dissolved into darkness.

I woke up grinning. Not a *damn good dream* grin where I scored the winning touchdown for my favorite football team. Not a *nailed that midterm* grin. This was deeper. My body felt loose, my head clear, like I'd just taken the nap of a lifetime and somebody had made all my troubles disappear while I was zonked out.

I stretched, groaned, looked across the room. My roommate was out cold, one arm dangling off his bed, mouth open, sawing logs. He hadn't stirred once. Fucker could probably sleep through a fire drill.

Okay. So. Last night. Naked calculus. Cal in the front row. That thing he did with his mouth. A dream. Had to be. Having a sex dream about a pledge, a guy, was bad enough, but if that hadn't been a dream?--The alternative was insane. And if Cal really had been in here? Surely my roommate would've woken up? No way even *he* could've sleep through that much noise, unless he was brain-dead ... though that might explain his G.P.A.

I rubbed my face, still smiling. Fuck, no wonder the incubus-bros had looked blissed-out all week. If this is what they'd felt from being *fed on* or whatever, I got it. I felt perfect, unbothered, like I was coming down from the world's best high with no hangover or crash in sight.

From downstairs, I could hear Trevor already yelling about rationing the pancakes. Already any negatives about the dream were fading, leaving just this feeling of deep satisfaction. *Had to be a dream; had to be a dream.* I was naked, my boxers down around one ankle, which seemed a little weird since I never slept naked, but whatever. Had to be a dream. I pulled up my boxers, pulled on a pair of sweat-shorts and shuffled to the bathroom to piss. Time to act normal. By the time my bladder was empty and I was ready to head downstairs, I'd forced my face out of that grin and into my usual frat-bro morning blankness.

Or so I thought.

"Why you grinnin' so big, Joe?" Trevor asked, sliding up beside me the second I hit the kitchen. "You get laid last night? Or just a really good"--he mimed the universal hand-pump sign for jacking off--"session in the showers?"

"No," I said, and, "Shut up."

He laughed, but he moved in close and said low where only I--and half the others--could hear, "You're practically glowing, bro. Tell me the incubus didn't get you."

I rolled my eyes. "Trevor, you're a fucking idiot."

His grin brightened. "Yep, *that's* the Joe we know and love talking! No incubus-chow here. You just got laid the regular way, right? Good for you. Been a while, right? We were all starting to worry."

I flipped him off, grabbed a Gatorade from the fridge, then staggered into the TV room and collapsed on the couch to claim my usual spot for a day of football. The first game hadn't even started and I already felt like I'd scored the winning touchdown.

For a second, I wondered if Trevor was right. Maybe I *had* gotten laid. Just ... in a dream. But dreams didn't leave you feeling floaty and sort of euphoric all morning, which you have to hide so you can act normal around idiots like Trevor, do they?

By game time, the TV room was packed, screens blaring, chips spilled everywhere. Trevor, sitting next to me, kept faux-narrating like a sports announcer who kept getting the statistics all wrong because he was making them up, which was sometimes hilarious and often annoying. Trevor could be funny, but sometimes he was just too much. I was determined to focus on the real statistics, just football and only football--just a normal Saturday, just a normal Joe.

Halfway through the third quarter, during a commercial break, I got up from the couch. My plan was simple: bathroom, piss, kitchen, another Gatorade, back to the couch just as the commercials ended, elbow Trevor and tell him to shut the fuck up. Practically a game-day ritual.

I was in the bathroom at a urinal, my dick in one hand--*Ahhh!*--in mid-piss when Cal walked in. I was about to say something like *Sorry Trevor's being such a dick to you* when Cal stood a little close to me--too close. "Big game, huh?" he said casually, like we were two bros discussing football strategy in the kitchen instead of at the urinal where I had my dick out.

"Yeah," I muttered, a little nervous *back-off* edge in my voice as I shook my cock off. "This game decides who takes the number nine spot in the rankings." Why was this pledge making me so jittery? I flushed the urinal, then I headed to the sink to wash my hands, because I believe in good hygiene.

I expected Cal to get the hint, but he followed along, not exactly pursuing, but pacing me over to the sink, still too close. When I switched off the water and wiped my hands dry on my sweat-shorts--because Cal was between me and the paper towels--I was about to say something about personal space issues when I felt his fingers touch my elbow. Our eyes locked and part of me froze, shocked--men just do *not* touch other men like this in a bathroom. Another part of me drilled into listening to him closely, very closely. He said, "That brain full of useless sports facts, and all that pent-up horniness--you're delicious, Joe. I want another taste." Under his words, I caught something--low, almost under his breath, so only I would hear. A tune. I knew what the tune was: a lullaby.

At first I thought I imagined it, but I felt this intense exhaustion roll through me, numbing my mind and muscles. I kind of realized what was happening. "No," I started, around a shallow yawn, and, "The game ... Third down ... Don't ..."

"The game will be posted online. You can catch up later. You won't miss a thing."

By then my eyelids had gotten heavy, my cock was plumping a little, and I felt like I was drifting toward a nap, a slow and inevitable slide. Cal had an arm around my back and he applied a little pressure that made my torso tip just a little toward him, until my shoulder brushed his, and he was guiding me ... where?

"Don't--," I tried again, but by then the song had wrapped around my thoughts and was pulling them into darkness. My head slumped against his shoulder. My erection banged around in my boxers and sweat-shorts as we moved into the hallway. In mid shuffle-step, my eyes closed.

And then I was dreaming again.

I'm taking the field as the quarterback. It's the fourth quarter, and we're down by one. Just enough time left for one more play, and the opposing team is obviously planning to make us run out the clock. I crouch close behind the center, his ass practically in my crotch, and I reach down; from the stands our position probably looks like I'm ready to take the snap, but I give his junk a little squeeze, feel his cock and balls inside his jock-strap and uniform pants.

Then the football was in my hands, and I fell back as bodies slammed together all around me. I pivoted, saw nothing but a collapsing pocket and three linebackers already chewing up yardage toward me. No time, just instinct. I planted, cut sharply, feeling the turf spit up behind me, and I somehow shot through the narrow seam between two bodies. A safety lunged; I slipped under his arm, popped back upright, legs churning. Twenty yards out now--couldn't think about pursuit or being dragged down by someone whose job on the field was to do exactly that. But every opposing player reaching for me found only the wake I left behind. The field stretched open, and I accelerated hard, legs pumping like pistons. Ten yards. Five. End zone! I crossed the line untouched, hearing the stadium and my teammates erupt as the scoreboard put us ahead. The

winning touchdown! We'd won!

After celebrating on the field, we headed back to the locker room and celebrated some more. The coaches, my teammates, everybody was high-fiving me, slapping my back, slapping my ass. Cal was there, a couple of spots down, just smirking a little and watching me soak up their congratulations. We all stripped down, and as I'm strutting my *who's a stud--I'm a stud* way to the showers, I passed a small bed, my bed from the fraternity house, and I thought *Oh, so we must be back at the house by now*, because I had no clue how dream-time compared to real-world time; and I sat on the edge of the bed. Cal kneeled beside the bed, between my spread knees.

"Dude, this is messed up," I said. "I'm not--I don't--You're a guy."

He reached out, traced a finger down my forearm, light as static. My breath froze. "Relax," he said, like this whatever-it-was was the most casual thing in the world. "The good thing about dreams?--They don't judge. Want me to stop?"

My mouth opened. Nothing came out. He grinned like that was permission. "See?" he murmured, fingertips brushing my thigh, then wrapping around my hard cock, stroking slow. "Nothing to fight. Just enjoy this. I know I will."

Then he was bending forward and about to suck my hard-hard dick. Teammates filing past to the showers called out things like *Get his load, Cal, he deserves it* and *Suck him right*. The noises of the showers and my invisible teammates faded, muffled until everything but Cal was just a background murmurs. Only him and me, like the world had decided this should be private.

I gasped, heart kick-thumping. I was shaking, but my hips pushed my dick into his hand like they didn't care what my brain had to say. And when his mouth closed around me, every nerve lit up. Something like electricity rushed through me, the kind of jolts that made me arch back, clutching the sheets, causing the bed frame to rattle against the tile floor.

My body shivered as Cal's skilled mouth enveloped my throb-throb-throbbing erection, and he was soon pulling a low, pleased groan from my throat as my hips rocked forward.

Cal's mouth worked my rigid and ready meat, and I gripped the sheets harder, a desperate animal rhythm taking hold, groaning and thrusting helplessly, a desperate mindless prey in the grip of a predator. Through it all, Cal's expression remained maddeningly light, almost mischievous, a glint in his eyes that dared me even to consider resisting the inevitable. He knew exactly what he was doing, orchestrating my surrender with the confidence of a master manipulator, stripping away my resistance. This dream had been so fucking good, I just gave in and let him do whatever, take whatever, my *prana*, life energy, pent-up horniness--though he sucked me dry last night so not sure how much of that was left--whatever, and the pleasure spiraled up and up, and my body felt heavier and heavier even as my nerves felt lighter and lighter. I was breathing heavily, disoriented, smiling this giddy smile like an idiot as I yielded completely, and then I was cumming, cumming hard ...

Cal wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, smirked up at me. "Best sleep of your life, Joe," he said, and the locker room and the showers faded out.

I woke up sometime late in the fourth quarter, spread across my bed, hearing the guys in the TV room downstairs roaring at a touchdown replay. Nobody had noticed I was gone--or cared.

I got myself together, tamped down that idiot grin on my face, until the mirror said I looked like the same old Joe. I stumbled downstairs and reclaimed my seat.

"You were gone a long time," Trevor observed. "Not like you to miss the game."

"Got a phone call," I said. "The parents. Had to take it."

"Hmm," Trevor said, distracted by the football in motion onscreen but seeming to accept my excuse.

I sat there and watched as the pass went incomplete. The buzzing euphoria lingered and I spent way too much effort trying not to grin too big, hoping maybe Trevor would think my smile was because my team was up by thirteen points, and once again I kept thinking *Best sleep ever*. What the fuck?

6.

By the third straight morning of waking up loose-limbed and smiling like I'd just won the lottery, I had to admit something more than just dreams was up.

Call it whatever. The facts were clear: every night Cal was there in my dreams, and every morning I woke up with the same grin Melv and the incubus-bros had worn since this circus started.

At first, I continued to fight it. Rolled my eyes at myself. Cracked jokes to my roommate--*Ha ha, crazy dream last night, dreamed I got the best blow-job, isn't that nuts?* He'd grunt, roll over, and go back to snoring.

But then the dreaming became ... routine.

The dreams shifted from calculus class and touchdowns to random surreal scenarios. Cal making me a bowl of my favorite cereal before dropping to his knees like feeding me was foreplay for feeding him. Or Cal showing up in some random room in the frat house, empty except for the two of us, where he gave me another round of mind-blowing oral. Always playful. Always coaxing. And always followed by the best damn sleep I'd ever had. In spite of myself, I started looking forward to it.

I was getting good at pretending. I'd slouch at the table during meals, acting aloof, trying not to grin like an idiot while Trevor ranted about *incipient demon warfare* or whatever. I'd focus on the games on TV and pretend my smile was because of how well my teams were doing in the fantasy football pool--though that part wasn't completely a lie.

Then one morning, my roommate sat up in bed before I did. That same too-happy grin I knew from my mirror was plastered on his face. Same floaty vibe. "Dude," he said, stretching his arms and bare chest like a cat, "I don't know why, but I feel amazing. Best sleep ever!"

And that weekend, a friend came to the frat's latest party and passed out drunk in our room instead of hiking it home. Morning rolled around and *he* woke up glowing too, yawning like he'd just had the best spa day of his life.

That's when I couldn't deny any longer: this wasn't just *my* dream problem.

And yet ... I wasn't mad. I was baffled, sure, but not mad. If anything, the idea made me weirdly protective. Cal wasn't wrecking us. He wasn't draining us dry. He was feeding on something inside us, yeah, but he seemed to be draining away any fear or negativity, and leaving behind this blissful lightness.

I started catching myself doing little things I hadn't usually done before--holding the door for my brothers, complimenting that pledge's new haircut, asking Melv how his classes were going. Me, the guy who usually saved all of my emotional bandwidth for the latest football standings.

"Bro," Trevor said one afternoon, cornering me as I claimed the last clean mug in the kitchen, "you can't hide it from me. You've got the incubus glow. It's real, isn't it? It's contagious, and you've caught it."

I flipped him off automatically--"Trevor, you're an idiot"--but he wasn't wrong.

And later, stretched out on my bed, I caught myself wondering: Was I actually okay with this? With Cal? With *choosing* to let it keep happening? Letting it spread? The thought should've freaked me out. Instead, it felt ... easy. Like my fear had already been drained away. Like all I had to do was go along and let everything happen.

By midterms, the incubus rumor had become house canon. Nobody agreed on the details, but everybody had an opinion.

Trevor naturally took the lead. He'd organized what he called an *Incubus Awareness Night*, which turned out to be an excuse to drink cheap beer while he lectured off a set of scribbled "facts" probably downloaded from who-knows-where on the Internet. "Point one," he declared, standing on the coffee table. "Never *ever* let the incubus get to six seconds of eye contact. That's instant hypnosis. You'll wake up in Tijuana married to a donkey."

Micah heckled from the floor: "You just described last spring break, bro."

"Point two!" Trevor plowed on. "He prefers athletes. Stronger male essences. More electrolytes."

"Gatorade sponsorship incoming," someone shouted.

"Point three"--Trevor raised his fist dramatically--"beware of lullabies."

At this, two brothers on opposite sides of the room immediately started off-key singing "Rock-a-Bye Baby" and quickly merged their renditions, and suddenly most of the brothers in the room were singing along until they all collapsed into giggles.

Cal, walking past the door while carrying some brother's laundry basket, paused just long enough to listen to a bit of Trevor's monologue, then kept walking without comment, calm as ever.

"See?" Trevor bellowed after him. "Classic demon move! Won't deny it. Won't confirm it. Just uses pledge chores to lull us into complacency."

Someone chucked an empty beer can at the door. Somebody else started a drinking game where the guys would all take a drink every time Trevor said *incubus*, *vampire*, or *demon*, and Trevor's lecture didn't so much end as it dissolved after most of the guys got half-drunk and wandered off.

By the end of the night, the whiteboard had been updated again:

Incubus Survival Guide v2.0

Six seconds eye contact = R.I.P.

Incubuses feed off [something illegible]

Avoid all pledges after dark, just in case

Garlic is ineffective

Socks may be optional (more research needed)

I went to bed shaking my head. The whole thing was ridiculous, a joke that got funnier the drunker you got.

But when I caught myself grinning under the covers, humming that low little tune Cal used ... I wondered if the joke was on me.

7.

I couldn't take another night of it without at least *asking*.

The dreams weren't just dreams anymore. They were more like *dates*, sort of, surreal ones--cereal bowls, calculus classes, blow-jobs so good I woke up the next morning still dazed. And, sure, I felt amazing every morning, like I'd been massaged by a professional football trainer, but this whole thing was messing with my head.

So I cornered Cal in the kitchen just before lunch and said low, "Come with me. We're going out."

He blinked. "Out?"

"Yeah. Somewhere normal. Not in my dreams. Somewhere away from here where we can talk like human beings."

He tilted his head as if he was deciding whether or not to humor me, then he nodded.

The ancient diner was three blocks from campus, which for this university was like saying it was a hundred miles away. As expected, no one I knew was there and the place was half-empty, buzzing with neon and the smell of old cooking oil. I ordered a double plate of chili-cheese fries, because I needed the ballast. Cal ordered nothing but a cola, which Trevor probably would have claimed only confirmed his theory that Cal lived on air and whatever energy he siphoned out of us at night. But maybe Cal just wanted to avoid all those carbs.

I pulled a fry from the greasy pile and told Cal to dig in. Both theories were sort of disproven when he helped himself to a fry. I dunked mine in ketchup. "Okay. Level with me. Are you or aren't you an incubus? Tell me the truth."

Cal didn't answer right away. He just chewed and watched me like this was some kind of test--which I guess it was. Finally he said, "Do you want me to be?"

"Not funny," I said. "I'm serious."

"So am I," he said, calm as ever. "I thought incubi didn't exist?"

I groaned, dragging both hands through my hair. "Look. I don't care if you're gay or bi or whatever. I don't care if you like feeding me lines about the 'best sleep of my life.' But I need to know if I'm being ... like, mind-controlled into this. Or if I'm being ..." I trailed off, embarrassed to say the rest.

"Turned gay by a demon visiting your dreams?" he offered. "Dude, there's enough stuff packed into what you just said to keep a therapist busy for years."

I dropped my forehead into my hands. "Exactly. Which is insane. Demons don't exist. Except apparently you do."

"Assuming I'm a demon, that is." He leaned back, chewing a second fry. "Maybe you're looking at it all wrong. You feel good, don't you?"

"That's not the point."

"That's part of it." He tilted his head. "Assuming I am an incubus or whatever, have I done anything to hurt you, or to make you afraid I'll hurt you? If I feed on male sexual energy, wouldn't I just be taking something that's already there, something you're not using?"

"That's supposed to make me feel better?"

He shrugged. "Assuming I'm an incubus, maybe it's the truth." He spoke so casually, unnerving. "I mean, it would make sense, right? Military barracks, monasteries, fraternities. Especially fraternities, these days. Clusters of young men, full of sexual energy, always half-asleep somewhere on a couch or passed out drunk. Easy hunting, like an all-you-can-eat buffet. And maybe I move on before anyone notices too much. You can imagine it might get kind of lonely after a few decades."

He said that stuff like facts in a lecture--well, maybe they weren't completely facts since he wrapped them in *assuming* and *maybe*--but I thought I saw a flicker in his expression: not hunger this time, but weariness. Like maybe he hated having to explain the same evasive half-truths so many times because the telling of secrets had stopped being fun. I grabbed another fry, trying to ignore the flush in my face. "So, what, this is like a fraternity tour for you? Go from pledge to brother, then four years later you move on to a new college, a new frat, rinse and repeat? That's ... weirdly practical."

"Hunger usually is."

I tried to interpret his tone of voice. No menace. No pity. Just a statement.

I leaned back in the booth, shaking my head. "So you're more ... hungry than evil, is that it?"

He smiled. "I like that. Put it on the board."

I groaned, half-laughing in spite of myself. Because somehow, I found myself kind of liking Cal. The real-world version of him. Okay, if he had secrets, I wouldn't be the one to reveal them. I'd keep them safe with me.

And maybe he revealed more about himself to me, real facts, and I just don't remember them. Why don't I remember? Well, because ...

When the check came, I paid. Cal just nodded thanks, like that was the most natural thing in the world.

I realized I still didn't have many clear answers. I also didn't have a pair of sunglasses with me, and as we stepped out into the bright early-afternoon sunlight I was squinting and scolding myself about that when Cal said, "Hey, Joe?"

"Yeah?" I said as I looked at him.

He was looking at me, smiling that smile of his that was always a little too confident. "I know this is important to you, and that's why I told you a lot of stuff in there, but I can't have you saying anything to Trevor or the others yet. Here's what we're going to do."

"No, wait--I won't tell any ...," I started to say.

"I know, but I need to be sure," he said, that something musical under his words slipping through my head again. How could he sing and talk at the same time? And how were his eyes that color? Wait!--How many seconds--? Two? Three already? Shit, I couldn't look away. Four? Five? Was he doing some incubus hypnosis

shit to me? What should I do? What could I do? At least five. Maybe six ...

I don't remember the walk back to the house. Next thing I knew, I was waking up sprawled on my bunk, still fully clothed, like I'd come back to my room and decided to take a nap. I fumbled around, found and checked my phone. A couple of hours had passed. A couple of hours of ... what? What had happened? I hadn't cum, but I was definitely *horny as fuck*. Had Cal done something to supercharge my libido? Or was I just the regular kind of *horny as fuck*? I sat up. My stomach was still weighed down with greasy chili-cheese fries, my head buzzing. Had Cal hypnotized me? Or had he simply gotten me home and put me to bed? Was this just a coma-nap bought on by too much grease, too many carbs? *Home and nap* still made a lot more sense logically than *hypnotized by an incubus outside a diner*.

But I knew one more thing: I kind of wanted him to visit me again that night. My balls were tingling so bad I *needed* a visit that night. That scared me more than any rumor Trevor could cook up, but the anticipation was stronger than the fear.

As my brain continued waking up, the volume hit me like a wave: voices blasting from the TV room, somebody singing off-key in the shower down the hall, the sound of the pledges washing the lunch dishes. Normal chaos. Comforting, even.

And yet, I couldn't stop replaying greasy fries and Cal's steady voice in my head.

Clusters of young men, full of energy, always half-asleep or drunk, easy hunting.

He'd said all that so matter-of-factly. Not a confession, not an apology. Just logistics, like explaining his class schedule. And then outside the diner he'd said something else that made my memories just ... stop for a while until I woke up here.

I sprawled back on my bunk again, staring at the ceiling, and tried to shake everything into a shape that made any fucking sense. Okay, suppose Cal *is* an incubus. So what? He wasn't hurting anybody. Melv, eight or ten brothers--hell, even my roommate--were walking around like they'd been handed the golden key to inner peace. The so-called "victims" seemed happier than I'd ever seen them.

But then I had to consider the other side of it. The *me* side. The way I kept giving in and letting Cal blow me in my dreams night after night, if those were really dreams, like I couldn't even pretend to resist anymore. I liked it. Worse, I wanted it. What did that make me? An incubus junkie? Turned gay by a demon? My own damn joke, turned back against me. Except the joke wasn't funny when I was lying there on my bunk, wondering if I'd ever stop wanting him to show up to blow me again.

Down the hall, Trevor was yelling at someone, pitching his *definitive plan* to expose the incubus pledge once and for all. Words like *bait* and *holy water* drifted in through the door. Oh, what the ever-loving hell?

I closed my eyes, groaned into my pillow. The house was about to go full Looney Tunes on Cal because of Trevor's rumors. And the worst part was, I was pretty sure I'd switched sides.

8.

By Friday afternoon, Trevor had gone full Ghostbusters. He stormed into the TV room, armed with a stack of printouts from websites that looked like they hadn't been updated since the Internet was created. "Gentlemen," he announced, smacking the papers down on the coffee table, "tonight"--dramatic pause--"Operation Dream Trap is a go."

Half the brothers groaned, probably tiring of this joke gone too long. The other half gulped from their beers

and settled in like this was going to be premium entertainment.

Trevor spread out diagrams, complete with stick figures and arrows. "Here's how it works. Step one: bait. Volunteers will sleep in these bags"--he kicked at a pile of three or four mismatched sleeping bags in the corner, scavenged from who knows where--"and pretend to be vulnerable frat boys ripe for the feeding."

"Pretend?" Micah said. "Dude, that's just sleeping."

"Silence." Trevor jabbed a finger in the air. "Step two: protection. I've printed ancient symbols, genuine, from the most authoritative sources on the Internet. We'll tape them around the room. No incubus can cross the threshold. Once he's in the room, he's trapped." Trevor held up a few of the pages: one was a crude pentagram circled by words in what looked like Comic Sans; another was a modified version of the Triforce symbol from *Zelda*. And: "Is that printed on the back of a pizza coupon?" someone muttered.

Trevor ignored him. "Step three: weapons. I've filled every Super Soaker in the house with holy water."

"You mean tap water," Jasper said. "I saw you filling them in the kitchen."

Trevor wagged a finger. "*Consecrated* tap water. My friend in Divinity Studies blessed the soakers. Therefore, any water put in them becomes holy water."

The room erupted in laughter. Trevor pushed on, unfazed.

"Step four: a little something I call the Dream Net. Custom-engineered with holy symbols and guaranteed to be inescapable for demons." The bundled-up net looked like it came from a soccer practice goal, with symbols on pieces of paper duct-taped here and there, probably fragile as hell. Had he even tested this thing? "Once the incubus is weakened by the holy water, we drop the net to trap him and we read this exorcism." Trevor brandished a wrinkled sheet. "Translated from Latin by Google."

I rubbed my temples. "Trevor, this has got to be the dumbest thing I've ever heard. How did you ever get accepted to college?"

"It's airtight, Joe; you'll see," Trevor insisted. "We'll catch him, we'll unmask him, and then you'll have to admit I was right."

I sighed. "Or we'll look like idiots hazing a pledge with water guns and soccer nets."

"That too," someone said, snickering.

Still, the house was split. Half the guys thought Trevor was insane; the other half thought this was the best prank since last year's goat incident. Either way, they were all in.

And me? I just wanted to disappear, preferably before the Dean got wind of all this *of course it's not hazing* stuff that absolutely sounded like hazing.

Because if Cal *was* what Trevor thought--and after our lunch conversation I was pretty much convinced he might be--I didn't want to see what happened when the joke got serious. I knew I should say something, maybe take Trevor aside and explain, but somehow I seemed to have a mental block that prevented me.

9.

Trevor's trap went live in the basement later that night. After all, incubus-hunting and entertainment wait for

no man.

The basement looked like a summer-camp slumber party thrown by escaped asylum lunatics. Must have been twenty-five or thirty guys packed in there, over half the active brothers. Three sleeping bags had been unrolled in a neat row; volunteers were supposed to be snoozing in them but were actually scrolling their phones. Super Soakers leaned against the couches and chairs like rifles in an armory. Hand-drawn "ancient symbols" were taped crookedly to the walls and the back of one guy's shirt.

"Perfect! Textbook setup," Trevor declared. Like a shirtless big-game hunter in nothing but frayed cargo shorts, socks, and flip-flops, he strutted around a lawn chair that had been set in the middle of this set-up, a cheap makeshift throne. "When the incubus shows--*bam!*--soak, net, exorcism. He won't know what hit him."

I muttered, "Neither will we," but nobody heard me over the group laughter.

The basement buzzed with anticipation. Half the brothers were treating this like a serious stake-out mission, because isn't every joke funnier when you treat it seriously? The rest were cracking jokes, taking bets, or just waiting for the inevitable explosion of dumb.

Then Cal and another pledge walked through the basement door, each with a basket in his arms, on their way to do some brother's laundry because pledge chores also wait for no man. Cal, the same calm expression as always, paused at the top of the stairs and raised an eyebrow when he saw the setup--sleeping bags, Super Soakers, Trevor standing like a bare-chested Van Helsing.

"Hey, Cal," Trevor called. "Come in here a minute, will'ya."

And the moment Cal obligingly reached the bottom of the stairs? The room erupted--"Get him!"

Water-streams blasted.

Paper symbols fluttered to the floor.

Someone yelled, "Begone, foul spirit!" in a bad British accent.

Cal stood there, T-shirt drenched and clinging, blinking water out of his eyes, laundry basket still clutched to his chest. "Seriously?" he said, voice flat but eyes flashing annoyance.

Trevor lunged with his so-called Dream Net, which as he swung it of course caught on the corner of a side table, duct tape and symbol papers flapping free. Four or five guys rushed forward to help with the net, colliding with four or five guys standing in the way, and they all tripped over each other and half of them landed in a pile.

I'd had enough. I shoved forward, arms out, between Cal and the brothers. "Knock it off! He's a pledge, not an incubus or a poltergeist or--or whatever this is supposed to catch!"

"Step aside, Joe!" Trevor barked. "He's exposed!"

"Yeah, exposed to tap water and stupid hazing shit!" I snapped. "Look at him!"

And that's when Cal ... shifted.

Not a full transformation, nothing cinematic--just a shimmer in the air around him, like heat waves off asphalt, but we were undeniably seeing *something*. The laughter broke off as everyone froze.

Then Cal pushed me aside and began to sing. Quiet, steady, a lullaby that hit me squarely. No, *hit* is the

wrong word. This feeling rolled over me: exhaustion, sweet and bone-deep, like I'd just run a mile after pulling an all-nighter. I stepped back and pushed my fingertips in my ears, trying to block the sound. That didn't mute the song entirely, but it cut some of the treble tones, so if the song was hypersonic ...?

The effect started with those closest to Cal. Super Soakers clattered to the floor and the brothers slumped to the floor. Volunteers in sleeping bags conked out mid-scroll. The semi-sorted pile of would-be demon netters dissolved into snores. Trevor stepped back and shouted, "See? What did I ... I," and then he sank into his lawn chair throne, out cold.

Through the drowsy haze that threatened to close my eyes, I saw Cal set the laundry basket down. For once, his expression wasn't calm. He was annoyed. But when he looked at me, his expression changed, became almost ... soft, almost touched. And I thought back to that flicker in the diner, the weariness he tried to hide like he carried it everywhere, even now. He stepped close to me, and his hands touched my wrists. "You tried to stand up for me, Joe. I won't forget that," he whispered. "But for now, you should sleep too." His hands pulled my wrists away and my fingertips left my ears, and the lullaby filled my head. He kissed my forehead. "Sleep well, Joe."

My knees buckled. I fought it, blinking hard, but the soporific song was too heavy, too seductive, sliding into my ears and directly into my brain where it coated every thought. I'd never felt as tired and sleepy in my life. I yawned, stumbled, caught myself on a chair arm.

And my world tilted into darkness as my eyes closed.

And the world tilted back into place much later when I opened my eyes and blinked.

Morning already? The basement looked like the aftermath of a frat-centric hurricane. A chair overturned. Big wet spots in the carpet where Super Soakers leaked. Hand-drawn symbols stuck to skin and furniture legs. Brothers sprawled everywhere, some with their pants around their ankles, others fully naked. Cocks out, morning woodies waiting to be noticed. Trevor lay sprawled in a lawn chair, buck-naked, cargo shorts nowhere to be seen, dick semi-chubbed; he was drooling on his shoulder.

One by one, the brothers groaned awake. The first thing that hit the room wasn't groggy curses about Cal or hangovers or who'd eaten the last slice of leftover pizza; instead, the room was a chorus of deep, satisfied exhales.

"Man," Jasper said, stretching. "Morning already? That was ... amazing sleep."

Micah grinned like a crazy man. "I dreamed about a fountain of nachos, and it felt *real*."

Trevor shot upright. "Did we--Did we get him?"

The room took inventory: all of the brothers were alive, the bait-guys were still wrapped in their sleeping bags like burritos, and no incubus in sight. No one seemed to care about their cocks being in plain sight. I didn't care either, though I pulled up my boxers and shorts more from habit. My body still rang after yet another Best Orgasm Ever, and my forehead still tingled where Cal had kissed me, and the lullaby buzzed at the back of my skull like a song I'd never get out of my head. My limbs felt light and steady, like I'd had the best nap.

"Clearly, the incubus evaded capture," Trevor huffed, puffing his chest.

"Clearly, you fell asleep first," someone said.

Trevor bristled. "That"--another finger dramatically in the air--"was a tactical nap."

"Yeah, well, your plan didn't mention tactical naps--and should have included more pillows," Micah yawned, rolling onto his back, morning wood bobbing over his groin.

"Dude," Jasper said, hair mussed, "why didn't somebody tell me it would feel this amazing? I would've fucking *volunteered* to be incubus-chow!"

Laughter ricocheted around the room, groggy-voiced but seemingly genuine.

Trevor, never one to surrender a narrative, pulled himself to his feet and staggered his naked ass upstairs to the kitchen whiteboard. With a guilty little grin, because he wanted a win and also because he was still jazzed from whatever he'd dreamed, he made changes at the bottom of the Survival Guide in big letters:

Socks may be optional (more research needed) ineffective ... Confirmed!
You can't trap an incubus. Don't even try.

Someone called out, "Incubus 1, Trevor 0." Some of the brothers cheered like this was the winning score in some bowl game. They traded high-fives and laughter. Someone suggested putting *Incubus Awareness Week* on the social calendar. Someone else proposed a recruitment T-shirt: Cal's photo with *Join Us ... For the Best Sleep of Your Life* printed below it.

They all laughed like they meant it. Nobody was hungover. Everyone looked relaxed around the edges, like the world had just become a friendlier place. I stood back a little from the laughing chaos, a fresh bottle of Gatorade in my hand as a prop because I was trying to look casual. Naked Trevor slid up beside me and grinned. "Dude, why didn't you tell me how great this feels?" Before I could answer, he continued on his way across the room to harangue someone else for a while.

No one seemed to care about the difference between *we failed to catch an incubus* and *we all just got fed on*. Typical frat-level reframe for one of Trevor's campaigns: trap failed, party succeeded. Trevor crowed about the moral victory anyway; after all, he'd "proven" Cal was an incubus. The guys tore into cereal boxes, milk sloshing onto the counter, breakfast underway, everyone still joking and better for it--house life resuming like nothing had happened. The trap was a joke; the failure was the punchline. They weren't mad. They were absurdly happy, catcalling and teasing and laughing. No one seemed to be worried about why they all woke up naked and smiling. I wasn't about to harsh their new vibe.

Auggie, a brother who hadn't been there last night, stumbled back in, still half-drunk from his hookup or date or whatever. From the kitchen doorway he looked at the mostly pants-less breakfast bedlam and asked, "Okay, what the fuck did I miss last night?"

Some brother called, "Show him, Cal!"

"Show me what?" Auggie asked, head swiveling in nearby Cal's direction. Cal, a small smile, locked eyes with him.

Trevor grinned and hollered, "Uh-oh! Cal's got him in the incubus eye-lock!" He chanting the countdown: "Three! Two! One! *Sleep--Sleep--Sleep!*"

Most of the guys around the table took up the chant:

Sleep--Sleep--Sleep!
Sleep--Sleep--Sleep!

The noise drowned out whatever Cal said to Auggie, but we all saw Auggie's eyes close as he slumped. Two nearby brothers caught him and the room erupted into hoots and catcalls. Maybe Auggie was just playing

along, really selling the joke, but he sure looked asleep, draped in the brothers' arms. Cal said something to the two brothers, who grinned and nodded and hauled Auggie out, presumably taking him to his room to sleep it off, or maybe Cal would join him there later.

"See! See!" Trevor crowed, fist pumping the air, victory dance making his cock bob and swing. "Did you all see that? I told you! Six seconds of eye contact with an incubus and you're *toasted!*"

Cal laughed and clamped a hand on Trevor's bare shoulder. "Dude, I think you should go back to sleep."

"Huh?--What--?" Trevor started; then as his eyeballs rolled back and lids closed, he sighed, "Oh, fuck, yeh ..."

"Me next," called one of the other brothers, sounding awed and eager, as Trevor sat clumsily in his chair again, slouched back, head rolling, cock rising, and he was out.

Which of course made the room explode, everybody pointing at Trevor and laughing and jeering. Somebody yelled, "The Great Incubus Hunter has become incubus chow!"--which the guys thought was the funniest joke ever. Trevor wouldn't be living this down for a very long time!

I let them have their moment. Let them chalk it up to a prank that backfired in their favor. Let them laugh about the whiteboard and add yet another ridiculous survival tip. I kept the truth: Cal had been there. He'd sung that lullaby. He'd kissed my forehead. He'd left all of them walking around like they'd been reset into factory-default happiness, and none of them minded.

And I'd been in the middle of it.

I kept my mouth shut. Some things were better kept as a house secret--a small, private barter between me and whatever Cal was. He'd said he wasn't an incubus or a vampire, and maybe he wasn't; maybe he was a siren or something else entirely. Whatever. The frat could keep the joke and the slogan. I'd keep the memories.

The whiteboard now included, in Trevor's messy handwriting:

If you can't beat the incubus, sleep with him.

They laughed. They meant it a little. I smiled along, because I could live with this.

10.

By that night, the last of the brothers, the ones who hadn't been in the basement when Cal sang, had been pulled into his influence, and the incubus matter wasn't even a question anymore. The frat had a new normal, and everyone accepted the situation.

Every night the house crashed around midnight--guys would yawn and fall asleep while doing whatever, brothers mid-brag on beanbags, pledges buried in their study notes, my roommate going from scrolling his phone in bed to snoring with an arm across his face. But every morning we enjoyed the difference. No hangovers. No grouchy wake-ups. Just deep, satisfied yawns and goofy smiles and empty balls, feeling a profound afterglow.

Guys stopped bitching about doing house chores. Most of them actually went to class on time. Jasper swore his GPA was climbing, "all thanks to our demon stress-reliever." Even Trevor stopped drawing symbols on the whiteboard long enough to bask in the feelings he still officially insisted hadn't claimed him.

As for me, I gave up pretending I wasn't in this deeper than the rest. I think I was Cal's favorite. He came to me most nights, his steady lullaby folding me under in seconds. My dreams with him didn't involve nightmare calculus classes anymore. Sometimes they were surreal dream-dates--he would offer me a bowl of my favorite cereal, or we'd take naked late-night walks through impossible alien forests, and sometimes he'd put me in the best dream ever where I'd suit up and score the winning goal for my favorite football team. But eventually the dreams would end and Cal would coax me into yet another dick-shooting surrender, leaving me cumming hard, breathless and giddy, before I sank into sleep.

And in daylight? That was new, too.

We never made a big deal of it, but he'd end up beside me at lunch, shoulder brushing mine. Or I'd catch his eyes across the lounge, held just long enough for that little horny buzz in my balls and the back of my head to remind me where we stood. Sometimes we sat out on the porch after the latest party, bottles of Gatorade sweating in our hands, not talking much. It felt like halftime in the big game--a break in the chaos before play began again. He'd look out into the dark like he could sit there forever, just sharing the night air with me. It wasn't romance, not exactly, but it wasn't nothing, either.

Some nights, though, I can't help asking myself: what makes me different?

I tell myself it's the extras: The invitation to fries, keeping his secrets, the defense, the forehead kiss. The way Cal looks at me like I'm not just another dish on a buffet table. All of that has to mean something, right? Sometimes I think about that flicker of weariness in the diner, like maybe he wanted more than just feeding. And I wonder if that's why he keeps coming back to me. He says I taste different from most guys, but I don't know what that means.

Maybe he says that to everyone, and I just haven't seen it. Maybe every frat bro thinks they're his favorite while he sings them into sweet oblivion. Maybe I'm not chosen--maybe I'm just conceited enough to think I'm special and stupid enough to think I matter.

And maybe *that's* the joke.

Because when I wake up and stretch, when my body feels loose and my brain's quiet once again, I don't really care if I'm special or not. He comes to me; I give in. He feeds; I feel. Cal isn't just a pledge, isn't just a joke. He's hungry, yeah. But he'd chosen me, and I'd chosen him back, even if I didn't have to say it aloud. I'd be in the TV room late at night or lying in my bed, and I'd feel Cal coming closer to me, and just knowing he was coming closer made my cock so fucking hard!--and I couldn't wait to feed him. I never resisted--I *chose* never to resist. Maybe that's like fourth-and-short; you can say the coach called the play, but you're still the one carrying the ball. I mean, why would I want to resist when he made me feel this great? And the truth is, for a guy like me, feeling this great seems like enough. Hey, at least I'm getting my balls drained regularly now, and without having to chase bitchy sorority tail!

The brothers kept the legend alive, of course. Trevor still called him *Pledge Nosferatu* because he thought he was being funny. The whole thing was one long-running gag, half-prank, half-pride.

But the thing about a good joke is sometimes it hides the truth. They laughed, they teased, they all claimed to be the one who invented the *Best Sleep of Your Life* slogan. And underneath it all, they did sleep better, smiled wider, and they went about their daily chaos with just a little more ease, like maybe the game was first-and-goal and we'd all agreed to run the same play, even if nobody called it out loud. Cal didn't seem to care if the frat kept the punchline going. I didn't mind either.

"What I don't understand," I asked one night, "is why you didn't just feed on Trevor at the start, make him an incubus-bro, and put a stop to his bullshit campaign sooner?"

"I *did*, during the first week of pledging, when he walked in on me draining one of the others. Then I wiped most of his memory, leaving just enough so he remembered only ..."

"Wait--so you gave him the idea?"

"I wanted to see how far he would take it."

"And what about the socks thing?"

"No idea. That part was all Trevor's."

I know it sounds crazy, but in the end, maybe Trevor's dumb whiteboard was right all along:

If you can't beat the incubus, sleep with him.
