

Beautiful to Dreadful

By Pete Clark

I have either enjoyed, or endured, night visions my whole life. I have always remembered the beautiful night skies of Central Wyoming, especially the moonless nights with no clouds. The firmament appeared to be covered by a vast black velvet mantle, decorated by points of light, varying in brilliance from almost invisible to a sparkle more brilliant than the finest diamond ever to come out of Africa. With a full moon, the stars were a bit subdued, but the prairie floor, with its clumps of sagebrush and mounds of bunchgrass, would glow as if moonbeams were being reflected from a sterling silver diorama. It has been decades since I last wandered into the benighted desert. I do not know to what extent the fouling of the atmosphere has affected its view of the night sky. I do know the daytime sky is not the deep blue of my youth.

Most mornings, I awaken unaware of any dreams that may have occurred. Sometimes I rise to a lighter state of sleep and am aware that I am dreaming and what interaction makes up the script of my vision. Unfortunately, now, my memory of a dream flits away instantly. I believe dreams are attempts by my mind to impart information to my consciousness that could be vital at some point. Of course, dreams I would prefer not to remember, refuse to fade.

I clearly remember two nightmares, one while asleep and another when I was ostensibly awake. The first happened during my high school years. The dream began with boarding a school bus for a football trip to the Big Horn Basin. When I sat down, I found a horror comic on the seat. The comic's cover featured *The Mummy*. I began to read the comic, becoming so enthralled by the pictures and words that I suddenly became part of the action. I was there, in the pyramid's dark passage. I could hear the Mummy shambling toward me. I raised my flashlight and could see something becoming visible ahead of me. I woke up. With a pounding heart and in a pool of sweat, I could not get back to sleep.

Late one evening, I sat down on the end of my bed to sort clothes for laundering. The sorting completed, I straightened my back and glanced up. There were clouds and a few stars where the ceiling should have been. I pivoted to the right. A young man dressed in a top hat and tails was sitting slightly behind me on the wall, with his legs hanging inside. He was first looking away, but turned his head toward me, revealing the long dead skull that composed the left side of his face. In less than a minute, things returned to normal. There were neither drugs, nor alcohol involved in this incident. Had I fallen asleep sitting up, I should have landed on the bed or tumbled to the floor. I have been unable to determine any meaning from this macabre vision. Its only residue is a haunting memory.

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