

Cadormbelliac E S

His downcast demeanor, which I've learned is the result of exhaustion rather than presumable apathy, is what initially intrigued me. He seldom speaks, but he's always clenching his teeth as if holding something back. Now I know that when he's sitting completely still, peering at some solid object or blank surface, tuning out the drivel of his rambunctious classmates, resting his head on his fist, forgetting to blink, forgetting to breathe, and neglecting to respond when I call out his name, he's secretly listening to something, or worse, being antagonized by someone – sometimes himself, sometimes a demon, an angel, a ghost, a God, or a monster who had envenomed one of his sweetest dreams. I remember the day that he described his nightmares to me. His words lingered in the atmosphere like an intoxicating incense, and I became enraptured in his story.

He often complains that "insomnia is a curse", but that's not the truth. It may hinder his scholastic abilities, and it may encumber his body, giving him the stature of the mysterious hunchback of Notre Dame, but for him, insomnia is a defense mechanism. In his dreams he's tortured and disturbed so much that he feels that his only option is to avoid sleep altogether. I realize that such an idiosyncratic boy only qualifies to be categorized as one thing: a cadormbelliac, one who is at war with himself in his dreams. It's a word that I crafted out of the Latin roots "cad", meaning "to fall", "dorm", meaning "to sleep", and "belli" meaning "war".

His subconscious, his foe, knows that he's afraid, and it's merciless when unbound by his conscious rationality. It also knows that the river of Lethe does not flow in reality and therefore he cannot forget the trauma of his past no matter how much he wishes to live in denial. One may argue that a cadormbelliac is a coward since he's unable to face his fears, but before you jump to conclusions and say that "cadormbelliac" is synonymous with "scaredy-cat" and "weakling", you should realize that for a cadormbelliac, insomnia is a test of endurance.

When twilight dies and shadows envelop the earth, his struggle begins. But sleep, like death, is inevitable. So, after weeks of restless fear, he finally allowed the darkness to intoxicate him like soporific incense as he whispered in a wispy voice "I may be afraid, but I will not succumb."

In that dream, he was in a battlefield, surrounded by a swarm of monsters, his forehead dripping with balls of sweat. With a dagger in hand, he annihilated them all, one by one. Then, amidst the carcasses, he believed for a moment that he was alone until his shadow crept up from behind him. At that moment, he realized that every horrific scene was created by him, every scream was an echo of his own voice, and every monster that had stalked and tormented him was a reflection of himself.

Then, after he awoke he exploded with vivacious passion and painted his visions of dark forests, and white-hot conflagrations all around the image of a shady boy. When he completed his design, he smiled dreamily and nonchalantly allowed black paint, like the water of Lethe, to drip down the canvas in pearl-like clumps. "Who is that?" his parents and his therapists asked him. "My doppelganger," he proclaimed between gasping breaths, "my best friend."