

Dream Beam Chronicles



GUARDIAN OF THE NIGHT

Written by:
THE PRESIDENT'S JUNIOR LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

2024-2025 PRESIDENT'S JUNIOR
LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (PJLC),
NORTHERN WESTCHESTER HOSPITAL,
NORTHWELL

Dream Beam Chronicles: Guardian of the Night

*A novel by the 2024-2025 President's Junior Leadership
Council (PJLC)*



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First edition

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*We would like to thank the following individuals for helping us
succeed in writing this novel:*

Nick Bruel, for his guidance and wisdom

*Vera Feuer, MD and Anne Van Der Veer, MPH, for their expertise
and recommendations*

*Northern Westchester Hospital leadership, for their unwavering
support of the PJLC program*

Foreword

Dear Reader,

If you're in elementary school, you probably hear your parents reminding you about bedtime. We, as high school students, understand! We used to be just like you, avoiding sleep and getting sidetracked by distractions. We've learned that sleep is super important for kids and teens, and it's often overlooked as part of being healthy. Lots of kids lose sleep for different reasons—maybe it's fear of the dark, eating too much before bed, thinking too much, or playing video games late. We'll admit it; we didn't always listen to our parents about bedtime either. Now, juggling high school, homework, screens, and other distractions, we wish we had!

That's why we wrote this book. We want you to know that sleep helps you have a great day! When you read it, we hope you'll see why sleep is so important. Even when we want to stay up late having fun, it's better to save things for tomorrow. Sometimes we don't "feel" tired because we're distracted by technology, noise, or light, but our bodies are tired even if we don't realize it. It's important to fight those distractions.

Our brains and bodies need a break! To make tomorrow the best it can be, we need enough energy and rest. As you grow up, high school will make getting enough sleep even harder. If

you start healthy sleep habits now, it will be much easier later on. We high schoolers want you younger kids to learn from our mistakes. Start building good sleep habits tonight! Your body, brain, and even your heart grow when you sleep. So, close your eyes, let sleep work its magic, and get ready for tomorrow!

Sincerely,

President's Junior Leadership Council (PJLC) high school students 2024-2025, Northern Westchester Hospital, Northwell

Acknowledgments

Publishing of this book is generously supported by the Thomas
and Agnes Carvel Foundation.

1

PJ

BRIIIIIIIIIING!

The bell rang. My friend Dani practically fell out of her chair. Her head snapped up, and for a second, she just blinked, dazed and confused. She had paint all over her face after falling asleep in art class.

I held back a laugh. “Jeez, Dani. Maybe at least pretend to be awake?”

“Mmhm,” she mumbled, rubbing her eyes.

I slung my bag over my shoulder, studying her more closely. She looked exhausted—dark circles under her eyes, shoulders slumped.

“You good?” I said.

Dani just stared at me. Eyes dull. Unfocused. She blinked slowly, like her brain was buffering. And that’s when a weird shiver ran down my spine. This was not normal sleep-deprived zombie behavior; I knew this look. I’d seen it before. I tried to convince myself that it wasn’t what I thought it was...

“Felt like I was fighting for my life... glowing eyes, shadowy ghost...” Dani murmured.

I froze. Very, very slowly, I turned back to face her.

“...What did you say?”

She rubbed her face, not even looking at me. “I dunno. Just felt like I didn’t sleep at all. And those eyes...”

Not again...

* * *

My name is PJ, which is short for Patricia Johnson. As an 11 year old, life can be pretty hard sometimes, especially because of my secret. For months, I was plagued every night by endless thoughts before I went to sleep, keeping me awake.

When I finally fell asleep, I battled monsters in my dreams, including the darkness monster, sugar monster, bluelight monster, and overthinking monster. But I fought back. I dealt with the darkness monster by discovering his weakness of light - go figure. I outsmarted the overthinking monster by learning new breathing exercises, and so on and so on. Needless to say, I fought my fair share of nightmare monsters.

I came out on the other side - when I defeated the monsters I unlocked the power of a good night’s rest. I realized shortly after that I had somehow achieved a rare thing - easy restful sleep, 8-10 hours every night. It is a treasure. Unappreciated until you achieve it. Falling asleep peacefully and waking up rested - Was that really something that so few of my friends had?

My stomach churned as I drew my focus back to Dani. Maybe she is just tired... exhausted, that’s all. I shoved my hands in my hoodie pocket. “I’m so sorry.” I could pretend Dani was just staying up late playing video games, but I knew the truth. She had monsters too.

My head hit the pillow with a thud when I finally turned into bed that night. It felt just as good as I had imagined - that cool fabric against my cheek, the warm blanket rolling me up like a burrito. Heaven.

“Good night, Patricia Johnson. I love you.” said my mother.

As I began to drift off, I felt the prickling sensation creep down my spine. The look Dani had. The emptiness in her eyes. The exhaustion clinging to her is like an extra shadow.

I felt my body being called and transported, absorbed into another parallel universe. I felt myself being pulled towards Dani - I don't know how or why but I felt her near me...

Next thing I know, I am swirling in an endless void ,with shifting figures. The dream had pulled me in - Dani's dream. I am wearing different clothing and I feel strong. I feel Dani's presence. But where was Dani? And why am I in Dani's dream?

A scream rings out in the distance. My body and my mind spring into action and a flashlight appears in my hand - I somehow know what I must do next.

Dani

Chimes rang through the house as the grandfather clock strikes 8 pm. Bedtime time? No, it's my cue to go into action.

"How about you go to sleep early tonight?" Mom said.

"Oh! Uh, no, I'm okay, Mom. Promise."

My voice came out too fast, too forced. I winced.

Mom frowned, lingering in my doorway like she knew I was lying. "You don't have to push yourself, Dani. You need rest for your science test tomorrow." Her voice was warm. But her kindness was about to lead to my doom...

"I have more homework, I need to organize, I..." I said as I struggled to come up with more excuses my mom would buy. The words twisted in my stomach, forming a knot. I can't sleep now.

"You should be all set, sweetie. You finished your homework, laundry, and chores. It's time for rest now," Mom said.

But before I could protest, she switched off the lights. The hallway glow vanished, and darkness swallowed my room.

I clenched my fingers to the blanket. I can't be left in this darkness...

I should just get up and turn the lamp back on. But that would be stupid. I was too old for this. I'm not scared of anything, but Dornax is just soooo...

I squeezed my eyes shut. *It's fine. Just go to sleep.*

I take a breath and close my eyes. I remember what my science teacher had said earlier today, "Shadows exist only because of light. No light, no shadow." There was nothing—just me in my bed. I let out a sigh of relief and I closed my eyes....

* * *

A light flashes in my eyes, teleporting me into an unknown world. I wasn't in my room anymore. My mattress was gone, replaced by something cold and hard. A thick smog curls around my ankles, and a grey sky stretches overhead. Then I hear this dreadful sound— an eerie whisper. This sound is only growing louder by the second, filling my head with fear. I start to see shadows shift together. I keep trying to tell myself that everything is okay and that I'm simply imagining these sights.

"It's just a dream, it's just a dream," I repeat.

Four walls shoot up from the smoke covered ground, trapping me within with no way out. Not a single crack of light. I press myself against the cold wall. I have to get out. I have to get out. I scream with all my might, squeezing my eyes shut. I push with all my strength and the walls rip away and shatter into smoke.

I fall backwards, crashing into nothingness. I wasn't anywhere— just darkness.



A familiar figure looms in the swirling dark, watching me. No face. Just a shadow with a mouth and glowing eyes. Dornax. I feel a chilling breeze pass through my hair as the large glowing eyes stare back at me.

I scramble backwards. “It’s not real. It’s not real.” I try to believe it.

Dornax slowly approaches me, his shadow engulfing my being. The ground shook, thunderously loud. I lose my balance immediately and fall to my knees. The dark smoke coils around my legs, winding up my chest, pulling me down. Dornax looms closer and I squeeze my eyes shut in fear.

Suddenly, a hand reaches down from the sky.

“There you are!” I was pulled up. *A girl? Why is her voice so familiar?*

“Hello? Earth to Dani? Come with me!” she says. She starts to run, dragging me along.

“Listen, Dani. You gotta help me out here. Give me a rundown. What is that thing?” she says as we run.

I speak between gasps of air. “Dornax... he’s a shadow monster.”

“OK Dani - let’s go, we gotta move, follow my lead,” says the girl.

I sprint for my life but Dornax is gaining on us. Then all of a sudden we stop. The girl shoves me aside, then clicks on her flashlight and points it at Dornax. The beam blasts through the dark, tearing a gash in the shadows. Dornax hisses and seems to weaken for a minute, giving us time to get away.



We had been running for what felt like forever through the darkness. My flashlight beam sliced through the black, cutting a sharp golden path through the void. I turned to Dani- she looked panicked. We kept running but we couldn't outrun Dornax. We had to fight back.

"Dani. Look at me," I said. "Monsters like Dornax? They don't just appear. They come from somewhere."

I saw it—the way her expression cracked for just a second. "I—I got stuck," she whispered, "Playing hide and seek with my friends a long time ago. I hadn't meant to lock the door - I was hiding and waiting for someone to find me - alone in the dark for hours. No one came."



“Dani, you’re not alone this time,” I said. “We’re gonna do this, together.”

I counted down as Dornax caught up to us. 3, 2, 1.

Both sets of our hands on my flashlight. Light streamed towards Dornax in a powerful beam and swallowed the shadows—

that was no ordinary flashlight. How did it do that?! Dornax shrieked from its light. We stumbled forward together into the light and then I disappeared before she could notice who I was...

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Dani

My eyes snapped open. It's over. I looked at the clock and it's already 3 AM. Welp, I'm definitely going to nap during English tomorrow. But, now that this hero saved me, I don't feel so afraid of Dornax anymore. He has been taunting me for so long, but in reality it's all just a trick in my mind. I shouldn't let the monster control my life anymore.

I can do anything, and I can certainly hold a flashlight towards a shadow. I closed my eyes, re-entering the world of my mind as I drifted back to sleep.

* * *

The darkness consumes me again, but this time it didn't matter. When I saw Dornax's lanky shadow of a body approaching me, he looked weaker. The flashlight damaged him, and now even though I'm alone, I have the upper hand.

I yell in his direction, "I'm not afraid of you anymore!"

Suddenly my own flashlight appeared in my hand, just like that girl's.

“You will never escape your fear. I am nothing, but everything at the same time.” said Dornax.

Dornax hunches over, his dark, red, eyes glowing dimly, and staring deep into my soul. He always scared me because he was unknown.

For a second, I pause. I shine my flashlight at him. He shrieks a high pitched shrivel that makes my ears pop, as he dissolves again.

“You aren’t real. You are darkness, and this is my dream. You can’t control it,” I said.

With that, Dornax disappeared and my dream became light. The peace I had been missing for so long. I didn’t need the help of some hero anymore, because I was able to conquer my own fears.

* * *

The next morning, I actually had more energy than I have had in a while. It was a relief to no longer be afraid to sleep. I still don’t like the dark but I asked my mom to buy me a night light. She got me this cool red-light night light that helps provide light and doesn’t disrupt my sleep. As long as I have some light, Dornax can’t find me anymore.

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PJ

And then I woke up, back in my bed. Um, that was interesting! How did I get into Dani's dream and how did I look so different? Did I save her and defeat a monster? WOAHA...How did I know what to do and feel so confident to do it?

And now Dani seemed back to her normal self at school today. Painting like a boss in art class... she keeps talking all about the amazing night sleep she finally got the second half of the night - totally peaceful.

Last night was such a blur... did Dani know it was me? Maybe we can just pretend last night never happened... and that was it. A one time thing. No more monsters. And I can go back to getting some rest... Maybe I was dreaming too and somehow our dreams aligned?

Can't think about it now. Gotta rally for volleyball even though I long for the bliss of my head hitting the pillow and sleeping. I'm glad Dani got some more rest but I am tired! Last night really took it out of me. I just gotta get through gym class...

As I get to the gym, I see my friend Margot - always a super

star at practice, at school, at everything. I'm sure she aced that math test earlier – it was so hard but Margot always does well. And she's such a good athlete too. But now she's tripping and falling all over the place. Something is off. What is going on?

“I'm just not sleeping... that monster is just so...” Margot says trailing off.

You too, Margot? What is going on?? The same look Dani had. The emptiness in her eyes. The exhaustion clinging to her is like an extra shadow...

Margot

As I paced in my room before bed, I couldn't stop thinking about my math test. What was with that test!? I thought it was easy, but when I talked to my friends about it, I wasn't so sure. My friend PJ got 20 on question 3, but I was *sure* it was 24 - wasn't it? I don't know... maybe it *was* 20!

Stop obsessing Margot and just go to bed! I told myself while glancing at the time. 11:30pm - how was it already so late?

But I asked everyone and they all got 20! My hands began to sweat, and I fidgeted with them restlessly, glancing at the clock, then my hands, then back at the clock.

Calm down. I play four sports; I'm good at math, at least that is what other people tell me; and, worst of all, I've *always* had good grades. How could I mess up this simple question?! Maybe people just tell me I'm smart? Who knows? What if they all think I'm a horrible person?

12am. Two hours have gone by since I started stressing about this test. Maybe I should just forget about it and go to bed...

But wait! Another thing! We were playing volleyball in gym class today and the ball was heading straight at me. I started

running towards it but I stepped on my foot with my other foot and fell in front of everyone. I looked up to see that *everyone* was staring. I felt so humiliated! Is it too late to transfer schools?

I guess there are some things to look forward to, like seeing Dani and PJ tomorrow! But wait... they have been avoiding me – did I do something? Should I talk to them?

iam. I hadn't even noticed how much time I was wasting. OMG, I *really* need to get some sleep, it's practically morning!

I crawled into bed, pulling my covers over myself. I felt my eyes getting heavier and heavier, fighting my restless mind...

* * *

Before I know it, I find myself back at school. I look around and realize I'm in my math class, a thick packet placed on my desk.

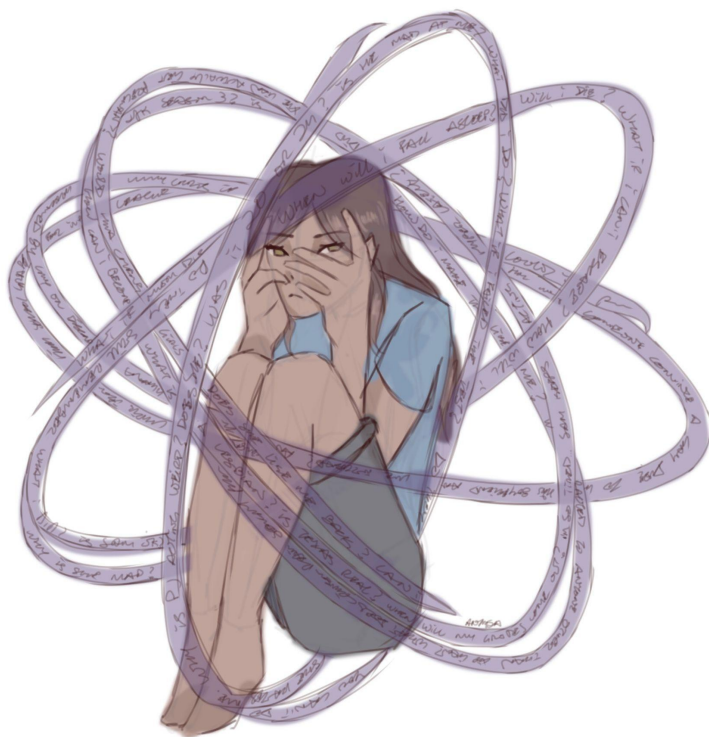
"Your time starts now!" a voice yells from the front of the room. I look down at the paper. *Wait... haven't I already taken this test?* I scramble through the questions, frantically trying to keep up with the time.

Tick tock, tick tock...

I flip to the last page of my math test. *I just need to focus. I only have one page left.*

My heart drops as I rethink the third question. I knew the answer: 24. I was sure of it. But my friends had gotten 20.

"You can't trust yourself?" boomed a creepy, dark voice. My head spins, frantically trying to see where the voice came from.



The ticking of the clock jerks me back to reality. I grip my pencil tightly, staring at the “24” etched into my paper. *Maybe it was 24? Could I have been correct?* My hands shake and my heartbeat rings out in my ears.

“Three minutes left,” the voice at the front warns.

Wait! What if I messed up other questions on the test! This wasn’t helping me! The more I try to think, the harder it gets.

Suddenly, the dark voice shrieks, "Are you sure that's the answer? How do you know it's not wrong?"

It's 24... I did the math over and over! But why did everyone else get 20?

"Don't write the wrong answer..." The voice teases.

I erase my answer without thinking, but before I can switch it back, I am pulled away from my desk.

"Time's up!" said the voice.

Darkness surrounds me, morphing the scene into yet another reminder of my failures.

* * *

Why am I back in gym class? I look around and notice a familiar volleyball net.

"They all saw you fall. It was silent. They all stared at you. You looked like a fool; you totally embarrassed yourself, big yikes" the voice taunted me.



The ball comes over the net. *Towards me.*

My legs tremble. All I have to do is receive the serve. *Breathe, Margot!*

“Don’t screw up,” a familiar dark voice warns.

I hit the ball. With my head. Out of bounds. How could I make

such a silly mistake??

“Ouch... that’s gotta hurt,” the voice says, teasing. I look around, following the sound of its voice with my head. *What are you?* “You could have at least tried to hit it with your hands.” The voice again. Where was it coming from?

I finally see the source of the voice. It’s a monster; a dark blob of words with a white mask. I looked at it with dread as its darkness grew around me.

My vision dims as the world around me morphs once again.

Now, I am surrounded by books, safely tucked away in the library. I don’t know what that *dark voice* was all about. I don’t think it will find me here.

I’m reaching for my favorite book when I see Dani walking by. “Dani!” I say with a smile, waving my hand.

I wait for her to come over, but she just keeps walking... Straight past me. She doesn’t even look at me. Why isn’t she looking at me?

“She’s mad at you, Margot” the voice taunted. “What did you do this time?” I search for it, recognizing the dark voice from gym class.

The monster blob leans over my shoulder with a twisted smile that sends a shiver down my spine. My hands shake and I don’t know what to say... I slowly feel myself feeling smaller and smaller.

Suddenly, the world went dark. I’m not floating in the darkness of my dream, flashing between the classroom, the gym, the library and now in the abyss of nowhere, searching for the strength to pull myself up. Where am I now?

All of a sudden I hear a familiar voice and a feeling of warmth

washes over me – it sounds like PJ, but that’s ridiculous! She is talking to me!

“Margot, you need to STOP! Listen, I’m trying to help you because we are currently stuck INSIDE your monster’s mind, and we aren’t going to escape unless you start to realize that you can make it stop. The negative thoughts it’s saying *aren’t real!* You are amazing, smart, and talented, and you have friends who love you. Everyone’s just trying to do their best and all you can do is YOUR best. One day at a time. We don’t need to be perfect; know that you are *awesome* even if you make a mistake,” assured the girl.

I know she is right. I slowly start to gain more strength... Suddenly the girl appears in front of me – she definitely looks like PJ. Is it PJ?

“You just have to be sure of yourself!” encourages the girl. She pulls out a huge silver flashlight and points it directly at my chest. I start to glow.

“Repeat after me,” she says, “with every breath I feel stronger.”

“With every breath I feel stronger, with every breath I feel stronger, with every breath I feel stronger,” I repeat.

“Now BREATHE! Breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for four seconds, breathe out for four seconds, and hold for four seconds.”

So I do, over and over, each repeat helping me relax. The beam of light is still on me, my glow from within shining brighter with each breath I take.

All of a sudden, the light grows around us. As the darkness lifts, my worries ease.

At last, my mind is clear and I am free...

So I was definitely in Margot's dream last night. I felt that same feeling I had with Dani, pulling me into the dream. I felt the prickling sensation creep down my spine.

How is this happening? How did I know what to do? Do I have superpowers - gotta be honest, I was awesome. I really could see Margot looking more confident and calming down... I don't want to sound too full of myself but something amazing is going on.

Margot and Dani seem to be back on track. We won our volleyball game and Margot aced her test. Margot seems a lot more chill and confident. They both keep talking about how they are sleeping sooo well now - going to bed early and loving sleep. Just like me - blissful, restful sleep!! Or at least how I used to. I'm tired! Every night helping my friends- but my superpowers come with great responsibility I guess, right?

But in computer class today, I noticed something was up with Harry. He was typing really slowly like a sloth, wasn't talking to his friends and his eyes were RED! I know Harry likes to game a lot but this time his look was totally different - like a zombie.

I was really worried about Harry so I went over to talk to him. I started getting that tingling feeling- something is up.

“Hey Harry, are you alright? What’s wrong?” I asked.

Harry looked up at me with red-bloodshot eyes. The same look Dani and Margot had. The emptiness in his eyes. The exhaustion clinging to him is like an extra shadow...

“I couldn’t sleep last night. There was a glowing, blue monster...and it just kept attacking me in my dreams...” said Harry.

First Dani, then Margot, now Harry? What is the deal? Whatever is going on, I am so amped to help my friends. I know I can do it - I feel it deep inside me. It’s go time.

Harry

Every day after school, I rush home to play my favorite game, FortFighter! If I win, I will be ranked 500th globally in FortFighter, the greatest game ever created!

**ping, crash* Oh no, I lost a round.*

“Aww, we lost another round,” I said into my microphone.

“Time to go to bed, honey!” said Mom.

“5 more minutes, Mom!”

“No, Honey, you really need to go to sleep. You have school tomorrow,” She responded.

Mom turned off the light, but she didn’t see me slide my tablet under my pillow. I wasn’t done with FortFighter yet.

I continued winning dub after dub and the hours flew by. That’s not so unusual for me – I love this game. I’d rather be up late playing than anything else – I meet my bros every night to play.

And besides, it takes me forever to fall asleep every night – I toss and turn but I just can't seem to relax. Whenever I play the game for too long, my eyes hurt. Some nights, when I'm on the game for hours, I get super stressed and it takes a long time for me to calm down afterwards.

By the time I knew it, the clock struck midnight. I knew I should've stopped, but I was *locked in*. My fingers tapped furiously against the screen, dodging, building, and outplaying every opponent. One more win, and I'd be on the global leaderboard. My heart raced.

Then—BAM! Final elimination secured.

“LET’S GO!” I whispered, pumping my fist in victory.

I checked the rankings. 499th place. I did it. I was officially one of the best.

In the midst of my celebration, I caught a glimpse of the time. Without even realizing it, two whole hours had gone by. I set my tablet down and tried to close my eyes, but I somehow felt wide awake and couldn't stop my mind from racing. I hadn't been getting much sleep yet somehow didn't feel tired at all.

When I tried to fall asleep at night, I just couldn't. As I was restlessly tossing and turning, I stood up to get a glass of water from my kitchen. Got back to bed, closed my eyes, and finally...

* * *

I am not in my house anymore.

I stood in the middle of a huge, broken battlefield, just like in FortFighter. The sky flashes between dark blue and weird, glitchy colors. Tall phone towers surround me, their screens blinking over and over with messages I couldn't read. The

ground is made of cracked glass, reflecting my confused face.

A strange sound echoes in the distance. Click. Click.

I turn. A huge, creepy shadow crawls toward me. Its legs are long and thin, like spider legs, but instead of fur, they are covered in phone screens. Wires dangle from its body, sparking with blue light. It's horrifying.

My stomach twists. The Blue Light Monster.

It moves closer, its glowing eyes flashing like notifications. The words "Just one more game..." "You're not even tired yet..." "Who needs sleep when you could be the best?" pops up on its forehead.

I step back. "N-no, I don't want to play anymore!"



But the monster doesn't care. It shoots out glowing blue wires that wrap around my arms and legs. My body is heavy. My head aches, like I had been awake for way too long.

I try to pull away, but my body won't listen. I am stuck.

The monster's cracked mouth opens, and a loud, screechy

voice comes out, like a ringtone turned up too high. “Just. One. More. Round.” it says.

I shake my head. “No! I just want to sleep!”

But I couldn’t. The blue light wraps tighter around me, making my eyelids feel heavier. Even though my eyes want to go to sleep, I can’t.

My arms droop. My legs wobble. It was pulling me in....

“Hey!” All of a sudden I heard a familiar voice. Suddenly a girl is running towards me. Is that?... no way, it couldn’t be...

“Harry, it gets its strength from that blue light. It makes us powerless and hurts your brain. That’s why you always feel wired at night—you’re staring at your screen too long. If you stop using electronics an hour before bed, it loses its power over you. And if the battery dies or gets turned off, that thing can’t hurt you! Then you can finally sleep” said the girl.

She’s right. If I could find it—if I could trap the monster inside and power it off—it would go away. But where is it? I had to escape before it was too late.

“I got you, Harry. I’ll distract it, hang on.” the girl said.

Out of nowhere the girl pulls out this flashlight. Strong and silver. She too looked like a flashlight in a sleek outfit - I could make out the words, Dream Beam on her back... Was that her name?

The monster lifts its legs, ready to strike. The girl quickly slides underneath the belly of the monster, using her flashlight to find the power button. She shines the flashlight at the power button, long enough to melt it into the off position. The blue light starts to fade...

The girl slides out from under the monster just in time as it was collapsing, shutting down all power and sending sparks into the air. All the light was turned off and I could feel my energy

rising...

She grabs my hand - I take a deep breath and we run.

* * *

I woke up back in my room, of course, like nothing happened. The sun was shining through the blinds, and I heard birds chirping outside - it was morning. To my surprise, I felt a lot better than I did yesterday. Normally, it feels impossible to get out of bed- I'm super cranky and wished that I had gotten more sleep. Not today.

"How did you sleep, Harry?" Mom asked as she opened the door.

"Pretty well, I think. Took me a little while but after the first half of the night I slept great. I'm not quite sure how..."

I got dressed, ate breakfast, and hopped on the bus waiting for me outside. I saw PJ waiting in our usual seat and sat down next to her.

"PJ, you're never going to believe this. I had the weirdest dream last night. It was just like FortFighter, and there were these weird phone-spider-monsters that were trying to attack me. Then, this girl that looked just like you came in and destroyed him. It was crazy."

PJ laughed awkwardly. "Huh. Ha, yeah, that is pretty crazy."

As soon as the bus parked, PJ ran off. "Sorry gotta go, bye!" Weird. Why did she run off like that? She could not get away from me fast enough...

PJ

As soon as the bus parked, I ran away from Harry. I think he could tell I was lying or hiding something. I could tell he was catching on. He would never believe me. I mean, how weird is it to be like, “yeah I have a superpower to transport into my friends’ dreams and help save them from monsters so they sleep again.” Yeah, totally normal PJ...

I was so happy to sit down in music class. I love playing the drums and music class is one of my happy places to calm down and relax. And boy, I could use some relaxation right now. Hiding this secret from my friends and saving them every night-I’m tired! I miss my restful nights.

I sat down next to Sam, and of course- tingly; I am sensing something is up.... He is normally ready to rock.

“Sam what’s up? Everything ok?”

“I’m just so tired! I toss and turn all night long. And Azucar...his snakes...” Sam moaned.

The emptiness in his eyes. The exhaustion clinging to him is like an extra shadow. The tingly feeling down my spine. Here we go again - I got you, Sam...

Sam

I love sugar. Twix©, Hershey's©, Reese's©, Skittles©. You name it, I want it. I grew up surrounded by sugar. My father would always come home from the chocolate factory where he worked with buckets of candy for my little sister Sally and me. Every birthday and holiday, I would receive a new type of candy from my father as his gift. Chocolate and candy are my snacks of choice. If the flavor is sweet, that's my jam.

I've always struggled to fall asleep and stay asleep. It takes me forever to calm down and get sleepy and then I wake up all night long. It must be my schoolwork...

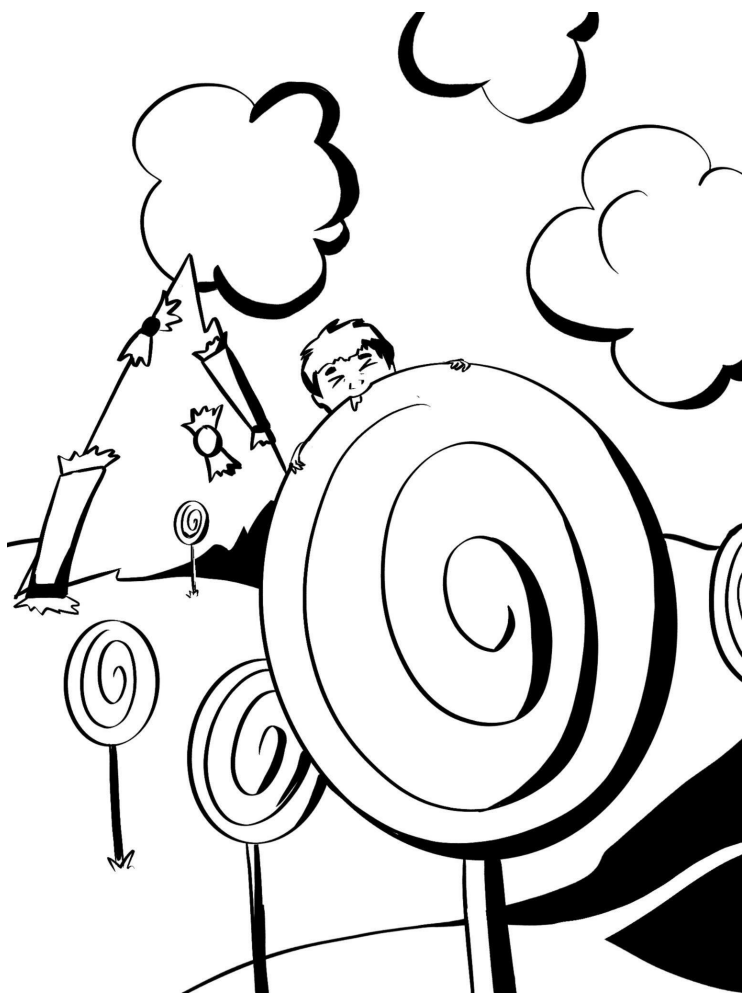
I grab a Hershey's bar from my room stash before doing my homework. I'm supposed to sleep after that, but something stops me.

I finally forced myself to lie down in my bed to go to sleep...let's see how long this is going to take tonight. I stare at the ceiling for what feels like hours. I'm so restless. Finally, I feel my eyes

getting heavier and heavier..

* * *

I must have drifted off as I find myself in a weird place. What is this world?? I see something in the distance. Mountain of candy bars and sweets. There are lollipop trees and cotton candy clouds everywhere and a gumdrop staircase leading to the top. But who is that standing at the top? Is that a robot? I can't tell...



I start to make my way up the gumdrop staircase. OH MY GOSH!
There are snakes up here! Gummy snakes over seven feet long!

I jump quickly to avoid them, trying to get to the top of the mountain without them biting my feet.

I'm almost there! I see it is not a robot, but a person. His back is turned to me. He starts to turn around and...

* * *

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

My alarm clock goes off! I woke up in a panic, dripping in sweat. I have to get ready for school. After I ate my Lucky Charms© cereal and got dressed, I took the bus to school.

I walked into Mrs. Salud's class and couldn't stop thinking about the strange man standing at the top of the gumdrop staircase that was in my dream.

"Sam? Sam!" Mrs. Salud yelled.

"Whaaat?" I said, mid-yawn. I sat up straight in my chair as quickly as I could.

"Sam, are you okay? You look exhausted," my friend PJ says to me.

"Yeah, I'm fine now. I had this strange dream last night, though." I said.

"What happened?" said PJ.

“Well, first, I couldn’t fall asleep for like two hours. Then, all of a sudden, I was in this weird candyland, where all I could see was sweets. There was a man standing at the top of a staircase with his back towards me.” I said.

“Did you get a look at his face?” said PJ.

“No! I woke up before I could see who it was!” I said.

“That’s odd...Maybe I could help you with that,” PJ said under her breath, thinking I couldn’t hear her.

“What did you say?” I asked. But before she could answer, Mrs. Salud started up again.

* * *

When I finally got home from baseball practice after school, I was so exhausted – last night was the hardest it had been in a while. Such an intense dream. It was late so I struggled to finish my homework – I grabbed some candy and washed it down with a Dr. Pepper© to keep me awake and focused.

When I finally finished my work around 11 pm, my desk was piled high with candy wrappers. I crashed on my bed as my mind swirls. My heart was beating fast but my eyes were just so heavy. I was so sleepy but I can’t seem to calm down. Eventually my heartbeat calmed and I felt my breath slow down...

* * *

The next thing you know, I'm back at the mountain. I see the same man from last night's dream waving at me from the top. He has a gummy snake slithering around his body. I shiver in terror.

I see his full form. He looks like a gigantic robot, candy wrappers swirling tight around his body. Gleaming, he looks like pure sugar, but something tells me he's salt. He is holding out a Hershey's© bar and he speaks in this dark, creepy, booming voice.



“Sam, it’s time we met. You will never defeat me! I am the great Azucar!” said the man.

Azucar comes sprinting at me with his snake coated in sugar

as his weapon. I dodge the snake fangs and dive into a pile of cotton candy.

“You can’t hide from me!” Azucar screams.

His gummy snake lunges at me, mouth wide open, and I brace for a snake bite. But I feel nothing. I open my eyes to see a familiar face holding the snake by its neck – a girl. Who is she? What is she doing here? How did she do that?

She launches herself at Azucar to attack. Azucar rips a NERDS© branch from a tree and slashes her in the leg. I rush to her side to try to help her. I see her holding this flashlight.

“I am your kryptonite, I am inevitable!” yells Azucar.

I try to shield the girl from another blow, but she just pushes me aside and hands me her flashlight.

“You need to shine this on the monster! It will reveal the truth!” she said.

“What truth?... No, you need help immediately!” I said.

“I’ll be fine. Just do it!” she yells.

Azucar sees the girl handing me the flashlight and yells in anger. He throws a gummy spear directly at me. I dodge the spear and shine a bright, white light from the flashlight at Azucar.

OH. MY. GOSH.

Azucar's wrappers no longer display the names of the candy bars. But instead, the wrappers spell out a list:

1. Sugar before bed makes a morning of groggy heads.
2. Caffeine in soda from late in the morning will stay in your system until you start snoring.
3. Three liters of water per day leads to happy play.

I gasp, IT'S THE SUGAR AND CAFFEINE! The years of eating so much chocolate and so many sweets has disrupted my sleeping! My poor habits have led to all that tossing and turning at night.

Azucar slowly walks up to me, a look of mischief in his eyes. He pulls something from within his armor, a chocolate bar. My father's double dark chocolate bar. He must know it's my favorite candy in the world.

"Just one more bite," Azucar says, looking me directly in the eyes. He smirks, pleased with himself. I feel my hand slowly reaching out.

But I catch myself. I look to my right and see my fallen ally slowly shaking her head. I could sense Azucar stiffening. I suddenly knew how to defeat him.

"No, I'd rather have broccoli." I say with defiance.

"Sam," He calls, "Don't leave me. Don't you love sugar?"

All of a sudden, Azucar begins to dissolve.

“I still like sugar and soda, but they can be a special treat. A good night’s sleep would make me happier.” I said with confidence.

“This isn’t the end...” Azucar cries out as he melts away...

The girl high-fives me and smiles running away before I could talk to her or make-out exactly who she was. So long, Azucar...

* * *

I woke up and this time it felt different. I don’t think I will ever see Azucar again. I went through my day with a clearer mind and felt a lot better.

That night, I decided to drink a glass of warm milk and an apple with peanut butter. Actually, PJ suggested to me that it might help me sleep through the night. Great idea, PJ. How does she know so much about good sleep?

Dani, Margot, Harry, now Sam... so many battles and monsters. I am super proud of myself, but how much longer can I keep this up? I'm so tired. I'm just so happy to see my friends seem so rested and happy now. Full of energy - I haven't seen them like this in so long. And they can't stop bragging about how much sleep they are getting.

Dani is sleeping with a red nightlight in her room and said, "it's a game changer." Margot said she slept 10 hours, breathing deeply every night before bed. I also saw her whispering, "with every breath I feel stronger" before her science test. I asked her if she was ok and she was like, "I got this." Now that's a 180. So amazing.

Sam started snacking on apples and peanut butter with warm milk at night and gave away his sugar stash - I never thought I would see that happen. And he said he gave up soda and switched to seltzer - OMG. Harry is now only playing video games on the weekends and is **READING** before bed- **WHAT?! Who are these people?**

I'm so happy for my friends but who is next? Am I destined

to go into dreams every night? I love being Dream Beam and helping people, but man, I need to sleep too! How am I going to keep this up?

Sam, Harry, Dani, Margot

In the cafeteria, Sam, Harry, Dani and Margot sat down to lunch. As Sam unpacked his food, everyone's eyes turned to him. A large can of seltzer, chicken and broccoli stir fry with brown rice and an orange for dessert.

"What a healthy lunch, Sam!" said Margot. "What happened to all your chocolate bars?"

"I still love chocolate," said Sam. "I just save it for a special treat now. After I defeated my monster Azucar in my dreams, everything changed."

"What did you just say?" said Harry. "You have nightmares too? You won't believe this!" Harry exclaimed. "The other night, a Blue Light monster showed up in my dreams and was trying to trap me. But THEN - a girl showed up and saved me! She had this special flashlight and an outfit that I think said 'Dream Beam'..."

“No way!” cried Sam. “Same girl was in my dream! TBH, I know this sounds weird but the girl looked a lot like PJ. I think PJ was the one to help me defeat Azucar!”

“OMG yes! I’m so glad you said that. I could have sworn it was PJ in my dream. She helped me overcome the overthinking monster! Her superhero name must be Dream Beam.” said Margot.

“And PJ helped ME extinguish Dornax, my shadow monster! She’s a superhero!” cried Dani. “We have to thank her!”

Just a few moments later, PJ walked into the cafeteria, looking exhausted.

“PJ!!” yelled Sam. “You saved us from our sleep monsters - why didn’t you tell us you were a superhero?!”

“Wait, how did you know...?” said PJ.

“We got to talking and we figured it out! You are the most amazing superhero, Dream Beam!” said Margot.

PJ’s four friends ran to give her a hug. As soon as they hugged, they heard this calming buzzing sound - a warm glow surrounded them.

“Woah, what’s going on??” cried PJ.

All of a sudden, they all turned at once to a girl named Mary, in the corner of the cafeteria. The emptiness in her eyes. The

exhaustion clinging to her is like an extra shadow.

Margot, Sam, Harry, PJ and Dani locked eyes. Like somehow they all knew – *we feel it too, PJ. The shiver down our spines – she has a monster too. We got your back – let's do this, Dream Beam team – Guardians of the Night!*

PJ

My name is PJ, which is short for Patricia Johnson. As an 11 year old, life used to be pretty hard because I had a secret. I am a superhero - Dream Beam.

It used to be my burden to save all my friends from bad dreams. I fought monsters night after night, empowering my friends to find the strength to defeat their monsters. I was so happy to help my friends but it was exhausting and I would lose quality sleep myself. But now, it isn't just me - we are an awesome team of superheroes who can sense when kids in our school need our help sleeping.

When we defeated their monsters and found the power of a good night's sleep, we became the Dream Beam team. Our plan? Help everyone find easy restful sleep, 8-10 hours every night. What a treasure - falling asleep peacefully and waking up rested. Now that's the dream... let's do this Dream Beam team - guardians of the night!



Appendix: PJ and the Dream Beam Team's Sleep Secrets

You need about 9-12 hours of sleep each night to feel your best!

Why Sleep Matters:

- Sleep helps your body recover and supports your immune system.
- Good sleep can improve creativity, memory, and problem-solving skills, making it easier to tackle challenges like our heroes did.
- Sleep also helps you manage your emotions, making it easier to handle stress and feel happier throughout the day.

Signs You Might Not Be Getting Enough Sleep:

- Feeling groggy, moody, or irritable during the day
- Struggling to stay awake in class (like Dani in art!)

- Having trouble remembering things or focusing on home-work
- Feeling clumsy or uncoordinated (like Margot in volleyball practice!)
- Increased cravings for sugar due to lack of energy (like Sam!)
- Difficulty waking up in the morning, even after a full night of sleep

What's Affecting Your Sleep:

- Too much screen time before bed can trick your brain into staying awake (like Harry!)
- Caffeine (in soda, tea, or chocolate) can make it harder to fall asleep (like Sam!)
- Sugar throughout the day can cause restless sleep (like Sam!)
- An irregular bedtime confuses your body's natural sleep cycle
- Worrying or overthinking at night can lead to restless sleep (like Margot!)
- A noisy or too-bright room can make it difficult to fall or stay asleep
- Naps that are too long or too late in the day can throw off nighttime sleep
- Not enough exposure to natural light during the day can make it harder to fall asleep at night

Tips for Better Sleep:

1. Stick to a sleep schedule: try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends.
2. Create a relaxing bedtime routine: read a book, listen to calming music, or do gentle stretches before bed.
3. Limit screens before bed: stop using phones, tablets, and TVs at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
4. Make your room sleep-friendly: keep it cool, dark, and quiet. Use a nightlight if you need it.
5. Avoid heavy meals and sugary or caffeinated foods late at night.
6. Get plenty of exercise during the day—but avoid intense workouts right before bedtime.
7. If you wake up scared or anxious, try deep breathing: breathe in for four seconds, hold for four, and breathe out for four.
8. Use a flashlight or a nightlight to “fight the shadows:” like PJ and Dani used light against Dornax, think of happy thoughts or a calming image when you’re scared at night.
9. Keep a dream journal: writing down dreams, especially scary ones, can help process fears and reduce anxiety about sleeping.
10. Talk about your sleep worries: if you have frequent nightmares or trouble sleeping, share your concerns with a parent, teacher, or friend.
11. Get morning sunlight: try to spend time outside in the morning to help regulate your body’s sleep-wake cycle.
12. Try progressive muscle relaxation: tense and relax different muscle groups before bed to help your body feel calm and ready for sleep.
13. Use a cozy sleep item: a favorite stuffed animal, blanket, or pillow can provide comfort and security at bedtime.

Facing Your Sleep Monsters

- Fears and anxieties can sometimes feel like real monsters at night.
- Instead of running from them, talk to a parent, teacher, or friend about what's on your mind.
- Practicing positive thoughts before bed can help keep the nightmares away.
- Doing a gratitude exercise before sleep can help your brain focus on the good things in your life.
- Remember, sleep monsters aren't as strong as you think—confidence and good sleep habits can help you defeat them!

Just like PJ and the Dream Beam team learned, a good night's sleep is a treasure! Take care of your sleep so you can feel your best every day.

Discussion and Resource Guide

This guide is designed to support educators and parents in using Dream Beam Chronicles: Guardian of the Night as a tool for 3rd–5th grade classroom discussion, literacy development, and social-emotional learning.

Themes & Life Lessons

1. The Power of Sleep

Discussion Prompt: Why is sleep important? What happens when we don't get enough?

Activity Idea: Have students journal or draw their ideal bedtime routine. Then, talk about what helps them feel calm before bed.

2. Facing Fears & Building Confidence

Discussion Prompt: What does each “sleep monster” represent? How do Dani, Margot, Harry, and Sam conquer their fears?

Activity Idea: Ask kids to imagine their own “sleep monster” and what tools (real or imagined) they could use to fight it.

3. Empathy and Friendship

Discussion Prompt: How does PJ show she cares about her friends? Why is it sometimes hard to ask for or offer help?

Activity Idea: Have kids write a kind message or “dream beam” note to a classmate—something encouraging that could help someone who’s feeling down.

4. Healthy Habits & Self-Awareness

Discussion Prompt: What habits were keeping each character from sleeping well?

Activity Idea: Create a “Good Sleep Checklist” together as a class or family (e.g., turn off screens, reduce sugar, calming routine).

5. Teamwork & Boundaries

Discussion Prompt: PJ is a great helper, but what does she learn about balance? Why is it important to care for yourself too?

Activity Idea: Talk about the idea of “filling your cup” before helping others. What’s one thing each student can do to recharge?

Creative Extensions

- Dream Journals: Encourage students to keep a dream log for a week. Use it as a reflection tool or to spark creative writing.
- Create Your Superhero: If you could help others like PJ, what would your name, outfit, and power be?
- Sleep Monster Art: Draw your own sleep monster and the weapon or strategy to defeat it—like a flashlight, shield, calming breath, or nightlight.
- Sleep Science Mini-Lesson: Teach how screen light affects the brain, or why the body needs REM sleep.

Home Connection Tips

- Encourage screen-free wind-down time before bed.
- Talk about nighttime worries together and use deep breathing exercises as a family.
- Set a consistent sleep schedule with calming rituals like reading, journaling, or listening to soft music.
- Remind kids: it's okay to ask for help, and their feelings are valid—even if they show up as “monsters” in dreams.





About the Author

The President's Junior Leadership Council (PJLC) of Northern Westchester Hospital, Northwell is a youth leadership group that promotes the health, safety and well-being of adolescents in Northern Westchester. PJLC members identify health issues affecting their peers and work collaboratively to create awareness projects to improve community health and wellness. Students explore healthcare careers, gain experience in public health, and learn leadership skills.

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