

Plausible Absurdity

by

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Studio Art B.F.A., University of Oklahoma, 2011

A Report Submitted to the Lamar Dodd School of Art

of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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Approved:



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Georgia Strange, Major Professor

5.2.14

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Date

### **In a Nutshell . . .**

Catharsis and investigation vie for center stage. Using my own experience as a model, I ruminate on the intersection of mythology, anthropology and consciousness. Conventional wisdom has revealed itself inept to address the dynamics of my sleep. Memory, imagination, trauma, chemical imbalance, omnipotent will: none of these solutions offered up seem exclusively veracious. They're not enough.

And so I build, compulsively and meditatively. I build with the intention of both examining and narrating my sleep and nightmare journey. A motley collection of fable and ritual informs this psycho-autobiography as I attempt to discern the night's antagonists, their nascence, their temper, and their entreat. Modern reason levies oral history as I test the array of mythos proposed in good faith and independently discovered. I dissect and amalgamate ideas. Trivia are plucked and deduced into essentialist philosophies I can try on for size. Conceptual bridges are built that seem semi-reasonable in the given confound.

### **How It All Started**

I don't sleep well. As far back as I can recall rest has never felt easily accessible to me. At least three nights out of every week are filled with nightmares. Horrific characters identical to or reminiscent of those in my waking plane flood the empty space toward the front of my head. I feel the images projected right behind my eyes. Graphic scenarios of violence, torture, and mutilation will be acted out in the dreamscape. When I'm not having nightmares, I don't dream. The only imagery I am capable of conjuring behind closed eyes is appalling.

I always seem to make an appearance somewhere in the plotline. Some nights I observe myself from a third person or omniscient perspective. I can watch myself like the star of a

terrible movie. Other nights I experience the evening's saga in first person. I perform the actions, and watch for the responses and cues from my co-stars.

On such evenings I do more than see. It's as if my entire physical being crosses into the dream dimension joining my subconscious self. Despite a total absence of tangible influences, I will viscerally respond. My present self will feel when my dream self is touched. It will sweat and hyperventilate when being pursued. It will experience actual pain sensations when acted upon by the dream's antagonists. It's as if a door between the two dimensions of dream and waking life has been left ajar; I and my supporting cast ebb and flow aimlessly through it.

For much of my existence this relationship with sleep and night has served as both my burden and source of quandary. Most evenings, as the sky begins to take its telltale pink and orange hues an anxious dread will begin to flood my amygdala<sup>1</sup>. With the realization that agony is likely imminent within the next several hours, a sneaking case of hypnophobia<sup>2</sup> will start to bud. Coping and avoidance mechanisms have led me meandering down a road of research and deduction in an attempt to regain the reigns. With little in contemporary science sufficient to justify this conundrum, I have trekked further into more archaic threads of reason. Calling upon classical beliefs and folklore, I desperately grasp at hypotheses, applying and testing them manually in my studio practice.

### **Saint Dymphna and Saint Elias**

Upon resolving to dissect this issue, I began with my roots and the stories closest and dearest to me. Having spent most of my formative years residing in Oklahoma and Georgia, I

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<sup>1</sup> The amygdala is a pair of small almond shaped lobes near the center of the brain that play a key role in emotional reactions and fear response.

<sup>2</sup> Hypnophobia is an irrational fear of sleep.

have been immersed in highly conservative and largely religious communities. Prayer, scripture reading, and theological discussions were practiced diligently in my childhood home. We regularly tithed and volunteered. And at least twice a week the family attended functions with our church congregation. Thus, when resolving to hunt a solution to my nightmares I kept my search tight. I turned first to the ideology with which I was most familiar: Christian doctrine.

Since the dilemma is sleep and its accompanying visions and emotions, I naturally sought sleep-specific wisdom on the topic. This brought me to St. Dymphna, a 7<sup>th</sup> century martyr whom Catholics regard as the patron saint of anxiety, nervous mental afflictions, and sleeplessness. At age fourteen Dymphna had just lost her Christian mother. This left her under the sole jurisdiction of her father Damon, an Irish petty king with pagan beliefs. Stricken mad with grief the king sought to mend his heart by marrying Dymphna because of the resemblance. To guard her virtue the princess fled to the continent with an entourage of clergymen. She was eventually caught up with and beheaded in the streets of Gheel, Belgium. Dymphna, with her experience and attributes, definitely seemed like someone I wanted on my team helping me address sleep phobias.

Sage wisdom and further research also pointed my search to Saint Elijah.<sup>3</sup> He is one of the more notable Old Testament prophets. Talk of Elijah typically centers on him being a total badass. He allegedly set entire armies on fire,<sup>4</sup> raised a young man from the dead,<sup>5</sup> and cast three

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<sup>3</sup> The name Elijah is alternatively translated as Eliyahu or Elias. This is not the same man as Elisha, who studied under Elijah as his protégé. (Catholics Online)

<sup>4</sup> But Elijah answered them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. (NIV Bible 2 Kings 1:12)

<sup>5</sup> <sup>17</sup> After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. <sup>18</sup> And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" <sup>19</sup> And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his

years of drought and famine on the people of Samaria,<sup>6</sup> all with just words. And on top of all that, legend has it that he's not even dead yet! The Bible says that Elijah was sucked up into heaven on a chariot in the middle of a fire tornado<sup>7</sup> and will later return to dispense plagues, turn rivers into blood, and fight Satan<sup>8</sup>. Clearly, he is a man that capable of grandiose accomplishments.

But there's one particular reason crucial to understanding why elders and mentors have guided my efforts toward Saint Elijah. That is the venerated Elijah is commonly regarded as the patron saint of sleep.<sup>9</sup> This is due to one of the less remarkable tales in which Elijah flees to the desert, takes a nap, is awoken by an angel with snacks, and then walks for forty days to a mountain.<sup>10</sup> It all honesty, the connection seemed to be a weak one. Dozing off under a tree

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own bed.<sup>20</sup> And he cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?"<sup>21</sup> Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life[a] come into him again."<sup>22</sup> And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.<sup>23</sup> And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives."<sup>24</sup> And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." (NIV Bible 1 Kings 17: 17-24)

<sup>6</sup> <sup>1</sup>And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. (NIV Bible, 1 Kings 17:1)

<sup>7</sup> <sup>11</sup> And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.<sup>12</sup> And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. (NIV Bible, 2 Kings 2: 11-12)

<sup>8</sup> <sup>6</sup> They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.<sup>7</sup> And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, (NIV Bible, Revelation 11:6-7)

<sup>9</sup> Depending on the sect, Saint Elijah is said to serve as the divine intercessor for a number of earthly realms. In addition to sleep, he is said to be the patron saint of fire, lightning, hail, various mountains, and the Romanian Air Force.

<sup>10</sup> <sup>5</sup> And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat."<sup>6</sup> And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again.<sup>7</sup> And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you."<sup>8</sup> And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. (NIV Bible, 1 Kings 19:5-8)

hardly seems like a tale worth canonizing a man over. I had my doubts with this hypothesis. But in my humbled state of seeking supernatural guidance, all hypotheses would be tested before being disregarded.

So I had my first logical deduction. If anyone is capable of interceding on my behalf to a higher power about overcoming traumatic visions and sleep phobias, it's this divine duo of Elijah and Dymphna. With due prayer, meditation, and homage, Saint Elijah can clearly reign in the Omnipotent's attention to my conundrum. All the while, Saint Dymphna, with her empathy and expertise, can function more as a specialist at an interpersonal micro level, addressing the individual quirks of each dream.

But it never happened that way. Scripture dictates that service<sup>11</sup> and dedication<sup>12</sup> will put me right with the higher power. From that position, my efforts will have enabled my voice to be heard and calls for guidance and sanctuary answered.<sup>13</sup> But it was never so. Despite numerous meditative drawings and writings, and regularly volunteering my time and skills, the dreams, the visions, and the accompanying anxiety kept coming back. Was I being heard? Was there a blunder somewhere in middle management? Fed up that the theological network in question that allegedly operated on martyrdom, intercession and homage seemed to be stalling out, I cut my losses and moved forward to new arenas of investigation.

## **Asibikaashi**

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<sup>11</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (NIV Bible, Hebrews 13:16)

<sup>12</sup> For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. (NIV Bible, Hebrews 6:10)

<sup>13</sup> And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. (NIV Bible, Luke 11:9)

My second pursuit led me down an avenue of lore indigenous to North America. As previously mentioned, most of my formative years as a youth were spent in Oklahoma. With forty-three different languages spoken within its borders, the state is a sanctuary for oral tradition.<sup>14</sup> Ancient wisdoms are frequently well known and proliferate freely through social, spiritual, and academic life. Childhood had left me well acquainted with these tales. It seemed sensible to test this mysticism next in my search for answers.

There's some disagreement about which tribe made the first dream catcher. It's a well-loved practice as it seems almost every tribe and clan in North America has their own unique rendition. However, most written sources will attribute the relic to the Anishinaabe.<sup>15,16</sup> Narratives behind the item's emergence and function will vary slightly in details, but largely hold the same themes. I hoped that these ancient constants would be my solution.

The story always begins in the time of the ancestors, not long after the Anishinaabe separated from the Gitchi Manitou.<sup>17</sup> In the version I grew up hearing, a young boy was playing in his tipi one afternoon when he spotted a spider spinning a web. Frightened he grabbed a stick with the intent to kill the spider and destroy its web. Sensing a disturbance, the boy's mother entered the tipi, snatched the stick from his hand, and saved the creature. It so happened that it wasn't just an ordinary spider she saved from her boy's mischief but Grandmother Spider, or

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<sup>14</sup> Oklahoma holds the highest density of indigenous languages in the United States. This Hotspot includes languages originally spoken in the area as well as the languages of tribes from farther east that were forcibly relocated onto reservations in Oklahoma during the 1800s. (Andersen)

<sup>15</sup> Anishinaabe are also known as Ojibwe, Ojibway, and Chippewa. Anishinaabe is the term they prefer for themselves, meaning "Original Peoples." (Ojibway Indian Fact Sheet)

<sup>16</sup> I was always told the Lakota Sioux were the first people to make dream catchers. The Sioux and Anishinaabe both lay claim to north-central and Great Lakes areas of the U.S. And in retrospect, it was a Sioux woman who told me this.

<sup>17</sup> Gitchi Manitou translates to "Great Spirit" but has also been used to refer to the creation time period and the sacred place of universal origin on Turtle Island. (Ojibway Indian Fact Sheet)

Asibikaashi. Asibikaashi thanked the mother for her kindness and in return vowed to protect the boy by weaving a special web over his cradleboard to capture the dark spirits of night. It is with this tale in mind that contemporary Anishanabe weave sinew across reed or willow hoops to invoke the spirit of Asibikaashi and her blessings and protection for their children.

An alternative version has it that early Anishanabe children were inexplicably haunted by horrible dreams, much like myself. Their parents appealed to the shaman who traveled to the dream world to seek the counsel of the spirits. The four elements spoke to the shaman; they had heard of the problem and felt cooperatively they could solve it. However, the elements lacked a practical way to unite their special abilities. But Asibikaashi was listening in and now she could help.

Air could carry the children's dreams.

Earth could hold the dreams within her hoop.

Water could wash and separate dreams - the wanted from the unwanted.

Fire could use the morning sun to burn up the unwanted dreams that are caught in the web. (Finder)

And with that realization Asibikaashi spun a magical web for the shaman to return with. Inside the weaving all four elements would be united to protect the child and ensure a good night's sleep.

I found this narrative family even more appealing and promising than my previous investigations into Christian saints. Here at last were some practical spiritual solutions. Previously, healing meant blindly entrusting my hopes and fears in the hands of a venerated

intercessor to appeal to the higher power, a practice which resulted in extensive middle management with no tangible vehicle or discernible output.

Now I had an actual mechanism. Rather than repeated pleas for assistance and approval, the dream catcher theology is based on the idea that everybody's on my team. The spirits and forces of the universe know my circumstance and want to help; they just need a clairvoyant implement to get there. Even better, that oh so important oracle item is made via arts and crafts. This is a doctrine that I can get on board with.

But once again, things didn't pan out that way. The dream visions kept coming. Multiple, dream catchers were sketched and woven in both traditional and avant-garde materials. Corner spiders were given amnesty in my home so as not to upset Asibikaashi. Countless other weavings and needle crafts were pursued with the intent of tying divine snares. Still, dark spirits always managed to slip the noose and find their way in. Perhaps the spirits were too great and powerful in number. Perhaps I killed too many spiders as a kid. Perhaps the Anishanabe spirits won't listen to a Waabishkaa Ikwe.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever the reason, I was certain a new approach must be taken. I became disenchanted with the spirit realm and its lack of empathy or even acknowledgment of my situation. Then one day, common sense slapped me in the face: I can't solve a problem without first knowing its cause. In order to overcome my nightmares, I would need to deduce what forces were actually concocting them in the first place.

## **Der Sandmann**

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<sup>18</sup> Translation: "White Woman."

My familial ancestry is a northern European blend. There's a little bit of Irish, and even less English. But my roots run deepest in Germany. Thus when it came to a repositioning my conceptual approach, I began closer to home and embarked down the road of tales found in dusty heirloom children's books. Discovering no useful data in the stacks of dissertations on fairies held in Nana's study, I kept looking.

The Sandman is an allusion I heard occasionally as a child when staying at my grandparents' house. It's an ancient tale that has its roots in northern Europe. The fable has been passed down by word of mouth for countless generations. Danish author Hans Christen Andersen is commonly accepted as the first person to put the original story on paper in 1841. Under the title *Ole Lukøje*,<sup>19</sup> the Sandman is an elderly man. Much like stories of St. Nicholas, his scale varies from being a tiny sprite to a full sized adult. Typically the Sandman is kindhearted and likes children. At dusk, he sneaks into the home and sprinkles magic sand on the eyes and necks of children making them drift off to sleep. Sandman then places a special umbrella covered in beautiful pictures over each child's bed, creating a night full of magical happy dreams.

Several years prior to Andersen's publication, German author Ernst Hoffman offered his alternative rendition titled *Der Sandmann* in 1817. In typical German style, Hoffman takes a morbid note from the Brothers Grimm. *Der Sandmann* is capable of kindness and punishment. The German presentation still tiptoes through the house at twilight offering magic sprinkles and pleasant dreams to the most polite and obedient little ones. However, naughty children are handled much differently. An elderly woman in the story recalls the legendary being to the young protagonist:

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<sup>19</sup> Ole Lukøje translates to "Ole Close Eye" in Danish. It is how the Sandman character is more popularly referred to parts of northern Europe. (Hosbeg)

“Oh! he’s a wicked man, who comes to little children when they won’t go to bed and throws handfuls of sand into their eyes, so that they jump out of their heads all bloody; and he puts them into a bag and takes them to the half-moon as food for his little ones; and they sit there in the nest and have hooked beaks like owls, and they pick naughty little boys’ and girls’ eyes out with them.” (Hoffman 3)

Ernst Hoffman’s morbidity appealed to my aesthetic and my circumstance. Maybe it’s just my own German pedigree and the traditions I grew up around. But there was a certain melancholy expressed that I found particularly appealing and relatable. The simple judicial cause and affect scenario expressed in *Der Sandmann* made my own sleep circumstances appear discernable and surmountable. The fabled being embodied both cause and effect sans any type of arbitrator. There was a simple linear narrative which he followed, all the steps of which were accounted for without assumption.

Unfortunately, authors and critics, including Hoffman himself, will profess that *Der Sandmann* is a blatant abstraction of the original traditional tale. Rooted in pagan legends, the myth’s oral history goes back too far for contemporaries to reveal a singular source. However, most historians agree that the duality of personas presented in *Der Sandmann* is atypical. Germanic folk characters more often than not find themselves dichotomously separated and paired. The pagan polytheistic influence has led to a common part-counterpart folk hero format: Christmas and Krampus.

Consequently, all signs point toward Hans Christian Andersen’s *Ole Lukøje* being the truer sleep legend. But the tale of *Ole Lukøje* only explained the nice parts of sleep. It’s entirely

unsympathetic to a disturbed sleep experience. Not only does it not explain my lifetime of bad dreams, I don't even have the positive dream experience to confirm that *Ole Lukøje* even exists.

So there I was, still sleepless. Yet another theorem was tested and found not applicable. My new approach of deducing and testing theology with reason had found the Sandman not at all relevant to the situation. I needed a new spiritual hypothesis. It then occurred to me that if I am indeed approaching this dilemma collegiately, I need to align my search more closely with contemporary academics and the cultures that have laid the foundations for modern science.

### **The Oneiroi**

Eventually my quest for understanding landed me deep in the writings of ancient Greece, where scientific classifications were first recorded. Greek mythology is an enormous convoluted saga of lust, murder, and deceit. Underlying all that drama is a beautifully precise and detailed framework of lineage and hierarchies. It was in that network that I discovered the Oneiroi, or dream spirits.

Powerful winged creatures, the Oneiroi are portrayed as both the physical manifestation and the deliverers of respective types of dreams. They are the sons of Hypnos, the god of sleep; descended from Nyx, the goddess embodiment of night. They dwell in the darkness of Erebus past the reach of the rising sun.

I felt the only way to decrypt my highly specific yet unjustifiable nocturnal experience was to reconcile it with one of these equally specialized supernatural beings. Forces, whether natural or cosmic (i.e. wind, gravity, karma, love) function within a defined set of rules. A being has the ability to make decisions and judgments, and so may or may not possess the attributes of reason or constancy. With all dream attributes separated and subdivided to be shared among the

hundreds of Oneiroi, I could selectively deduce the affecting spirit or collective spirits via simple comparisons.

Though their ranks number into the hundreds, there are three central Oneiroi that became pivotal to my understanding. Roman poet Ovid describes the three brothers in his magnum opus, *Metamorphoses*:

Morpheus his name, than whom none can present more cunningly the features, gait and speech of men, their wonted clothes and turn of phrase. He mirrors only men; another forms the beasts and birds and the long sliding snakes. The gods have named him Icelos; here below the tribe of mortals call him Phobetor. A third, excelling in an art diverse, is Phantasos; he wears the cheating shapes of earth, rocks, water, trees- inanimate things. (Atsma)

It was the extreme division and intricate classification of these spirits that seemed sensible.

And so it was with the story of Phobetor that I began to make sense of things. He dwells in the land of darkness, operates only in the night, and takes the form of snakes and beasts in his dream messages. His name shares etymology with phobia. It is no wonder that most contemporary scholars interpret Oneiroi as the “God of Nightmares.” All the cards seemed to be falling into place. But there was still one conceptual hurdle I couldn’t overcome: How does this whole process actually occur?

### **Structures of Plausible Absurdity**

No amount of research I conducted was able to shed light on how Phobetor actually practically affects my contemporary existence. Ovid describes the visions of Iris when “through the dewy dark on noiseless wings flew Morpheus.” I suppose it is reasonable to posit certain similarities practiced among Morpheus and his Oneiroi brothers, Phobetor included. But how does he actually do it?

With an estimated 7,162,365,645 people on this planet,<sup>20</sup> surely I can’t be the only one to experience bad dreams. Ovid indicated that the Oneiroi pay personal visits, at least in the time of the ancients. But how could that possibly happen now with over 7 billion people on the planet?

There has been one consistent truth that all my research leads back to: Faith can supplement lapses in reason; systems can supplement lapses in faith. Arbitrators, intercessors, methodologies and mediatory objects are featured consistently throughout various theologies. It is when individuals lack a constant and navigable structure that entire fable system begins to crumble. The Christian god has Jesus Christ and thousands of saints working under him. Asibikaashi delegated the natural forces to increase productivity. Santa Clause has elves to make toys. The President has cabinet members to supposedly specialize and keep him abreast of current data. Clearly, Phobetor must have a sub-infrastructure yet to be discovered. This practice in discovery and analysis is where my artistic intention lies today. (Image 1)

My most recent efforts have been an exercise in illustrating and replicating this hidden bureaucracy. Past precedent has established that there are likely numerous

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<sup>20</sup> At least, that was the global population when I wrote this sentence according to the U.S. Census Bureau. It has undoubtedly risen since then.

members. Analyzing sensations and experience tells me what they do. Each member serving Phobator has a place within the mystic infrastructure determined by their unique task, locomotion and inabilities. They are then ranked and ordered by whom they affect.<sup>21</sup>

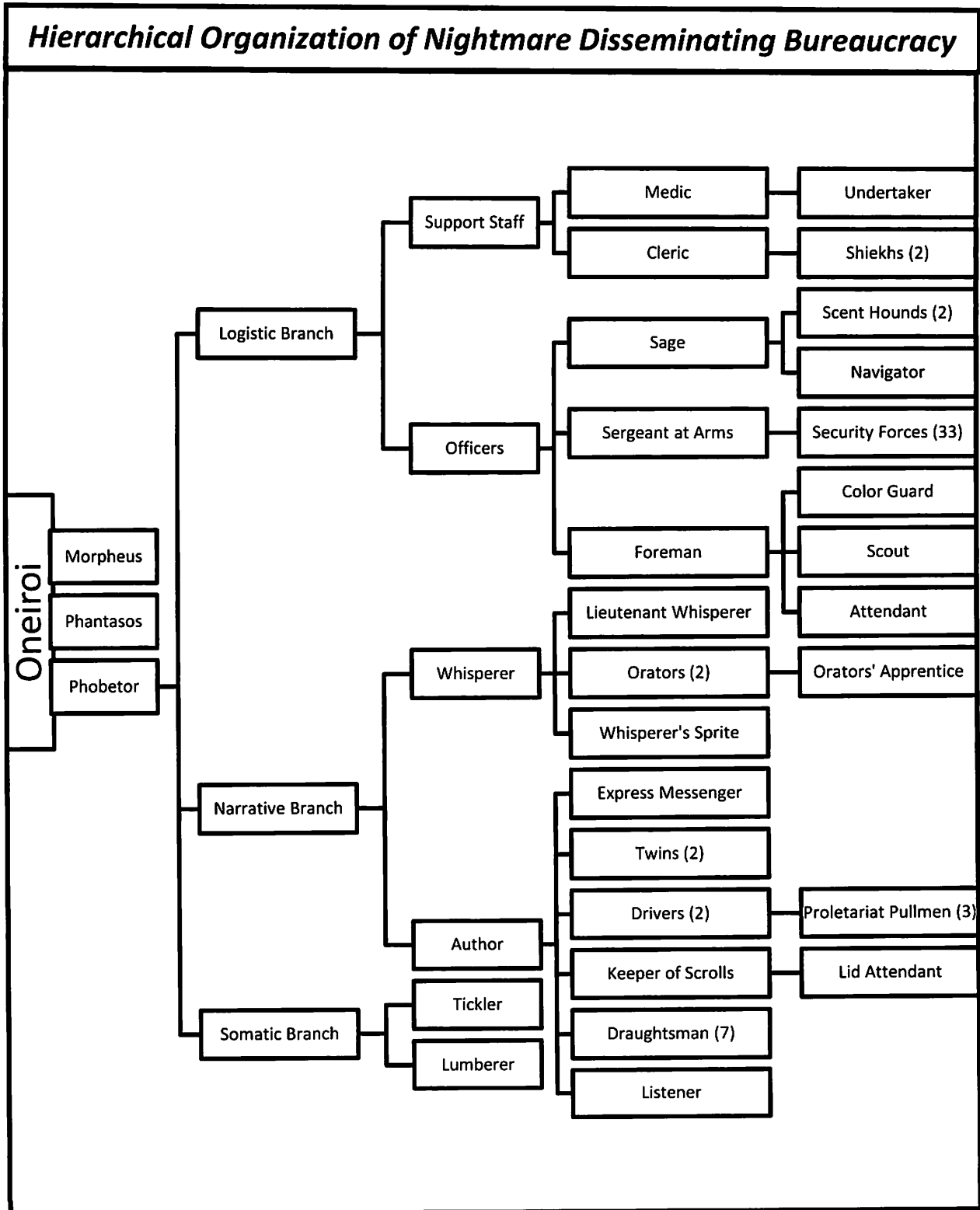
Based on the multiple types of sensations I experience, I found it reasonable to deduce that there are two utilitarian branches of Phobator's army. There is most clearly a Narrative branch which conceives, writes, transmits, conveys, and whispers the stories that play like a broken record. Additionally, it seemed reasonable to assert the existence of a Somatic branch of the army. This battalion exists solely to impress eerie discomfort upon my body. They are then further subdivided into individuals or subsets.

The Narrative branch is organized to accommodate the efforts of two crucial figures, the Author and the Whisperer. The Whisperer is where the entire system began. With a gentle soft face, silent wheel, and a delicate 30" high frame, the whisperer is designed to creep silently. (Image 2) He is the original intercessor between Phobator and I, slinking through my home and whispering the tales in my ear while I sleep.

As discovery progressed, I deduced from the volume and diversity of dreams I experience, that disturbing my sleep is too great a task for the Whisperer alone. He needed someone to tell him what to say. This is where the Author came into being. (Image 3) Little more than a brain and arms, he composes the second anchor of the Somatic branch of Phobator's army. The Author is fixed to his desk, fervently composing visions designed just for me. He seals his envelopes and casts them aside to clear more space for the growing saga.

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<sup>21</sup> Page 16 contains a chart which maps the hierarchy as I currently understand it.



It was here that I encountered another conceptual problem. The Author writes and has no legs. The Whisperer slinks but has no arms. There's a 25" height difference preventing them from ever speaking face to face. I needed to figure out how they work together. Thus, the entire remainder of the Narrative branch was born. Various types of messengers, carts and drivers, keepers of secrets, and conveyers of data must all seamlessly unite. (Image 4) In doing so, I was able to craft models of how I hypothesize these intermediaries to be. (Image 5)

Knowledge regarding the second utilitarian regiment of Phobetor's army, the Somatic branch, is small but growing. As of now there are two known members: the Tickler and the Lumberer. (Image 6) These two soldiers are responsible for certain physical sensations of discomfort that often accompany visions dispensed by the Narrative branch. I do, however, believe there are many more in the Somatic ranks to be discovered. Additional bodily sensations still unattributed include sweats, shivers, burns, compressions, torsions, and pricks. It seems reasonable that there are still many more reclusive Somatic troops to be discovered and classified.

When it dawned on me that the intercessors of Phobetor were more abundant and varied than I could have ever imagined, another quirk had to be reasoned. How were they surviving? It's a long journey from the land of mystics to my home, especially if they choose to cross the great divide by way of Mount Olympus. Since everyone has a hyper-specialized task, it seemed to make sense that there would be a third and final Logistic branch under Phobetor's command. Upon further analysis, I realized they function in two subunits, Officers and Support staff.

The Support staff exists to tend to the functional needs of everyone in the company. The unit includes a Medic and a Cleric with two Sheikhs. (Image 7)

Unfortunately, none of them have arms to actually do their job. So it became apparent that there is a likely need for an Undertaker to exist in the structure as well. (Image 8)

Among the Officers, only two of three are worth nothing. First off, the entire army is guided by the Sage. He is a portly bearded old man. Brass chains link the Sage with his two Scent Hounds who sniff out the sleeper's fear, while the compass needle of the Navigator contributes additional data for the Sage to consider. Together, the Sage guides the team through the dark of night. (Image 9)

The other notable member of the Officers battalion is the Sargent at Arms. (Image 10) The Sargent is a sturdy figure responsible for overseeing the safety of the unit. He typically brings up the rear of the movement, overseeing roughly 30 bronze faced guards and making sure no one is left behind. (Image 11) He has small sharp eyes that peek out from under a heavy iron helmet. Ever vigilant, his head rotates a full 360° watching for threats.

The third Officer is the quite unremarkable Foreman. (Image 12) As one might presume from the title, the Foreman doesn't have a specific skill in his repertoire and is largely inconsequential. But, if Phobator's network is like any other, it requires a useless blubbing figurehead with a team of cronies to get in the way. Like every other sect of Phobator's army, I expect them to keep propagating.

Though I have unraveled what seems like huge portion of mystic intercessors, I know it is just the beginning of this field of research. Repeat failure in halting my

nightmares is a clear indication that there is still much I don't understand. The dilemma and the resulting aesthetic content by nature require further meditation and reasoning. Like Moses who penned the creation story of Genesis without actually being present for it, and John who has made audacious predictions while scribing Revelations, I'm writing as well. I am drawing connections and weighing ideas. The inexplicable elements of my non-corporeal experience are becoming hashed out into illustrated open-ended structures of plausible absurdity.

Image Appendix

1. *Phobetor and Co.*



2. *Whisperer*



3. Author



4. Driver and Proletariat Pullman



5. Messenger



6. Tickler



7. Medic



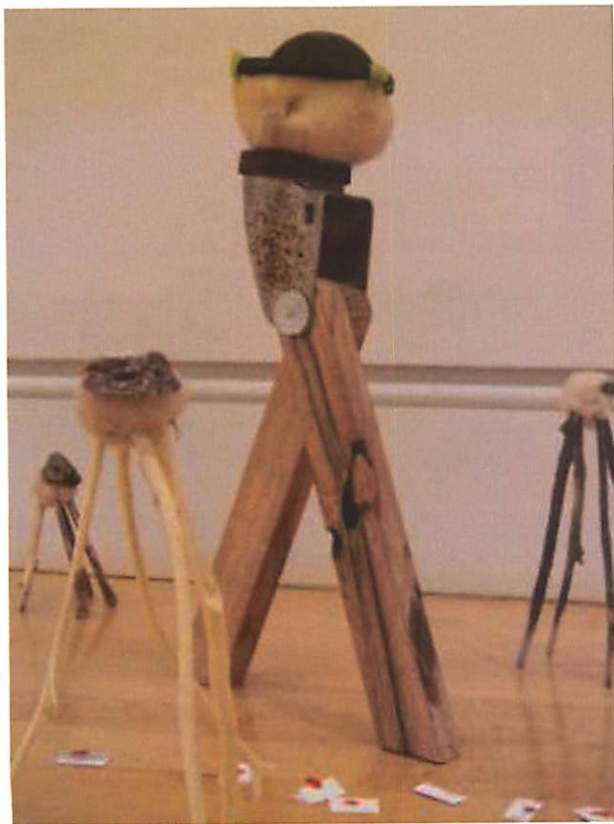
8. Undertaker



9. Sage with Scent Hounds and Navigator



10. Sergeant at Arms



11. Security Force



12. Foreman



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