

I had a dream

By Holly Lisle

FADE IN:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Through her eyes, we see the hands and forearms of a young woman pushing a wheelchair. In the wheelchair, we see the back of a bald, liver-spotted head and the thin, vein-roped arms of an OLD MAN. Young woman and OLD MAN are moving at a brisk pace along a pristine sidewalk with precision-cut emerald grass to the left, a brilliant autumn-blue sky overhead, and alabaster skyscrapers in front of us.

Over stirring, passionate MUSIC:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We have the best cardiac hospitals
in the world.

(CONT.)

Young woman looks far right, and we see a veritable cathedral to medicine, shining in white marble, reaching toward the heavens.

While MUSIC soars, promising us miracles:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We have the best neurological
hospitals, the best hospitals of
every sort in the world.

(CONT.)

Young woman's gaze travels forward, showing us yet more grand, shining edifices to health, while MUSIC crescendos.

Abruptly, we hear SHATTERING GLASS and, music stops dead.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Which won't do you a bit of good

(CONT.)

Young woman abruptly turns left down fork in sidewalk, and through her eyes we see a hulking building, an edifice of polished black marble and reflective black glass, squatting in a miasma of darkness like Darth Vader beckoning us toward the pits of hell. The grass surrounding this hospital is dead, the sky behind it storm-clouded and threatening. Young woman and OLD MAN glide down the darkening path toward the building as if on a fast conveyer belt.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

If they won't let you through the
goddamned doors.

(CONT.)

Door of the Building of Darkness swing wide in welcome.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Welcome to

(CONT.)

Young woman and OLD MAN are sucked inside, into a place of charcoal gray concrete walls, black carpets, and a broad corner nurses' station where wan nurses and coughing doctors greet the new arrivals with faint smiles.

Smoke swirls around us; the smell is overwhelming.

Through doors to left and right, we see rows of skinny, sick old men smoking in beds.

Joyous, triumphant music erupts:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Smokers' Hospital.

OLD MAN

(Waving arms
gleefully)

Fuckin' AAAaaaay, baby, I'm HOME!

I don't know if there was any more to this, because I woke myself up laughing.

Only time in my life I've ever smelled anything in a dream—there was nothing to smell when I woke myself up, but while I was dreaming, the stink of a thousand cigarettes being smoked it close, airless quarters damn near choked me.

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