

The Dragon



Following the mother's death, the young narrator develops a mysterious insomnia that ties their sleep to the field where the mother is buried.

I watched his grief over my mother's death embodied in his strained muscles: his forearms repainting the house, his thighs running our field in the morning, and the way he rubbed his neck with both hands after sitting too long at his writing desk. Sometimes, while passing by him, I rub it for him and he says: "Thank you dear."

Does everyone prefer exhaustion over sadness?

I know it's best not to weigh on him with the questions that live in me. Instead, I go out and lay in our field, the beauty of nature lightens the thoughts that weigh on my mind, such as the thought that I may have not truly loved my mother until after she died, something I don't know how to explain, not even to the bugs of the field.

Usually, I don't sleep in our field, but last week I accidentally did and dreamt that my father had turned into a dragon. When I told him about the dream, he smiled at me and returned to his writing. The strange thing is that, ever since I accidentally fell asleep in our field, I haven't been able to sleep anywhere else. I lie in my bed forever, cursed with a strange insomnia. I tried everything, but nothing could get me back to sleep, not even the visit of a city doctor.

I had spent an entire week without sleep when I happened to lay in our field again, completely exhausted, and fell asleep as soon as my back touched the grass. It was a little green coma that comforted me and soothed me with dreams I had never seen the like of before, such as my dream of a giant cathedral flying through the night sky like an ancient spaceship. I still remember its sound, much like the furious noise of space's silence, like the hum of electricity behind walls or the one we hear inside our ears in complete silence.

I began to spend my nights sound asleep in the field. My father started sleeping next to me, out of protectiveness, and for a short time I was happy with my little curse; my father and I sleeping next to my mother's resting place, touching the soil of her deep



sleep. Sometimes when we closed our eyes, about to doze off, I could not tell our breaths from the wind, nor life from death, and I found myself smiling inside the shared darkness of our closed eyelids.

But our peaceful nights didn't last long. One day, we had finished shopping in the city and were returning to the village in our van, when we arrived to find our neighbors surrounding the house, worried and angry over something that befell our field. As we approached them we caught a foul smell and quickly understood that smell was somehow connected to the worry and the anger. They told us that some men had dumped a large amount of stolen oil over our field to escape prosecution, some businessman's goons, perhaps. That was the conclusion of our neighbors. We, however, were not looking for conclusions, but for remnants of our green among the black.



Where will I sleep now?

My father held me close to him and hugged me tightly, I wasn't as afraid of my death as I was of seeing his fear for me. I couldn't believe the hopelessness, I ran towards the field and touched the dark matter, I winced, almost sure it had stung me. My father came up from behind and put his hand on my shoulder. When I turned and saw the fear in his eyes, I fell apart crying.



Does everyone prefer suffering over seeing their loved ones suffer?

Throughout the following days, I tried to sleep back in the house, but my insomnia returned home with me. My father struggled too, but he would fall asleep sooner or later. I remembered our sleepful time in the field, it was the first time we reunited with my mother in a long time, was he thinking about her or me as he lay there next to us? Is his love for her separate from his love for me, or are they intertwined like clouds? Why do I feel angry at him whenever he falls asleep? Why do I assume that he would not be able to sleep if he cared enough for me? What if my father, despite his sleepiness, is suffering as much as I am throughout these nights?

The days passed and I grew wearier. They took me to the city hospital, but to no avail. They tried clearing the oil from the field, but that was hard to do, and any remaining traces would prevent me from falling asleep.

One morning, my father called me for breakfast, but I couldn't get up. I lay in my bed powerlessly, watching our field from the window. I heard my father come up the stairs to check on me, he entered my room and put his hand on my forehead, caressing my hair and my cheeks. His tearful eyes were brimming with love, but for some reason, I felt as if his gaze was passing through me, as if he were looking at someone else behind me, present with us in the room. At that moment, I understood that he thinks of my mother when he cries over me.

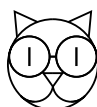
That same evening, I heard him tell our neighbor that he was going to try one last thing. I watched him from the window as he went out carrying the dining room's large candlestick. I saw him approach the dark field and gaze at it for a long time before he finally gathered his strength and threw the lit candlestick over the grass.

The field blew up with fiery fire, lighting the sky with flames. My father knelt before our burning field, his remaining strength seeping from his bones. He could no longer hold himself together under the weight of his grief. I watched him kneel and lean his head over the soil. I knew that if he had any energy left, he would have raised his head and look up at me, and we would have gazed at each other, I from our house and he from our field, thinking together not only of my mother's lingering death, my own eminent one and his future one, but about every death this dark matter reminds us of, wherever it was, even if beyond what can be seen from our little window.



BIO

Yeser Berro is a Syrian writer based in Damascus. “The Dragon” is a short story from his book *Night Swimming*, forthcoming in 2026. You can follow his work on Instagram: [@yeser_berro](#)



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