

LUCID
(short film version)

Written by

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INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING HALLWAYS - DAY

DENNIS, a college-dropout-turned-janitor, stands in an empty hallway, his mop in his bucket. He is leaning against the wall and not really moving.

BURT, an old, creaky janitor, walks towards Dennis, carrying a styrofoam cup of coffee.

BURT
Yo, Dennis! You still on this
floor? We gotta... Dennis?

As Burt approaches Dennis, he sees that Dennis is asleep, barely propped up by the wall and his mop. Burt walks right up to Dennis.

BURT (CONT'D)
(loudly)
Inspection!

DENNIS
AAAHHGGG!!!

Dennis flies awake and into a panic simultaneously. He tries to run, trips on his mop bucket, and runs right into the opposite wall.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
(groggy)
Ow... goddamnit, Burt!

Burt chuckles.

Dennis turns around. He looks like hell. His eyes are a little red and there are bags under his eyes.

Burt hands Dennis his coffee.

BURT
Here, you need this more than I do.
You been staying out all night
again?

Dennis takes a sip of coffee. It is scalding hot and he spits it out on the floor in pain.

DENNIS
Ow! Christ, where'd you get this? A
volcano?

BURT
That's how it comes out of the
machine.

Dennis wipes coffee off of his outfit and yawns.

DENNIS

And no, I haven't been partying.
Just... I don't sleep right. Keep
having these weird dreams. I wake
up and it's like I never slept.

Dennis leans back against the wall, exhausted. A PROFESSOR walks out of his classroom. Dennis quickly grabs his mop and starts cleaning up the spilled coffee on the floor.

Burt leans against the wall.

BURT

What you been dreamin' about?
(with a dirty-old-man
grin)
The *ladies*?

Dennis snorts out a small laugh.

DENNIS

No idea. I can never remember.
Maybe an image or a feeling
sometimes, but that's it.

Dennis plops the mop back in his bucket.

BURT

Stress? Not enough exercise?
Those'll keep you from sleeping.

DENNIS

Stress, maybe. This shit is killing
me. I'm reapplying for classes, and
if I don't get back in...

Dennis stops. He looks at Burt with a mixture of horror and sorrow.

BURT

Yeah, I get it. You don't want to
be a mop boy for the rest of your
life. Like me!

DENNIS

Oh, hey, I didn't mean...

BURT

Don't sweat it, kid. I'm a Senior
Custodian! Hell, I get paid more
than most of these professors.

Dennis continues to mop the floor.

BURT (CONT'D)
Still, it's not for everyone.

Burt watches Dennis mop for a moment.

BURT (CONT'D)
Hey uh... my ex-wife's brother had
trouble sleeping once. He said
ah... oh, what the hell was it...
he learned to do uh... "loosely
dreaming"?

Dennis looks at him with confusion.

BURT (CONT'D)
(suddenly remembering)
Lucid dreaming! Said he could take
control of his dreams. Wrestled 'em
down, slept like a baby after that.

DENNIS
I dunno, isn't that some kind of
new-agey bullshit or something?

BURT
Nah, nothing mystical. You just
wake your brain up a little while
you're dreaming, gives you a bit o'
control. So he says.

Burt shrugs and walks off down the hall.

BURT (CONT'D)
(calling back to Dennis)
If nothing else works, might be
worth a shot.

Dennis watches Burt amble down the hall, pondering this
advice.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Dennis is dressed in casual clothes. He walks out of the
bookstore, looking at the lucid dreaming book in his hands.
He flips the book over and looks at the back.

DENNIS
(reading)
Take control of the unconscious
you.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)
(snorting in sarcasm)
Okay.

EXT. PARK - EARLY EVENING

Dennis sits on a park bench, reading his new book.

DENNIS
(reading)
To control a dream, you must first
be able to identify *when* you are
dreaming.
(to himself)
Makes sense, I guess.

Dennis flips to the next page.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
(reading)
The simplest way to do this is to
attempt an activity that only works
in dreams, such as flying,
hovering, and the ability to
manipulate characteristics such as
color or weight.
(to himself)
Huh.
(reading)
Periodically attempt these actions
every day. Once you are in the
habit of trying the impossible, you
will start attempting these actions
in your dreams. When one of these
actions succeeds, this tells you
that are dreaming, and you are now
consciously aware of the dream.

Dennis leans back on the bench, still looking at the book.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
I'll be damned.

He flips to the front inside cover jacket and looks at the
AUTHOR's picture that is there.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
(musing)
Crazy... or genius?

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING HALLWAYS - DAY

Dennis is mopping the floors. He looks around at the empty hallways. No one is visible. He sets down his mop, bends his knees, and jumps up into the air, landing moments later.

DENNIS
(to himself)
Nope. Can't hover.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Dennis is cleaning the classroom. He picks up a blue pen.

DENNIS
Turn... red!

The blue pen remains blue. Dennis stares at it in dismay.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

Dennis walks down the sidewalk. He stoops down, picks up a pebble, and continues walking.

He stares intently at the pebble.

DENNIS
(to the pebble)
Heavy. You're a heavy pebble. Yes
you are. Weighty.

Dennis sighs and tosses the pebble away.

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dennis sleeps restlessly, tossing and turning.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Dennis holds a stapler in his hand.

DENNIS
Levitate!

The stapler does not move.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING HALLWAYS - LATE AFTERNOON

Dennis' mop is propped up against the wall. Dennis is repeatedly jumping into the air, attempting to hover.

Two students walk out of a classroom. They see Dennis jumping up and down. Dennis notices them and stops jumping, embarrassed.

DENNIS

Uh... floor was loose. Had to uh...
stomp it back down.

The two students back away, confused. They walk away from Dennis in a hurry.

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dennis is again sleeping extremely poorly.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING HALLWAYS - MORNING

Dennis looks very haggard. His red-rimmed eyes stare listlessly as he mops.

Burt approaches, hauling a wheeled bucket of tools.

BURT

You look like hell.

DENNIS

Never better.

BURT

You still trying that dreaming
thing?

DENNIS

I'm gonna give it... give it one
more week. Then... I dunno, maybe
see a doctor?

BURT

Do what you have to. I can't have
you dropping dead on the job, makes
me look bad.

Burt ambles off. Dennis sags, using his mop for support.

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

A single lamp illuminates the room. Dennis groggily throws the sheets back, climbs into the bed, and shuts off the light.

INT. SMOKY POOL HALL (DREAMLAND) - NIGHT

The pool hall is dim and smoky. Pool tables loom out from under their toplights. A bartender moves from patron to patron.

PATRON #1

Beer.

BARTENDER

No!

PATRON #2

Beer.

BARTENDER

No!

Dennis is playing pool against a gravelly HUSTLER. A few of the hustler's pool buddies hang back in the gloom, grinning smug smiles at Dennis.

SMUG POOL BUDDY

A C-Note says the kid chokes and
zorts the 8-ball before it rains.

HUSTLER

You all keep quiet and give him his
shot.

Dennis surveys the table, agitated.

DENNIS

Uh... what are the rules... again?
I can't remember. Why can't I
remember?

HUSTLER

You gotta know the rules before you
play at *my* table, son.

Dennis looks down at his feet. They are bolted to the floor. He looks back to the table and picks up the cue ball.

DENNIS

What do I do with this?

HUSTLER

You use it to command your troops!

The Hustler points down at the table. The other pool balls are arranged in groups, like soldiers waiting to march.

Dennis looks at the cue ball for a moment, thinking.

DENNIS

(to the cue ball, quietly)
8-ball!

The cue ball turns into the 8-ball. A huge smile breaks out over Dennis' face.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

I'm dreaming!

He looks up at the Hustler with a gleeful, determined grin. He holds up the 8-ball.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

You're playing *my* game now!

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dennis sleeps deeply, a small smile on his face.

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - DAWN

Sunlight creeps through the bedroom windows.

Dennis' eyes flutter open. He looks well-rested. He smiles, and lets out a contented sigh.

Dennis suddenly sits bolt-upright in horror. His left hand scrabbles at the sheets, tearing them away. He brings up his right hand.

He is holding the 8-ball from his dream.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING HALLWAYS - MORNING

Dennis is sprinting down the hallway. He sees Burt at the far end.

DENNIS

Burt!

Dennis runs over to him in a panic.

BURT

Whoa there, what's got into you?

Dennis is shaking and pale.

DENNIS

It... I...

BURT

What? What is it?

Dennis pulls out the 8-ball. His shaking hand holds it up before Burt.

BURT (CONT'D)

(confused)

Okay...

DENNIS

You can see it? It's real?

BURT

Uh... yeah... you uh... played pool last night? What, you lose money or something?

Dennis leans in close.

DENNIS

(loud, harsh whisper)

My dream, Burt! This is from my dream!

Burt looks at Dennis with worry.

BURT

You dreamed about an 8-ball, so you went and got one?

DENNIS

No! This...

Dennis points at the 8-ball.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

This is from my dream. It was in my dream, and then I woke up holding it!

Burt takes a step back.

BURT

Now you just calm down there, son,
and I'll get the nurse, and we'll
get you some help, okay? Just...
just stay right there.

DENNIS

(exasperated)

It's from my dream! It is! I swear
it!

Burt looks very worried.

BURT

Just stay right there, don't do
anything, and I'll be right back.

Burt hobbles off as fast as he can.

DENNIS

I'm not making this up, Burt!

Dennis looks at the 8-ball.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

(looking around)

I'll prove it! I'll... I'll bring
back something impossible, like...
like something from one of those
weird Escher drawings! That'll
prove it for sure and...

Dennis suddenly looks scared.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

And maybe they won't lock me away
in a padded room... shit!

Dennis takes off running back down the hall.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - SUNSET

The sun sinks over the horizon.

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dennis throws back the sheets, and climbs into bed. He flips
open the Lucid Dreaming book to a page he has bookmarked.

DENNIS

Okay, how did that go?... ah!
(reading)
(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

The more control you exert, the
closer you get to waking up.
Practice retaining control while
remaining asleep.

(to himself)

Or think really hard and wake
yourself up. Got it!

Dennis closes the book and turns off the light.

INT. ROOM OF EMPTINESS (DREAMLAND)

Dennis stands in a small, cubic room who's walls are
completely covered by curtains of all designs. At one end
stands a woman. She is business-formal and serious.

DENNIS

Hello!

THE WOMAN

Hark or be harkened to!

DENNIS

Right. Sure. Look, I need an
impossible thing, like an Escher
object or something. I tried to
make one on my own, but I'm not
good enough at this lucid dreaming
thing, and I got close to waking
up, so I need you to rummage around
in my subconscious and grab one for
me, okay?

THE WOMAN

An impossible thing will be
impossible to find, and thusly,
very expensive. What have you
brought in payment?

DENNIS

This isn't some adventure movie,
this is my brain! Just go get one!

The Woman points at him.

THE WOMAN

The price must be paid or there
shall be no sale!

Dennis stares at the woman in frustration. He focuses all his
concentration on her.

DENNIS
Turn into... someone useful!
Useful! Come on....

Dennis' eyes widen.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
I'm waking up! No!

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Dennis is murmuring in his sleep. His eyes almost flutter open.

INT. ROOM OF EMPTINESS (DREAMLAND)

Dennis frantically looks around. The only thing in the room is the woman.

Dennis leaps forward and grabs her wrist.

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Dennis wakes up with a gasp. There is a thud to his right.

THE WOMAN (O.S.)
Oof!

Dennis looks over at his hand, still holding on to the wrist of The Woman, her arm disappearing behind the edge of the bed.

Dennis lets go of her wrist. The Woman stands up, glaring at Dennis, when she suddenly notices the bedroom she's in. Her jaw goes slack.

THE WOMAN (CONT'D)
What? Where....? What is this place?

DENNIS
Holy shit.

THE WOMAN
What have you done with my curtains?!

DENNIS
This uh... this isn't your... curtain room. It's... it's my bedroom.

The Woman stares at Dennis in horror.

THE WOMAN

There's... there's more than one
room??

Her breathing becomes panicked. She runs to the walls,
feeling her way around them, pushing, pulling, and banging on
them.

THE WOMAN (CONT'D)

(very frightened)

I want my room! I don't know where
I am! I want my room!

She turns to Dennis. Tears run down her terrified face.

THE WOMAN (CONT'D)

(pleading)

Take me back to my room! Please!
This place doesn't... doesn't...

She screws up her face in concentration.

THE WOMAN (CONT'D)

It doesn't feel right here! Please!

Dennis has pushed himself back to the wall, pulling the
sheets with him.

DENNIS

I... I don't know how...

THE WOMAN

(unstably)

What??

DENNIS

(horrified)

I don't even know how I... I
mean... I don't even know if I
can... y'know... go the other
direction.

THE WOMAN

No! Oh no oh no...

She backs against the door. Her hand pushes down on the door
handle for support and the door opens.

The Woman gasps. She throws one last look at Dennis and runs
through the door.

Dennis hops out of bed, grabbing his pants off of the floor.

DENNIS
Wait! Wait!

INT. DENNIS' APARTMENT HALLWAY - MORNING

Dennis is rapidly putting on his pants, hopping down the hallway when he hears an EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK.

INT. DENNIS' LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The Woman is pressed back against the far wall, screaming at the couch.

DENNIS
What? What is it??

THE WOMAN
(near hysterics, pointing)
There's a... a thing, a fuzzy thing
on... on that other thing! What is
it? WHAT IS IT??

Dennis looks at the couch, where his cat is sitting.

DENNIS
That's my cat.

THE WOMAN
... cat? What's a cat?

DENNIS
It's a pet... it's... we keep them
around as pets... they're friendly,
see?

Dennis pets his cat, which starts purring.

THE WOMAN
(shaking with fear)
(tearfully)
I don't... I don't understand.

DENNIS
(to himself)
Oh Christ, what have I done?

The Woman looks around the apartment in sheer incomprehension. She sees the apartment's front door and recognizes the door handle. She runs to the door, flings it open, and runs outside.

Dennis dashes after her, then stops, realizing he's not wearing a shirt.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - MORNING

Dennis runs out into the street, tugging his shirt down. He looks around frantically, then takes off running down the street.

A black van starts up, and follows after him.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA STREETS - MORNING

Dennis jogs down the street, looking back and forth.

A black car pulls out in front of him and stops crosswise in the middle of the street. Two government heavies jump out of the car and aim their tranquilizer weapons at him.

Dennis stops in his tracks. He looks behind him. The black van has blocked off that end of the street as well. The door opens and a serious-looking man, PHILLIPS steps out. He walks calmly over to Dennis, followed by a sciency-looking man with a hand-held detector.

SCIENCE GUY

That's him. Same EM signature as the woman, same signature we detected the night before last, same signature you found twenty years ago. You were right.

PHILLIPS

(to the Science Guy)
Told you I'd find another one.
(louder)
I want him alive!

He turns to Dennis.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

Take it easy there. I've spent two decades looking for you. They all laughed, but I *knew* there'd be another someday.

Phillips suddenly yells at the government heavies.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

I said no trangs! He must remain conscious at all times!

Dennis takes off running. The heavies give chase and tackle him after only half a block.

INT. BLACK VAN - DAY

Dennis is tied up and gagged in the back of the van. He stares in terror at Phillips.

Phillips looks at Dennis.

PHILLIPS

At last.

Dennis struggles in vain.

DENNIS

Mrmmph!

INT. SECRET UNDERGROUND FACILITY

Phillips leads a group of high-level governmental advisors over to a window that opens into bare room. In the center is Dennis, strapped to a metal chair with an I.V. hooked up to his arm. He looks like he hasn't slept in days.

PHILLIPS

And here is the man himself. Just like the one I found twenty years ago, only this one's alive. He is rare breed, one who can bring back physical manifestations from lucid dreams. If we can get him under our control, there will be *nothing* to prevent us from taking control of this world. Think of it. No more wars, no more political bickering... we can finally get things done! Re-mold this world into something better!

The governmental officials look very unsure of this idea.

GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIAL #1

And if you can't control him?

PHILLIPS

Oh, we'll have to kill him, obviously.

GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIAL #2

What's in the I.V.?

PHILLIPS
A special cocktail of amphetamines.
Under no circumstances must he be
allowed to sleep.

Phillips leaves the window and motions for the governmental officials to follow him.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)
If you'll follow me, I'd like to
show you our brainwashing roadmap.
If it meets with your approval, we
can get started right away.

They leave Dennis in his room.

INT. SECRET UNDERGROUND FACILITY - SECURE CONTAINMENT ROOM

Dennis sits in his chair. He struggles against his bonds again, but it is futile. He looks around the room wildly, his eyes red and baggy. Except for him and his I.V., the room is empty.

INT. SECRET UNDERGROUND FACILITY - BRIEFING ROOM

The briefing room is starkly lit, with a conference table and various chairs surrounding it.

Phillips hands out copies of the brainwashing plan.

PHILLIPS
We have a seven-month roadmap, at
the end of which he will either be
under our control, or dead.

GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIAL #3
I don't understand. You're going to
keep him awake for seven months?

PHILLIPS
Yes. It will be a strain on his
body, but we have ways of easing
that burden.

GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIAL #3
To keep him from dreaming?

PHILLIPS
Of course.

GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIAL #3
But if you go without REM sleep for
long enough, you start dreaming
when you're awake. So I don't
understand.

Phillips looks over at him in shock.

PHILLIPS
... what?!

GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIAL #2
You mean you didn't know that??

Phillips runs out of the room.

PHILLIPS
(yelling)
Security! On the double!

INT. SECRET UNDERGROUND FACILITY - SECURE CONTAINMENT ROOM

Dennis looks over at the corner of his cell. He sees a small,
wild man in coveralls.

DENNIS
(sleep-deprived)
Why... hello there...

WILD MAN
You got things need unlockin'?

DENNIS
Why yes...

Dennis shakes his restrained arms.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
Yes I do...

WILD MAN
Locked doors? You got's them too?

DENNIS
Lots of locked doors. Locked doors
everywhere.

The Wild Man cackles crazily and rushes over to Dennis'
restraints. The restraints fall to the floor. Dennis stands,
as the Wild Man careens over to the door and begins fiddling
with the lock.

WILD MAN
Haven't had this much fun since
yesterland!

The door swings open. A hail of gunfire cuts down the Wild Man, who falls dead to the floor.

Phillips and several security guards rush into the room. They aim their weapons at Dennis.

SECURITY GUARD
Sir?

PHILLIPS
Dennis? We can work this out. We have such marvellous plans. You can play a part in a world-changing event!

DENNIS
You kidnapped me. You tied me up and threw me in a van! I don't think you have any ideas worth following.

PHILLIPS
I would like it very much if we didn't have to kill you. Won't you reconsider?

Dennis give Phillips a very evil grin.

DENNIS
You know... when I was a kid? I had the *worst* nightmares.

The light in the room suddenly comes from below instead of above. The horrifying roars of monsters can be heard.

Phillips and the security guards scream.

END