

Eternal Wednesday

by Anikó Wéber

Chapter 1

The light bringer

Juno was yapping and whining like she was caught in a trap. Her yelping woke David up. Rubbing his eyes sleepily, he looked at his phone. It was almost midnight and Juno just kept on barking. Something must be wrong...

Sitting up in bed, David looked out of the window, but couldn't see the dog. He knew that Dad was in England on business, and nothing ever woke mum once she was fast asleep, so he would just have to go down and see what was up. He jumped out of bed, popped his slippers on, and hurried downstairs. As soon as he stepped out into the garden, Juno was there in front of him, tail wagging, but then she ran off towards the gate. David watched her go and immediately saw what the problem was. Juno's two-month-old puppy, Dakota, had crawled out under the fence again and was sitting in the middle of the road.

'So that's the problem,' he patted the dog's head, 'I'll go and get Dakota'. He opened the gate and walked over to the frightened puppy. As soon as he crouched down, Dakota jumped into his lap and licked his blue pyjamas. David laughed, but then suddenly stopped. In front of the house across the street, a girl in a nightgown stood staring at him. Her skin was so white that she almost glowed in the dark, but it was not that which frightened David, it was her stillness. She didn't say anything. She didn't blink. She didn't move, at all. Her face showed no emotion. She was like a statue or a vision. Or a ghost. David felt mesmerised and just froze, unable to move at all. Even Dakota remained motionless on his lap. The leaves on the trees didn't rustle. The streetlights didn't hum. There was silence, and then a bell suddenly sounded in a distant church tower. It chimed twelve times. On the last note, a blinding light flashed. David closed his eyes, and when he opened them again the night-time street had gone and he found he was in his room again, lying on his bed. His forehead was beaded with sweat. The morning sun was shining in through the window, and Mum was fidgeting about in the doorway.

'Did you catch cold in the night? If you're still ill, you won't be able to go to school tomorrow, either'.

'I'm fine!' David grumbled, shaking off the blanket. He was trying to recall the night, but his head was spinning. Had it all been a dream? Or had it really happened? If he had been out on the street, then why couldn't he remember how he got back to bed? And if Juno hadn't been barking, and he hadn't gone out to her, then why did he remember it all so vividly? Maybe he did have a fever and had been having a nightmare. There couldn't be any other explanation because he wasn't wearing his blue pyjamas, as he remembered he had been during the night, but his white ones. His slippers were still in their place by the door, too.

David tried to banish these disturbing thoughts from his mind and staggered sluggishly into the kitchen. Mum was watching the morning news on TV and making scrambled eggs.

'It's the 13th of April, but it's going to feel like summer with temperatures reaching 25 to 28 degrees during the day,' said the pretty weather lady. Mum shouted above the broadcast.

'Take off your white pyjamas, I'll bung them in the wash before I go. Then get yourself dressed and come and have breakfast.'

...

Fifteen minutes later, David was dressed in his day clothes and disinterestedly listening to his mother. He would have much preferred to be on the trip with his classmates, but instead he was stuck at home alone for the third day in a row.

How could anyone be as totally doomed as this? How could he catch a cold and get a fever right before their first sleepover class trip? There was no way Mum would let him go, no matter how much he begged her to. But today was Wednesday. In the evening, his class would be coming back from their trip, so tomorrow he could finally meet up with them. The doctor had said he could go back to school on Thursday, which was good because he was in the first year in secondary school, and Thursday and Friday were to be days without taught classes. It was the election of the School President. All the 11th grade classes would compete against each other. And they would then get to vote for whoever would be president. It was going to be a laugh. He just had to make it through Wednesday, somehow.

'Did you hear what I said?' David's train of thought was interrupted by his mother.

'Umm... What were you saying?' David asked.

I said, 'hang out the washing when it's done! And don't play with your earphones on because you won't hear when the doorbell rings. I've ordered a couple of boxes of tea, and they will be delivered at some point today, and there is some pasta in the fridge if you get hungry'.

'Right, got it!'

'And don't sit in front of the TV and the computer all day, do get out into the garden!'

'Chill Mum, I'm not ...' David started to speak, but suddenly trailed off. He had the strangest feeling that he had said all this yesterday, in precisely the same way, too. It didn't make any difference in any case; Mum hadn't waited for him to finish answering. She had glanced at her watch, hurriedly pulled on her high heels, waved goodbye, and left. David lounged in front of the TV, bored. He channel-hopped for a bit, then glanced at his phone. His mates Benny and Nobby had just posted a picture. They were climbing up to some lookout point with the class... They had all gone to primary school together and David was so happy when they'd all been accepted at the same secondary school. How much better it would have been to have gone hiking with them today!

David sighed. Just then the bell rang. He ran to collect the package from the courier, but a little girl and her mother were standing at the garden gate.

'Sorry to disturb you... Barbara's ball went into your garden... Would you be so kind as to give it back?' the little woman's melodious voice rang out.

'Sure, no problem,' David replied, and he picked up the ball that was lying in the grass. Meanwhile the little girl grabbed the fence and shouted out.

'What a sweet puppy!' She was pointing at Dakota. David had already guessed what was coming next, and he was spot on...

The mother asked him if he would lift the puppy up so they could pet it. David obligingly picked up the lively little dog and let the grinning woman and her little daughter nuzzle up and coo over him. When they lost interest and departed, David went back to the house to hang out the washing. It was just an ordinary morning and passed uneventfully. The delivery people arrived with his Mum's parcel, and around noon a neighbour lady dropped off some cake for poor David, who was ill. Later, a stranger called by to offer his team's services to repave their yard, David promised to pass his card on to his parents. As the builder pulled away in his car, a taxi pulled up in front of the house across the street and a girl got out. David's heart began to pound when he saw her. He recognised her immediately. She was the ghost from his dream! Even now, she looked more like a ghost than a girl. Her face was thin and white, and her hair was dark. David stood frozen in the doorway and watched as the stranger turned, noticed him, and then started toward him.

'Hi!' she called from some distance away

'Hi!' muttered David.

'Could you please help my aunt and I to carry in our suitcases and luggage?'

'Well, okay,' David mumbled, mostly because he couldn't think of anything else to say. He quickly followed her to the taxi and began to take the bags out of the boot of the car. Although he didn't look up at all, he could feel her staring at him.

'You've brought a lot of luggage,' he murmured in surprise.

'I'm moving in with my aunt,' said the new neighbour, staring unblinkingly at David like a cat hunting its prey.

'Won't your parents miss you?' David asked, just to fill the silence.

'I don't have any parents. I never knew my father. And my Mum's dead,' she said, matter-of-factly, as if she were pointing out that the weather was unseasonably hot.

David wished the ground would swallow him up. He closed his eyes.

'Sorry,' he gushed.

'Don't worry,' she reassured him. 'I wasn't living at home before; I was staying at a boarding school, so I hardly ever saw my mother.'

David was not heartened by this at all. He couldn't understand how anyone could talk so unemotionally about the death of their parents. He wasn't sure that this girl was CHILD rather than a dream or a ghost. Why didn't she blink at all? How could her face be so impassive? And why was she

staring at him so much? She looked as though she was waiting for something... But what did she want from him?

A shiver ran down David's spine as he lifted the last suitcase out of the car. He was struggling to find the words to say goodbye as quickly as possible, but she beat him to it.

'My aunt told me about you. She said there was a boy my age living down the street. Your name is David, isn't it? I'm Becca. You've just turned thirteen like me, haven't you?'

'Uh-huh,' said David tersely, and then, to break the silence, he added: 'I'll be fourteen at the beginning of the summer.'

Becca nodded absently. 'I have to go and unpack now, but I'm sure we'll see each other again. Bye!' as she said goodbye, she failed to thank David for his help. She acted as if she were disappointed in him in some way.

'Bye!' David repeated. He wanted to mention that he had seen her in his dream, but he couldn't find the words, so he let her disappear and went back home. Mum came back a few hours later. David reassured her that she was completely fine. He couldn't wait to meet his friends the next day. He would tell them all about the strange girl next door, he thought as he yawned and searched for his white pyjamas. Then he remembered they had been washed. He put on the blue ones instead. He lay on his bed and quickly drifted off to sleep.

Juno woke up. She was howling bitterly outside the house. David looked at his watch and saw that it was almost midnight.

He knew that Dad was abroad, and Mum was fast asleep, so he went downstairs alone to see what had happened. Dakota had slipped out into the street and was sitting in the middle of the road. David walked out to get her. As soon as he took him in his arms, the door of the house across the street opened and Becca appeared. They looked at each other, then David was blinded by a light and...

He woke up. He was in bed again, it was morning again, and his mother was staring at him from the doorway.

'Did you catch cold in the night? If you're still sick, you can't go to school tomorrow, either'.

'I'm fine! I just had a bad dream. And I want to go to school today,' David grumbled.

'You can't. It's Wednesday. Your class won't be home from the field trip until the evening,' mum said apologetically.

David was confused.

'That's impossible! Yesterday was Wednesday. Today is Thursday. We've got the Class President's election at school.'

Mum anxiously entered the room and felt David's forehead.

'You really did have a bad dream,' she said reassuringly, and hurried out to make breakfast. David went into the kitchen, where the TV was on.

'It's 13 April, but it's going to feel like summer with temperatures reaching 25 to 28 degrees during the day,' said the pretty weather lady. Mum shouted above the broadcast

'Take off your white pyjamas, I'll bung them in the wash before we go. Get yourself dressed and come and have breakfast.'

'But I changed the white ones yesterday! Now I'm wearing the blue ones...' David began, but when he looked down, he was shocked to find that his mother was right and not him. He was wearing his white pyjamas. Nothing made any sense. He was stunned, he changed his clothes and listened to his mother tell him that she had a parcel of tea coming that day, which he needed to take from the courier, and that there was pasta in the fridge. When she had finished her monologue, she glanced at her watch and hurried off, leaving David to sit in front of the TV. He looked at his phone. Bence and Norbi had just sent him a picture of the class field trip to the lookout. David looked at the phone screen, suspecting something was wrong. It really was the 13th. Wednesday. It was just that he knew he had lived through all this once before! Or was he dreaming? Can someone dream a whole day in advance? Can you know what's going to happen before it does?

The doorbell rang. David shuddered. As he stood up and headed for the door, he tried to calm himself.

It's the courier! It can't be the little girl with her mother. You can't just dream the future so precisely... If the courier is at the door, everything is fine. If it's the little girl and her mother, then...

David's throat tightened. He looked out through the peephole, and his breakfast churned in his stomach. Outside the house stood the mother with her little girl. David tossed them the ball as before and let them pet Dakota. In the morning, he took the parcel of tea from the courier, at noon he let in the neighbour with the cake, and in the afternoon, he took the business card from the guy who was offering to do the paving. Finally, the new girl, Becca, came and asked him to help her unload the car. Everything happened just as it had in his dream. David had a headache by the evening. He couldn't wait to go to bed, fall asleep and wake up in the morning. Only he woke up not to the sound of the sun and the chirping of the dawn, but to the sound of Juno howling just before midnight. He had to go out again for Dakota. He saw Becca again. Again, he was blinded by a bright light, and once more found himself in bed.

It was Wednesday again.

Wednesday April 13 - for the fourth time

I love the wind.

The wind is exactly what I want to be:

free.

It's huge, like a fairy-tale giant.

It doesn't care what people think.

It's not afraid of harsh words, or mockery,
or hatred.

It fears nothing.

It doesn't have to hide its feelings.

When it's angry it blows. It howls. It thunders, it clatters.

It screams like a stamping, toddler in a tantrum.

When it's in the mood to rage, it turns everything upside down and inside out.

When it's happy, it strokes my face.

It shakes the leaves on the trees to make music.

The flowers nod to its particular rhythm

When it seeks adventure, it flies far on the backs of clouds.

When it's sad, it hides beneath its coattails to wail and whimper.

When it's lonely, it knocks on windows and doors.

It cries itself into our dreams.

The wind can do anything!

I wish I could be as brave and strong.

Especially now,

nothing could scare me away.

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