

**Spiral**  
Anna Davis

*May 28<sup>th</sup>: Day One.*

My dreams aren't normal. I know this because in my dreams I kill my husband. When I first started having the dreams we had only been married two years and they were terrifying. I remember distinctly the first time it happened I was thrashing so bad I kicked him in the shins and woke him up.

"Love, love, hey! Wake up, it's just a dream. God, you're sweating."

I sucked in a breath as I awoke. His hands were holding my arms to keep them still and I wrenched them away and pushed myself to the side of the bed. I kicked off all the sheets and would've leapt out of bed had I trusted my legs to hold me. My whole body was warm but chills wracked my frame the minute my skin was exposed. I felt the urge to rip off my pajamas and run into the lake but also pile all of the blankets and pillows I could find into a cocoon and slowly immerse myself.

"Now you have goosebumps all over, are you getting sick?"

He tried to put the back of his hand to my forehead to check my temperature and I recoiled so fast the back of my head smacked into the headboard. He recoiled similarly, his palms held out in surrender—just like in my dream. His eyes scanned this normally tough woman turned skittish animal in his bed.

"In my dream—you died." *At my hand*, remained unsaid.

*You died. I killed you.*

He heaved a deep sigh, his hands dropping gracelessly to the disheveled bed, as if the threat had been resolved.

*I killed you—in my dream. I put a knife through your chest and then I laughed.*

I reached toward him and put my hand on his chest. His skin was warm and his heart was beating normally. I left it there until mine stopped racing to match with his.

"I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. You're stuck with me," he murmured as he removed my hand from his chest, gave it a slight kiss, and tugged me from the bed to take a shower.

And that was it. As far as he could tell, I had left my nightmare in dreamland where it belonged. But my mind never left it, even as the images, the exact story of the dream faded. I wracked my brain to figure out why I had it in the first place. Nothing I could remember leading up to the dream left me the least bit upset with him. We were having a genuinely relaxing trip to the lake house, only our second trip away from the baby. On our drive back home, I stared out the window and thought about the morality of the dream, of my decision not to tell my husband that I was capable of murdering him. We didn't speak, instead listening to the crooning sounds of Frank Sinatra until he jiggled my hand and asked me to loosen my grip. When I let go, I noticed the crescent marks on his skin and rubbed over them gently in apology. I pulled my hand away and left crescent marks on my skin instead.

When we returned home and nothing remotely murderous had entered my mind, or my dreams, I tried to let it go. But every time I looked at Robert, I felt his blood on my hands. I saw the betrayal in his eyes. If I couldn't get the image out of my head, it was possible that this dream wasn't a fluke, that even if it was in the deepest recesses of my mind, I was capable of murder. But until this point in my life, in my marriage, I hadn't had a thought of stabbings or killings, barely even rage. Not the kind of rage that would make me twist a knife into my husband's chest. Therefore, there must be a reason. Cause and effect.

Thus why I have started journaling—to log my mood as I go to bed, what Robert might have done to annoy me that day, any stress at work or at home with our little one, Henry—to try and pinpoint why I dreamt about killing my husband. I didn't notice any pattern in my husband's behavior. There were the little things, the tapping of his foot as he pours over documents or the hogging of the sheets at night. But nothing major, Robert was the definition of a loving husband. Even when I asked him to stop tapping his foot or hogging the sheets, he didn't complain about it, he just ribbed me about my hogging of the bed in return. And he stopped, he really made an effort, because of course he did.

And all I did in return was have another dream of brutally murdering him. And another.

It's been a month and I've had five dreams already. Each dream has been more vivid than the next. I've started to dread going to bed at night. I can't make it stop. No matter how much I focus on the circumstances or how much I journal. If I could just make them stop through sheer force of will.

I've been staying up late, sitting in Henry's room and watching him sleep—his little body moving with his breath, his mouth wide and slack facing me. I sit in the rocking chair and whisper to him—whisper about how I killed his father in my dreams last night.

I remember when Henry was born a little more than a year ago. Robert was right beside me, letting me crush his hand and encouraging me on. We had trouble getting pregnant, it took so long that by the end we were constantly tortured with fertility drugs and ovulation schedules. I had a big calendar on the wall in what would become Henry's nursery with color coded schedules. Blue and Grey, what would become his nursery color scheme. It seemed poetic.

But now we have Henry, our chubby cheeked baby boy with Robert's blue eyes. But when I look in his eyes, I feel no murderous memories. When I look in Robert's eyes, all I can think about is how I was looking at those same eyes as I stabbed him in the neck at the dinner table in my dream a few weeks ago. So I talk to Henry about it. He doesn't give very helpful advice, but he's receptive enough.

Hopefully our conversations can be less violent again.

*June 27<sup>th</sup>: Robert left his shoes scattered across the living room floor, as always.*

He left his shoes on the floor—so I strangled him with his tie.

My sweat hasn't even dried and adrenaline is still pumping through my body, but I couldn't stay in that bed with Robert knowing what I had done against my will.

“It's alarming that such a little thing caused me to dream I murdered your daddy, bubba.”

He snuffled in response.

My hands reach into my hair and pull tightly, allowing the slight tug of pain to ground me. My knee bobs in contemplation.

When Robert and I first met, he was a new law school grad and I was still an intern at my accounting firm. We fit together, we balanced each other well. He's easy going where I am not, I am organized where he isn't. We had the same values, we both wanted a family, we dated for quite a few years before we got engaged, we loved each other. We still do. We checked all of my relationship boxes.

But we're devolving and I can't pinpoint why.

“This is just a problem. And I solve problems.”

Henry sighed.

“I'll take that as approval.”

*July 11<sup>th</sup>: Robert accidentally woke Henry up when he came home from work after I had just spent an hour putting him down.*

This morning I awoke with a groan of frustration rather than a gasp of adrenaline. I even woke Robert up in the process.

“Okay?” he mumbled, his arm slinging over my waist.

“Yup. Sleep.” My rough voice snapped with each word.

“And I stared at the ceiling for the rest of the night. I didn’t even try to go in to talk to you because I was worried I would yell and wake him up again.”

Henry munches on his cheerios as I prepare dinner that evening.

My knife slices through the veggies with my aggressive chops.

“Instead I did some research. You won’t believe, bubba, I swear. I looked up...” I stopped chopping for dramatic effect, “dream interpretations.”

“Oooo.” Henry’s surprise translates into swiping a bit of cereal onto the floor.

“*I know*. That bull—bologna. But don’t worry, I went out for the big guns. Actual psychologists. I’m not an amateur,” I emphasized as I gestured with my knife.

“*But*,” I grip my knife tighter, “Freud claims that dreams reveal wishes we never knew we had.” *Chop*. The force reverberates through my arm.

“And Jung,” *Chop*. “claims that dreams reveal our inner truths. Can you fu—flippin believe that?” *Chop*.

“My inner truth, my deepest wishes,” *Chop*. “...I do not want to kill my husband.” *Chop Chop*. My knife slams harder. Somehow Henry doesn’t flinch.

“No matter how much I’ve tried,” *Chop*. “and tried,” *Chop*. “and *tried*.” *Chop*.

I scoop the chopped veggies into the awaiting pot next to me. I drop my knife and heave a sigh, leaning on my hands on the counter, my back stiff with dissatisfaction.

“I just want them to stop. There was a split second last night when—.”

I stop and suck in a breath.

“If they don’t stop soon...” I say under my breath.

I look over at Henry as he mashes the Cheerios beneath his hands.

“Time for your bath my boy, I’ll get your toy ship all ready.”

When Robert went to bed that night, leaving his paperwork scattered across every surface in the kitchen, all I could think about was smashing the bottle of wine I was pouring over his head.

*July 30<sup>th</sup>: I just want to end this.*

I had gotten home early that day, but it didn’t feel like it. I prepared dinner for Henry, who decided to throw it on the floor and laugh instead of eat it. I then gave him a bath when, on a second helping of food, he spilled it on himself instead. I spent three hours putting him to bed, culminating in an all-time record for the amount of times I had to read *Goodnight Moon* in a single night. I prepared dinner for Robert and me; even as it was sitting warm in the oven, he wasn’t home yet.

I was leaning against the windowsill sipping my very full wine glass, my heels long off and put away but still in my dress from the day. When I heard Robert’s keys jingle outside the door, I made no move to open the door for him, watching the bustle of the city outside as the tumblers in the lock clicked open.

*Four Hours Late.* I took a sip of my wine to keep from saying anything.

“I am so sorry I’m late, love. I really wanted to finish that brief before the weekend so I could focus on you and Henry and having fun with my two favorite people.”

*Forgot to pick up the milk like I asked him.* I sip again, feeling the tension coil from my hand down through my body.

He came over and kissed my neck, his hands spanning my hips. I leaned back into him slightly, turning my head and kissing his forehead haphazardly while my gaze remained on the people outside.

“Oh, that wine looks so enticing right now.”

He rubbed my back as he moved to go get some.

*Shoes scattered on the floor.*

I heard them fall without turning my head. A bigger sip of wine.

He moved on to pull out a glass and pour the wine.

*Left the cabinet door open.* I didn’t hear it close. The wine hits the back of my throat, the sweet sizzle of alcohol settling warm in my belly.

He took his glass and moved to creep up the stairs.

“Please don—.”

“I just need one peek,” he whispered, finishing his trek up the stairs and opening the door to Henry’s room.

*Interrupting me.* Sip.

*Not listening to me.* Sipping as my hand clenches around the stem of the glass.

*Waking Henry up after I spent three goddamn hours putting him down.* Another sip.

*Inevitably expecting me to put him back to bed while he lounges down here, enjoying my wine and my home cooked meal that I slaved over after a long fucking day at wor—.*

I watch the wine glass crash into the wall, shards of glass scattering into the carpet, the wine stain growing as droplets linger down the side of the wall. Tunnel vision swarming, I don’t see him until he’s down by the remains.

“Jesus, Sarah, what the hell?”

He bends down to pick up the shards of glass, stepping gingerly in his socks around the wine. He becomes clearer, closer. I see my feet start to move. I walk towards him, stepping carelessly, my feet numbed by adrenaline and alcohol coursing through every muscle in my body. I grab a shard of glass and clench it in palm, bringing blood to the surface.

Pounding in my head, ringing in my ears.

His hands don’t come up in surrender this time.

The shard pierces his back, I can feel it puncture his flesh, the blood spilling to the surface as I plunge it in again, two distinct red colors staining the floor. I am disappointed as he falls to the floor face first that I don’t get to see his expression as his last breath leaves his body. But as the trickle of blood slows to a stop, the blood around him evaporates. I try and cling to this moment, try to will the blood back into place.

*It has to end.*

I grasp my shard, my murder weapon, my last bit of hope—

“Sarah? Sarah! Hey, sorry I’m a little late, I wanted to get that milk so we wouldn’t have to run out this weekend.”

I blink out at the city and breathe deeply past my rapid heartbeat. I look away from the window to see the proof of his statement, my hand still clenched around the wine.

“Hey, why are you still in your clothes from work? Why don’t you go get into something more comfortable while I set the table and pull the dinner from the oven?”

He comes and kisses my neck when I don’t move, his hands spanning my hips. I lean back into him slightly, turning my head and kissing his forehead haphazardly, the normally welcome scent of his woody cologne an aversive smell to me right now. I clench my eyes in response.

“Oh, that wine looks so enticing right now.”

He rubs my back as he moves to go pull out a glass and pour the wine.

My brain is unfocused.

He takes his glass and moves to creep up the stairs, my brain just barely picking up his motivation.

“Please don—.”

“I just need one peek, I won’t even step a foot inside. No casualties tonight when we finally have some alone time,” he whispers, finishing his trek up the stairs and slowly turning the knob to Henry’s room.

I push off the windowsill and walk to the kitchen. I take one last sip of wine, my fingers unclenching without my permission and letting the glass clunk onto the table. I breathe in, the tension still coiled around my bones.

*Fuck.*

Maybe next time.